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**Notions of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy and
New Interpretations of Existentialist Literature**

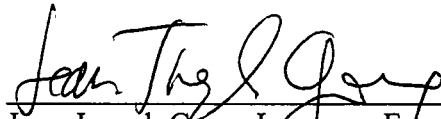
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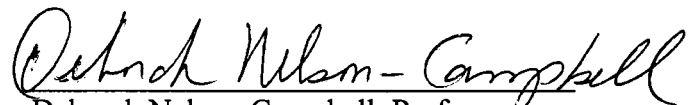
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ABSTRACT

Notions on Language in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy and New Interpretations of Existentialist Literature

by

Roger Bruce King

Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the interiority of language address verbal and non-verbal communication dilemmas that have implications for how the existentialist subject interfaces with the Other. When considering the contemporary topic of emotional intelligence, many of Merleau-Ponty's ideas pointed the way for understanding the importance of this realm of human communication long before it became a subject of timely debate. In studying his and other scholars' ideas on the interiority of language one can develop a more plenary comprehension of how the existentialist hero in literature can be understood from an affective perspective.

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Introduction

Why use the concept of “literary analysis” in the title of a philosophical thesis based on phenomenology? In what ways can literary criticism and the study of literature incorporate themselves into a study of phenomenological existentialism? What is most challenging about these questions and the thesis that attempts to answer them is a call for a synthesis of already well-established arguments and of completely new and raw attempts at examining how philosophy and writing support one another. The fact that a phenomenologically oriented existentialism presents itself as “return to things and phenomena” certainly poses challenges to a work that targets the analysis of a cultural production such as literature. Bridging the gap that exists between such a philosophical perspective and the novel of the past century is another example of the ambitious drive that inhabits the very many different domains of academia, from feminists who seek to re-define the image of women in painting to cultural theorists who propose new concepts of power and tyranny in the media. Of course, the present work is involved with a relationship between bodies of work that clearly are not of recent appearance. Nonetheless, involvement in graduate studies in most disciplines in the humanities still requires at minimum a cursory knowledge of existentialist principles and the basic ideas of literary criticism. No matter how far in the past Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus loom, their figures still cast a lengthy shadow on the landscape of the Western academy. To attempt a devaluation of literary theory in a humanities thesis would be tantamount to denying the very existence of literary production.

What is important about the present work is twofold. First, we have decided upon a specific philosophical “framework” that will allow us to channel our theoretical

potential for examining literature. This choice is an existentialism that places phenomenological analysis at the forefront of all considerations, be they literary or purely philosophical. Given that this decision will obviously favor certain existentialist philosophers while limiting the relevance of others, it is our intention to engage all theorists that have contributed to phenomenological studies. While this task seems clear enough, the second and subsequent target of this work will be to literally construct a “space” where the intersection of existentialist philosophy and literary production forms a mutuality. To be very clear, we will endeavor to establish a relationship between phenomenological existentialism and literature that is more than just correspondence, but a “space” or “realm” where the two dialogue. Specifically, this thesis will seek to reveal how language production, non-verbal communication, and emotional awareness on the part of the individual body-subject are activities that have multiple functions in and implications for the realms of philosophical writing and literary production.

These facets of human experience will always be examined with the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty having primary position in terms of philosophical perspective. Along with this particular choice of theorist, it is our intention to answer the questions posed above by exploring the contributions of the philosophers that Merleau-Ponty read and how they had an influence on his thought. To contextualize his work in terms of their place in the historical progression of continental philosophy is to pay homage to Merleau-Ponty’s own interpretation of how phenomenology is supposed to be done. Like Husserl, he sees phenomenology as a continuous process to be carried out by generations of philosophers. In view of this cooperative spirit, let us refocus our attention on our original questions and expand upon them: How does phenomenology appear in literature? How

does the body-subject's use of language extend beyond conversational dialogue and into the writing of texts? How does this writing create a broader "dialogue" that transcends the initial utterance and introduces new types of inter-subjectivity between author and reader? How does affective intelligence figure into the interpersonal experience of existentialist characters? How can the non-verbal emerge from the written text and create a whole other form of communication?

We may start to formulate an answer by clarifying the most problematic term in our initial question as it relates to existentialism: *phenomenological*. Most students of philosophy would either automatically assume that a phenomenological foundation always and already exists within the framework of practically *any* form of existentialism, or they would at least grant that Husserlian phenomenology plays a considerable role in the development of the various existentialist schools of thought. Exactly what is meant by the term "foundation" and to what degree the role of phenomenology has played in this context will be addressed later. For the sake of this introduction let us say that Merleau-Ponty is clearly an attentive student of Husserl (not without notable conflicts with Husserlian thought, however) and that his own version of existentialism is exhaustively phenomenological. His main work, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, concentrates on the lived, daily experience of the body-subject as it pre-reflexively encounters the phenomena of the world such as objects, colors, the Other, etc., while largely excluding the social and cultural aspects of existentialism for said body-subject. Although this is a very limited description of the totality of an enormous work, this primacy of perception for the body-subject places Merleau-Ponty much more in league with the Sartre of *l'Être et le néant* than with de Beauvoir, Camus, and even Heidegger.

To say, however, that Merleau-Ponty diligently follows all the main conceptualizations of Husserlian phenomenology is to be incorrect on a number of main points, the greatest of which is the transcendental reduction. Merleau-Ponty nonetheless continues to support the basic Husserlian position that a new, foundational approach was needed in order to ensure the validity of and the possibility of intercommunication between philosophy, the sciences, and the humanities. This brings up a very crucial aim of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: the primacy of establishing a revised phenomenology that could be capable of reconciling the differences between philosophy and psychology. He receives a great deal of encouragement towards accomplishing this objective through the latter writings of Husserl. The importance of psychology for Merleau-Ponty opens the door for us to see how essential it was to him that an understanding of emotional interplay between body-subjects be brought to light. In conjunction with his emphasis on the body-subject as the means through which we engage experience, he also contributed much to nascent ideas on non-verbal communication as well.

With regard to the latter part of this thesis, it is important to recognize the *programmatic character* (Edie, xv) of Merleau-Ponty's early writings in general, and more specifically with the major work, *Phénoménologie de la perception*. The programmatic intentions of Husserl's own phenomenology certainly have to serve as a role model for the ambitions of our theorist here. Merleau-Ponty, true to his phenomenological roots, intends to provide us with an initial way of doing philosophy, in lieu of giving us a series of texts that only have dogmatic and prohibitive themes and principles. Providing us with a solid basis for phenomenological research with the *Phénoménologie*, his program is open-ended and understandably incomplete. Merleau-

Ponty planned to forge ahead into studies of various disciplines such as linguistics, politics, and even religious experience (Edie, xv). In this way a natural progression from an initial phenomenology of perception would lead to phenomenologies of intersubjectivity, truth, aesthetics, etc. In other words like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty leaves us with unrestricted philosophical orientation. From this foundational perspective, it is the task of others to create phenomenologies that continue and re-formulate his philosophical perspective.

It is the intention of the last part of this work to attempt an original and yet limited phenomenology of literature that is based on the tenets and principles of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and his work on language. Therefore the first task of this thesis is to articulate these two areas as Merleau-Ponty has done in his major works. Along with this analysis, we will continuously broaden our treatment of phenomenological studies by mobilizing the viewpoints of all pertinent philosophers and theorists when applicable. Having already mentioned Husserl within the context of phenomenology, we will also turn to Ferdinand de Saussure, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger in order to ensure a balanced perspective with regard to this philosophical approach. A brief mention about the general relevance of these three thinkers to Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenological position seems appropriate before beginning our preliminary discussion of language throughout his corpus.

For purposes of brevity we will limit ourselves to a basic outlining of the major ontological differences between Merleau-Ponty and the aforementioned other philosophers. The major difference between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective and these three theorists is his insistence on an "incarnate cogito" whose

primary function is the perceptual constitution of the world in which it is at the same time a part and a participant. In other words, the perceived world is the primary reality for the body-subject. This places Merleau-Ponty at odds with Heidegger's notion of the Being of beings which, far from being based on perceptual consciousness, is more a search for the rediscovery of authentic understanding of one's existence through originary thinking and acceptance of one's finitude. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty diverge from one another on the main issues of dialectics and the nature of consciousness. For Sartre, existence is divided into two realms, the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*, and consciousness is "pure" and independent of being. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, views dialectical reasoning as too concerned with its own schema or "structure" and therefore not focused on the particular subject of its investigation. Consciousness for Merleau-Ponty is not totally free but bound up into and conditioned by the particular body-subject's social and historical *being-in-the-world*.

In relation to Bergson, our aim will not be to focus so much on differences between his approach and that of Merleau-Ponty, but rather to emphasize the similarities that exist in their philosophical points of view. Bergson's conceptualization of human intuition, an immediate and direct knowledge that allows us to penetrate the realm of the real, represents a return to our authentic selves that avoids the pitfalls of scientific method and intellectual analysis. While this view of intuition certainly coincides with Merleau-Ponty's "*retour aux phénomènes*", the two theorists diverge on their attitude toward language. For Bergson, language is the tool of intellectualism designating things only in their most common and banal aspect. Language constricts and renders fixated that which language being far too bound up by

scientific and popular convention would seem compatible with Merleau-Ponty's search for a totally new foundation for philosophical research. However, Merleau-Ponty is not concerned with a restrictive view of language. For him, the possibility of inter-subjectivity is dependent upon language, and certainly language as it exists as an everyday, pedestrian phenomenon. A more detailed discussion of this inter-subjectivity will comprise an entire section of the first portion of this thesis.

After having completed our examination of the purely philosophical in Merleau-Ponty's texts and his relation to the other major theorists, we will turn our attention to his ideas on language. This second portion of the first part of our thesis will serve as a transition between foundational phenomenologies and their influence on literary production. An undeniable fact about Merleau-Ponty's career is that after having read *Cours de linguistique générale* by Saussure, he then chooses to make a phenomenological study of language his one main scholarly pursuit for a considerable length of time. Therefore, a careful review of Merleau-Ponty's reading of Saussure and how this structural linguist influences his basic notions of language seems paramount to our examination of language production for the body-subject. Merleau-Ponty has a great deal to say about language, and especially dialogue between body-subjects, that starts from the lived, everyday reality of the *Lebenswelt* and progresses to more analytical perspectives. It is from this area of analysis that we will build an argument based on the references to "deeper structures" in various texts of Merleau-Ponty that show a psycho-linguistic unity exists that links together all body-subjects in his view of inter-subjectivity. In doing so we will also be able to begin an examination of his references to emotional intelligence and non-verbal communication.

Intersubjectivity and language production are two notions that Merleau-Ponty rarely lets stray far from one another throughout his entire corpus. Along with the aforementioned psycho-linguistic unity that is produced by the use of language between body-subjects, we would argue that literature as well creates a bond between body-subjects that transcends dialogue. Literature represents a step beyond the daily verbal exchange of ideas and multiplies the possibilities of the psycho-linguistic unity. This argument is a point of departure from what Merleau-Ponty explicitly said about literary production. Returning briefly to what he did say about this subject, we must be clear that although Merleau-Ponty never dedicated an entire work to literary theory, he did include considerable insights about literature sparingly throughout his major texts. His comments on Proust, Valéry, and de Beauvoir are most notable and will constitute the majority of the examples of his own literary analysis within our text. With these ideas in mind, however, our plan is to move ever so slightly away from what he says about literature and to construct an analysis more based along the lines of his notions of language production. From this point we will draw our own conclusions about this interpretation of language for literary production.

The two literary texts that will constitute the subjects of study for the second part of our thesis will be *la Nausée* by Jean-Paul Sartre and *l'Etranger* by Albert Camus. The examination of these works will, of course, always make reference back to the study of Merleau-Ponty's ideas that comprise the first part of our analysis. Specifically, the major points of emphasis will be his ideas on the interiority of language, emotional awareness between body-subjects, and non-verbal communication. We will drift from strict philosophical analysis to a more open-ended literary examination that will create a new

engagement with these two classics where novel ideas on affective intelligence and gestured communication will come to the forefront. Basically, we will see two major existentialist protagonists in a new light that will at times reveal capabilities within them that will be surprisingly at odds with their traditional images in academia.

Looking briefly at Antoine Roquentin of *la Nausée*, the emergence of notions on emotional intelligence in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy serves as an inspiration for uncovering a new image of this main character. Suffering from intermittent attacks of the Nausea, Roquentin is commonly regarded as an individual who has been transformed into an inter-subjective blank slate incapable of valuing any sort of contact with his fellow man or woman. Because of the fundamental change in his perceptual capacities, he is portrayed as no longer having either the desire or the ability to communicate on any level with those around him, be it socially, affectively, or intellectually. We will argue that the interiority of language plays a large role in how he thinks about the language that he uses, and this will have considerable implications for his interpersonal relations. Finally, we will closely examine the one part of the text that dismisses the effects of the Nausea and how this makes Antoine a much more emotionally-capable character than he is commonly considered.

Likewise, with Meursault of *l'Etranger*, our analysis of Merleau-Ponty will give us the orientation needed to show how adept this existentialist hero, so infamously known for his indifferent and aloof nature, is at interpreting non-verbal cues from other characters. In addition, our analysis will show how interpersonal relationships help to create a part of his character that is rarely emphasized or even talked about in academic circles: a nascent yet muffled inter-subjective acumen. The key to understanding how this

is possible lies in what makes the novel so famous: its first-person narrative. We will show how Camus's choice of the "je" is responsible for the possibility of Meursault to emerge as an emotionally receptive narrator-main character who is very attuned to the physical and gesture-based expressions of others.

The following study has a limited philosophical scope, but it attempts to give credit to thinkers and contributors that stand above and beyond what the present analysis chooses to examine. Also, we acknowledge that while the two existential novels that we have chosen are only two works that do not speak for the entirety of this philosophical genre's literary tradition, they are indicative of this school's intent on creating new images for the individual existent. By examining the aforementioned aspects of the main characters within the philosophical framework we have chosen, we feel a new, informative light can help to expand knowledge of an already rich literary field.

Language and Inter-Subjectivity

As stated in the introduction, Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on language form a part of our analysis that is central to understanding both his philosophical undertakings and those of this thesis. The beginning of this section will focus on which major texts dealt with his ideas on language production by the body-subject the most, with references to other minor contributions when applicable. How Merleau-Ponty conceptualized language changed over the course of his life, and an appreciation of this evolution will, of course, appear as well. Central to grasping some of his more original conceptualizations will be an understanding of the primacy of the body-subject to his philosophy in what concerns basically everything. Therefore, constant references to this concept should be expected. This provides a convenient means of defining exactly what the term "body-subject" entails, and a piece-meal approach is, in our humble opinion, probably the best way of displaying the variety of notions associated with this vital cog in Merleau-Ponty's machinery.

The idea of language production and the notion of intersubjectivity are shown to be intertwining concepts in *La Prose du monde*. Dialogue becomes a process through which the affirmation of both the body-subject and the other happens not only on a social level, but on an existential one as well. Whereas perception and consciousness, coextensive terms themselves in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, once provided the background for the entirety of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, it is language that captures his thoughts in most his latter philosophical works. Merleau-Ponty can be said to be at his best as an existentialist theorist when he simply describes what it is to produce speech and what exactly transpires when two body-subjects talk to one another. This type of analysis is indicative of the scope of *La Prose du monde*. From this work we will extract a phenomenological interpretation of language production --- primarily through the author's examination of dialogue --- and construct a foundation for the phenomenological analysis of literary production.

It is a matter of record that Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of language changes considerably from *Phénoménologie* to his last unfinished work *Le Visible et l'invisible*. In order to have an adequate basis for analyzing dialogue and intersubjectivity, we feel it is important at this point to follow the development of Merleau-Pontean thought on language throughout his corpus. Focusing on the two aforementioned texts as well as an intermediary one, *La Prose du monde*, the unfolding of the philosopher's analysis of language can be divided into three major phases: a gestural theory of language followed by a developmental/cognitive psychology-based interpretation of language, and finally an approach dominated by ontological concerns (Dillon, 186). While what follows will be a limited summary of the major characteristics

of each phase, a more developed version will be offered once the shift from language production proper to intersubjectivity has been reached.

To understand Merleau-Ponty's gestural theory of language is to realize that the philosopher intends first and foremost to establish a foundation for language production that would solve the problem of origins for language. Like all philosophers, the problem of establishing origins for phenomena such as language and culture is an obstacle of which the phenomenologists are quite aware. Briefly stated, Merleau-Ponty sees an a priori human embodiment in the world (*l'être-au-monde*) as a grounding of perceptual experience. Any description of this body-subject cannot be conceptually separated from describing the world. Although this body-subject is physical, it is not a physical object along the lines of animals, plants, or material objects. The physicality of the body-subject is neither the totality of what it is, nor the essence of its consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, this conceptualization of the body-subject is a means of overcoming the problem of mind-body dualism. The a priori "thrownness" of the body-subject in the world is an answer to the problem of origins for the problem of origins for the subject. We will examine this facet of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in much more detail later.

As with the thrown character of the body-subject, Merleau-Ponty maintains (in *Phénoménologie*) that a variety of communication exists between natural signs and conventional ones that is a sort of intermediary containing qualities of both, the linguistic gesture. This verbal gesticulation helps to overcome the problem of origins for language because it is a spontaneous reaction of the thrown body-subject (itself always and already in the world) in a communicative context. The most essential aspect of this gesticulation is that it delineates its own meaning: "Le geste linguistique comme tous les autres,

dessine lui-même son sens. Cette idée surprend d'abord, on est pourtant bien obligé d'y venir si l'on veut comprendre l'origine du langage, problème toujours pressant..." (1945, 217). For Merleau-Ponty, there is an intrinsic and transcendent power to language production (1969, 30), that he describes in *Phénoménologie* and *Prose du monde* as an "interiority," that stems from this ability to gesturally depict its meaning in this initial phase of creation. The notion of interiority in language will be explicated in great detail later in our examination of intersubjectivity. Nonetheless, it is a concept that can serve as a transition from the gestural theory found in *Phénoménologie* and the cognitive/developmental psychological model of language that appears in *Prose du monde*.

Merleau-Ponty himself was not only a phenomenologist, but a student of cognitive psychology as well, especially Gestalt theory. His tendency to buttress his arguments with anecdotal passages of specific cases from cognitive studies (primarily in *Phénoménologie*) gives a clear indication that he valued the insights into human understanding that cognitive psychology could provide to his philosophy. In *Prose*, a limited focus on the gestural theory of language and the corporeality of the body-subject is still maintained (1969, 21-22, 27, 41, 46-47, 52), but the text is really driven by an account of cognitive-based analyses of language and the other. Merleau-Ponty assigns language the ability to enable body-subjects to interface mentally, as well as linguistically. He contends that communicating verbally allows body-subjects to open up their thinking processes to one another. In reading a particular text, the body-subject brings his/her own cognitive skills and past experiences to this process. In a reciprocating fashion, the text, while of course using a language that both participants understand, pulls

the reader past the boundaries of his/her own limitations because it subtly changes the “ordinary” meanings of the acquired and available expressions that exist in the mind of the reader (1969, 19). During communicative exchanges individuals open themselves up to having their thoughts formed by those of the other: “Parler et comprendre ne supposent pas seulement la pensée, mais, à titre plus essentiel, et comme fondement de la pensée même, le pouvoir de se laisser défaire et refaire par un autre actuel, plusieurs autres possibles et présomptivement par tous” (1969, 29-30). Linguistic capabilities are not only buttressed by cognitive skills, they found a reciprocating process between body-subjects where each exerts influence over and is influenced by the other not only in what concerns language production, but the purely subjective as well.

There is a parallel between the successful transmission of a communicative act between body-subjects and the cognitive development of each body-subject in this act: “La communication réussie... elle ne l’est jamais que si celui qui écoute au lieu de suivre maillon par maillon la chaîne verbale, reprend à son compte et dépasse en l’accomplissant la gesticulation linguistique de l’autre” (1969, 41). But how do we assume that cognition is assured by this transcendental union of body-subjects during the articulation of the linguistic gesture? It is the way in which Merleau-Ponty uses the verb *comprendre* in intersubjective contexts that founds the developmental/cognitive phase of his studies on language.

Linguistic understanding for Merleau-Ponty entails an intersubjectivity in which the cognitive capacities of interlocutors reach a point of psychic fusion. However, any union between body-subjects must take into account the very nature of the Merleau-Pontean body-subject. What can be accomplished in the realm of communication is not

exclusively a mental/cognitive issue, it involves the use of the body in conjunction with mental faculties: “le parler et le comprendre sont les moments d’un seul système moi-autrui, et que le porteur de ce système n’est pas un ‘je’ pur...c’est le ‘je’ doué d’un corps...qui quelquefois lui dérobe ses pensées pour se les attribuer ou pour les imputer à un autre” (1969, 27). The corporeal aspect of the body-subject thus has a unique capability with regard to the cognitive abilities of interlocutors. It can be seen simultaneously as a limiting factor for the body-subject in terms of self-comprehension and as a facilitator for this same body-subject in understanding the points of view of the other. This basis for linguistic comprehension in human corporeality is indicative of the Merleau-Ponty of *Phénoménologie*. What he expresses in *Prose* continues to include this corporeal element, but also extends beyond the physical aspect of understanding to a more psychic-cognitive level.

Again, the issue of understanding (*comprendre*) is at the center of this psychic-cognitive explication. He even addresses the subject of the history of language in this context by contending that:

L’histoire du langage conduit au scepticisme tant qu’elle est histoire objective, car elle fait apparaître chacun de ses moments comme un événement pur... Alors, dans l’envers des événements, se dessine la série de systèmes qui ont toujours cherché l’expression. La subjectivité inaliénable de ma parole me rend capable de comprendre ces subjectivités éteintes dont l’histoire objective ne me donnait que les traces. (1969, 36)

There is again a clear indication of the transcendental quality of language that accompanies the understanding between body-subjects, even across time.

At this point it seems necessary to define the term “transcendence” with regard to language production for the purposes of this work. If indeed there is a “*subjectivité inaliénable*” for language production this would indicate a type of self-consciousness and an interiority for language. This notion of interiority will have its own explication later in this thesis. What must be determined at this point is exactly how this language-based transcendence comes into being so that it is made available to the consciousness of the body-subject. This is the context in which “transcendence” for language manifests itself for the intentions of the current thesis.

The transcendent quality of language is brought about by the understanding that takes place between body-subjects. Ever the proponent of a phenomenological existentialism based on corporeality, Merleau-Ponty grounds his explanation of this comprehension in terms of the actual sounds and the physical movements required of the body for successful communication. It is not in placing *all* of our thoughts in words that others engage and draw meaning from that we communicate with them. Understanding is a process that plays out between two communicating partners. On the one hand, it is in composing our chosen expressions with our throat, our voice, our intonation, and, of course, words that we initiate this process (1969, 42). Then, from the other side, our counterpart, who accompanies our “melody” of sounds bristling with key changes, peaks, and valleys, comes forth to take in this transmission in his/her own fashion and to “say” it with us (1969, 42-43). This procedure between the two (or more) body-subjects represents a “space” that is the realm of the transcendent.

As with Husserl, this transcendence is the work of an intersubjectivity. The way that Merleau-Ponty read Husserl on the notion of intersubjectivity deals more with the ultimate demand made by philosophy on the philosopher, but it parallels considerably with the body-subject's need for the other in communicative contexts. According to Merleau-Ponty, philosophy is essentially progressive for Husserl, an *infinite meditation* in his own words, and because of this the philosopher cannot afford to remain in the realm of mere facts and observations. He is in need of dialogue with his fellow philosophers because he is always situated and individuated (1964, 51). Likewise for the given body-subject, there is a need to understand the other and to be understood by this other in order for there to be a transcendence and a subsequent overcoming of the limits of the objective world. Merleau-Ponty agrees that "the surest way of breaking through these limits is to enter into communication with other situations... other philosophers or other men. As Husserl stated in his last years, the last... radical subjectivity, which philosophers call *transcendental*, is an *intersubjectivity*" (1964, 51). So, the transcendental for Merleau-Ponty is dependent upon the cognitive capacities of the body-subject that, through dialogue (language production), bind the experiential, lived realities of individuals together in a process of (self-)comprehension that is infinite and forward driven.

Merleau-Ponty abruptly abandons *Prose*, leaving it unfinished, and begins a third phase of language analysis that has for its main text the last work that the author produced, *Le Visible et l'invisible*. Briefly stated, this text focuses on an ontological interpretation of language production because it represents an ontological overhauling of the entirety of Merleau-Ponty's thinking. Due to the scope of this work, analyses of language production are far more infrequent than in *Prose*, and they tend to be much

more defined in terms of their applicability to ontological concerns rather than the lived, existential reality of body-subjects. In *Visible*, Merleau-Ponty is openly questioning many of the phenomenological assertions that he made in his previous texts. In particular, he reveals doubts about how he has granted certainty to certain phenomena that transpire between body-subjects and their world. Among these uncertainties is a concern for how philosophy can actually verbalize the experience of sharing perceptual encounters with others and of having any kind of access to the other's inner sphere of existence (*le monde privé d'autrui*) (1964, 26-27).

Thus, language is bound and delimited by the role it plays in the development of a new ontological overview for Merleau-Ponty's thought. We witness in *Visible* a shift away from the existential functions of language between body-subjects toward a problematic of the philosophical uses of language (by and for Merleau-Ponty himself as philosopher) that utilizes a new terminology: *la foi perceptive*, *le visible*, *l'invisible*, *la conversion réflexive*, *la surréflexion*, and *la dés-illusion*. This terminology can be interpreted as an attempt to solve problems that Merleau-Ponty encounters as he re-adjusts his prior views on how his version of phenomenological existentialism is to be done. Merleau-Ponty nonetheless continues to support certain aspects of his previous notions that concern the body-subject. He does not doubt that we as body-subjects have a naïve assuredness of the world that allows for an intelligibility of our experience *as it is lived and practiced*. Where he does experience doubt is in the philosophical thematization of these certainties (1964, 29-30) and whether or not body-subjects can reflect on perceptual experience through language without this reflection having its own effect on said experience during and after its execution.

Among the previously mentioned new terms that Merleau-Ponty creates in this text, *la surréflexion* responds to this question of whether or not language (as a corollary of reflection) can accomplish its task of elucidation for the body-subject without having any effect on experience. The concept of *surréflexion* represents an eclipse of the powers of everyday language as Merleau-Ponty had conceived of them previously. He anticipates the need for a cognitive process even more fundamental than the *conversion réflexive* that would take into account itself and the changes that it would introduce into perceptual experience (1964, 59-60). Also, this *surréflexion* would not lose sight of the thing perceived nor perception itself (*la perception brute*), and would avoid effacing or cutting the organic bonds between the two. More to the point of language production, this same process would speak of perception and the perceived “non pas selon la loi des significations de mots inhérentes au langage donné, mais par un effort, peut-être difficile, qui les emploie à exprimer, au-delà d’elles-mêmes, notre contact muet avec les choses, quand elles ne sont pas encore des choses dites” (1964, 60). Clearly, Merleau-Ponty is re-thinking foundational concepts such as language that once served as cornerstones for his philosophical edifice. Concentrating on building a more ontologically sound version of the body-subject in *Visible*, he finds lacunae in his prior conceptualizations that require an even more diligent commitment to confronting the obscure and the ineffable of the pre-logical and the pre-reflective nature of being open to the world. In other words, Merleau-Ponty seems to be in a mode of self-interrogation that would place the contents of *Visible* before his research in *Phénoménologie*.

While this treatment of the changes in the status of language throughout Merleau-Ponty’s major works has been admittedly brief and limited, it will be addressed again and

expanded later in this thesis. For the purpose of the examination of language production and intersubjectivity, this cursory review now serves as a foundation for research into more specific concepts that appear throughout Merleau-Ponty's corpus. The analysis that follows will not attempt a chronological assessment of Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on any particular idea germane to language production or intersubjectivity. Given the lack of transition between the aforementioned three phases of the philosopher's study of language, we would prefer to draw upon that which is relevant and compelling for our argument with no regard for the sequential order of texts cited. In terms of subject content, Merleau-Ponty's writing can certainly be described as divergent and disjointed, and no mention of his political treatises, significant in their own right, has or will be made. Therefore, a strict adherence on our part to a chronological ordering of texts would seem both an unnecessary and artificial position to take up with regard to the limited scope of language production and intersubjectivity.

Famously known as the "philosopher of ambiguity," Merleau-Ponty is in no way ambiguous with his descriptions of dialogue when he uses his phenomenological existentialism to explain speech production. Nonetheless, spontaneous speech between two people is not a phenomenon that is to be scientifically dissected and defined once in for all by either the interlocutors or the philosopher (1960, 98). Of course, this is no surprise given the author's constant criticism of realism and idealism throughout his works. What is important here is that Merleau-Ponty supports the open-ended and dynamic nature of language production on the part of the body-subject, i.e. something even elusive and magical (1945, 209, 1964, 155-156, 1969, 29), while at the same time clearly defining some parameters for said language production.

The body is clearly an existant in the world (1945, 403) and language is *institué* (1945, 214), but these conditions do not inherently indicate a set of limitations: “Le ‘je’ qui parle est installé dans son corps et dans son langage non pas comme dans une prison, mais au contraire comme dans un appareil qui le transporte magiquement dans la perspective d’autrui” (1969, 29). There are limits for speech production in that the body and language are composed of a certain set of elements that do not spread out to infinity. Human bodies are of course measurable physical quantities, and a given language is composed of a finite number of words and expressions at any particular point in time. However, taken in conjunction with the corporeality and the linguistic capabilities of another body-subject, Merleau-Ponty leads us into a realm of existence that becomes more than just a sum of its parts. This synergistic relationship between body-subjects and their language capacities allows for infinite possibilities of communication, and is the foundation of the author’s ideas on intersubjectivity. For now, however, we must return to what Merleau-Ponty says about language itself, and particularly speech, in order to grasp its relevance for his phenomenology.

For Merleau-Ponty, the use of language by the body-subject is analogous to its use of its own corporeality: “Quand je parle, je ne me *représente* pas des *mouvements* à faire: tout mon appareil corporel se rassemble pour rejoindre et dire le mot comme ma main se mobilise d’elle-même pour prendre ce qu’on me tend” (1969, 28). One does not need to represent or mentally visualize speech somehow in one’s consciousness in order to speak, just as one does not “speak” internally to one’s shoulder, arm, and hand in order to grasp an object. There is an automatic nature to the operations of the body for Merleau-Ponty: “Je meus mon corps sans même savoir quels muscles, quels trajets nerveux doivent

intervenir, ni où il faut chercher les instruments de cette action” (1960, 83). An effort to grasp the object is certainly made, but it is on the level of a muscular memory reflex, learned through habitual and general application of the body in its physical environment. Likewise, speech flows with effort provided by the body along with everyday and general acquisition of language obtained through one’s cultural milieu.

Merleau-Ponty does differentiate between the ways that a body-subject participates in these two domains, however. To use a Heideggerian expression, we are thrown into the world physically, while cultural participation, and specifically interaction with other body-subjects, happens more gradually: “Par l’action de culture, je m’installe dans des vies qui ne sont pas la mienne, je les confronte... je suscite une vie universelle, comme je m’installe d’un coup dans l’espace par la présence vivante et épaisse de mon corps” (1960, 93-94). This confrontation between body-subjects should not be interpreted in the same manner as Sartrean existentialism would have it. As Merleau-Ponty states clearly, the body-subject is giving rise to a universal life by this encounter with the other. There is a bonding with the other (1945, 410) that happens during the engagement of conversation in which the thoughts of each participant weave a single fabric and each interlocutor “becomes” the other (1945, 407, 1969, 165). Antagonism and adversarial positions are not part of the Merleau-Pontean viewpoint of this process.

The untrammelled exchange of ideas and sentiments that build a collective sense of intersubjectivity define this confrontation and its ultimate objective:

Ce n’est pas même le mot à dire que je vise [quand je parle], et pas même la phrase, c’est la personne, je lui parle selon ce qu’elle est, avec une sûreté quelquefois prodigieuse, j’use des mots, des tournures qu’elle peut comprendre,

ou auxquelles elle peut être sensible, et, si du moins j'ai du tact, ma parole est
à la fois organe d'action et de sensibilité... (1969, 28)

Dialogue has a directionality that is modified by an attitude adopted by the speakers that is one of cooperation and recognition of the other's linguistic capabilities. This sense of cooperation gives language production two aspects that might seem contradictory. On the one hand, the way in which Merleau-Ponty describes the basic elements of the speech act is so straightforward that it has the effect of placing language production on the same level of primacy as that of perception. One speaker perceives another, is activated linguistically by the presence of this other, and uses language as an ability that is automatically granted to oneself: "Nous-mêmes qui parlons ne savons pas nécessairement ce que nous exprimons mieux que ceux qui nous écoutent. Je dis que je *sais une idée* lorsque s'est institué en moi le pouvoir d'organiser autour d'elle des discours qui font sens cohérent" (1953, 85). At the same time, however, he allows for a sensibility between interlocutors that suggests a tacit mental connectedness shared by said speakers. As proposed by the above citation, the listener in a conversation perhaps knows just as much about what the speaker is uttering as the speaker him-/herself.

The mental union existing between body-subjects alluded to above promotes the idea that a contradiction lies at the center of the distinction between the phenomenological, that to which consciousness has direct perceptually access, and the mentally transcendent. Merleau-Ponty rejects the Husserlian notion of the phenomenological reduction based on the argument that it is not something that can be observed by perceptual consciousness, or consciousness *tout court* (1945, 452). How does the mental connectedness that binds us together in language production come to be

known by consciousness in Merleau-Ponty's scheme? The answer to this question lies in Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of *being-in-the-world* (1945, 413). This term, borrowed of course from Heidegger, allows us to view existence from points other than the traditional Cartesian *cogito*, the self or ego proffered by psychology, or from a privileged, disinterested spectator-consciousness transparent to itself and to the world. Being-in-the-world for Merleau-Ponty constitutes a relationship between the body-subject and Being in which there is a direct contact on the part of the body-subject with the world without mediation and without the world being "represented" to the body-subject's consciousness. The body-subject *consists* of this relationship with the world.

To return to the subject of language production, our question about the linguistic connectedness that seems to exist between body-subjects can now be approached with the aid of the concept being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty provides us with a pithy summary of what his *cogito* is and is not near the end of *Phénoménologie*:

Ce que je découvre et reconnais par le *Cogito*, ce n'est pas l'immanence psychologique, l'inhérence de tous les phénomènes à des « états de conscience privés », le contact aveugle de la sensation avec elle-même, -- ce n'est pas même l'immanence transcendente, l'appartenance de tous les phénomènes à une conscience constituante, la possession de la pensée claire par elle-même, --- c'est le mouvement profond de transcendance qui est mon être même, le contact simultané avec mon être et avec l'être du monde. (1945, 432)

The *cogito* is constituted by its relationship with the being of the world and is at the same time in direct contact with this being. In addition, this rapport between the being of the world and the body-subject is transcendent and the being-in-the-world of the body-

subject is transcendent as well. So, at the very center of Merleau-Ponty's ontology is a sense of transcendence that is both constitutive and relational with regard to the individual and the being of the world. To bring language production into this scheme requires the simple recognition that, for Merleau-Ponty, culture is a product of this transcendence that occurs as spontaneously as nature (1969, 106), and that language is given to us by culture (1945, 407).

In *Phénoménologie*, the author defines the cultural life in roughly structuralist terms, and includes with this definition the role that language plays therein: "Qu'exprime donc le langage, s'il n'exprime pas des pensées? Il présente ou plutôt il *est* la prise de position du sujet dans le monde de ses significations. Le terme de 'monde' n'est pas ici une manière de parler : il veut dire que la vie 'mentale' ou culturelle emprunte à la vie naturelle ses structures..." (1945, 225). Language, being the "prise de position" of the body-subject in the world, exists on the same level as the being of the world and the being-in-the-world of the incarnate subject. That being said, cultural life borrows from the natural world its structures according to Merleau-Ponty. It is a reflection of nature while language is the device with which the incarnate body-subject founds the thinking and reflecting body-subject (1945, 225). As self-evident as our philosopher considers concepts such as "world," "culture," "body-subject," and "being-in-the-world," the question of where the grounding of language occurs is yet to be established. It is to this point that we must now proceed in order to continue our discussion of language production and then eventually its role in the constitution of intersubjectivity.

However, we need bear in mind the important distinction that exists between phenomenological approaches to philosophy and philosophical methods that seek a

historical discussion of origins. Phenomenology does not accept as valuable or plausible the unequivocal establishment of historical origins for phenomena such as language, painting, or music. It does not deny the reality that at a certain point in time, a certain word might have been coined, or that a particular development in art such as three-dimensional perspective could be given an effective date of birth. However, Merleau-Ponty, who frequently emphasizes the importance of a given body-subject's social and historical milieu (1945, 217, 225, 231, 399-400) on his or her subjectivity, maintains that with regard to language it is ludicrous, from the phenomenological perspective, to attempt to pinpoint exact moments of linguistic change --- historical moments of change -- due to the fluid and always self-regulating nature of language:

...il faut renoncer à fixer le moment où le latin devient du français parce que les formes grammaticales commencent d'être efficaces et de se dessiner avant d'être systématiquement employées, que la langue reste quelquefois longtemps prégnante des transformations qui vont advenir et qu'en elle le dénombrement des moyens d'expression n'a pas de sens, ceux qui tombent en désuétude continuant d'y mener une vie diminuée et la place de ceux qui vont les remplacer étant quelquefois déjà marquée... (1960, 52)

This explication of language transformation follows Merleau-Ponty's view of temporality in that there is always an element of both the past and the future in the present (1945, 471). For the phenomenologist, this blending of traditional temporal boundaries obviates the need for origins in explaining phenomena because it renders origins unnecessary. What is more important is the phenomenological analysis of the body-subject's experience either over time or in relation to other body-subjects at any given point in time

in the present. For Merleau-Ponty, finding the origin of some phenomenon with complete certitude would require the possession of a consciousness that is present to everything at all times and that has a total immediacy with perceptual sources. This being a subject for discussion later on in this thesis, we will move on to what Merleau-Ponty says about culture while keeping the previous citation at the center of our analysis.

The idea of an eternal intertwining of the past and the future in the lived present of the body-subject not only impacts our considerations of origins, it shapes the way we can look at language and culture as well. Language and culture are phenomena that we live by and through just as we experience the world that is always already there for us like an inalienable presence before any reflection on our part (1945, I). Culture and language, being two dominant aspects of our social experience, extend beyond the limits of our perceptual and intellectual abilities: “ Il nous faut donc redécouvrir le monde social, non comme objet ou somme d’objets, mais comme champ permanent ou dimension d’existence... Notre rapport au social est, comme notre rapport au monde, plus profond que toute perception expresse ou que tout jugement” (1945, 415). From this notion of an a priori inherence in the natural and social worlds, we could assert that the search for an origin to culture or to language is really considered as an objective beyond the purview of the phenomenological approach. However, Merleau-Ponty considers some primordial form of community between body-subjects as mandatory in order for language production to originate (1969, 59-60). But exactly what founds this primeval interrelationship that exists before language emerges to sediment the body-subject’s social milieu?

With this notion of a primitive form of communication in mind, we must return to Merleau-Ponty's gestural theory of language emergence to answer the question of foundational intersubjectivity. One point about language remains steadfast throughout Merleau-Ponty's corpus: language emerges in the phenomenal world and could not exist without this world or the body-subjects interacting with it: "s'il n'y avait pas eu un homme avec des organes de phonation ou d'articulation et un appareil à souffler, --- ou du moins avec un corps et la capacité de se mouvoir lui-même, il n'y aurait pas eu de parole et pas eu d'idées" (1945, 448). Thus, language is a founded phenomenon based upon human embodiment within the world, and must be understood in this context (Dillon, 186). As for the beginning of language production, Merleau-Ponty insists in *Phénoménologie* that the linguistic gesture delineates its own meaning (1945, 217). Therefore, in this scheme where signification inheres in the verbal gesture, words are linguistic gestures that have acquired institutional limitation within the conventions of culture (Dillon, 188). There is then a reciprocating relationship between the body-subject's primitive verbal gesticulations and the cultural context in which that body-subject exists:

La gesticulation verbale...vise un paysage mental qui n'est pas donné d'abord à chacun et qu'elle a justement pour fonction de communiquer. Mais ce que la nature ne donne pas c'est ici la culture qui le fournit. Les significations disponibles, c'est-à-dire les actes d'expression antérieurs établissent entre les sujets parlants un monde commun auquel la parole actuelle et neuve se réfère comme le geste au monde sensible. (1945, 217)

There is an accumulation of accessible meanings overtime that sediment and thereby establish a cultural context from which the body-subject may make reference in order to build a common vocabulary. These sedimentary meanings then gradually lose their gesticular characteristics. They become signs that are removed from the original gestural context, float freely from speaking subject to speaking subject, and ultimately undergo a gradual process of degradation that takes place over generations, that, according to Heidegger, is responsible for “the rootlessness of Western thought” (*Poetry*, 23).

Returning to our brief description of temporality, the intertwining relationship that exists on the temporal level of experience is also a model for understanding the lack of origins in culture. Merleau-Ponty suggests that what is given as present in a cultural setting is really the making *explicit* of elements that have been covertly abiding their chance to emerge in the past. Also, there are cultural features currently unknown to us in the present that are in a state of incubation awaiting a future date to become explicit: “Même quand il est possible de dater l’émergence d’un *principe pour soi*, il était auparavant présent dans la culture à titre de hantise ou d’anticipation, et la prise de conscience qui le pose comme signification explicite ne fait qu’achever sa longue incubation dans un sens opérant” (1960, 52). As will be disclosed throughout the whole of this thesis, this notion of the basic components of lived experience, e.g. culture, language, temporality, etc., always and already disclose their entirety to some degree in the moment-to-moment existence of the body-subject. This serves as a constant reminder that phenomenology, for Merleau-Ponty, is an open-ended programme that sees itself as a continuous process of the return to pre-reflective perceptual consciousness for initial philosophical inquiry.

Before returning to our treatment of culture as the basis for language production, it would be beneficial for us to have a firmer grasp of what the relationship between pre-reflective consciousness and reflective thought consists and what this relationship means to language use. This habitual return to perception may seem problematic for those theorists who focus on categories of human experience that are products of reflection. All forms of phenomenology assert that a rejection of the tradition of metaphysical thought is necessary in order to gain access to consciousness. Husserl and all phenomenologists after him want to establish a method by which we will be able to be witnesses to the vastly complicated contents of consciousness and its operations just as we have immediate access to the everyday workings of the “real world” by our perceptual senses. The study of cultural objects such as literature, art, or architecture would then seem far removed from the realm of pre-reflective consciousness. In order to bridge this gap it is necessary to investigate what artistic expression meant for Merleau-Ponty and for his predecessor Martin Heidegger. In doing so, we will be lead back to our analysis of language production in a way that will further our understanding of its role in consciousness.

Heidegger views artistic production as a means by which truth comes into being. In “The Origin of the Work of Art”, he concludes that “art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical” (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, 78). Our status as beings born in a particular cultural and historical milieu, our facticity, places us within the boundaries of a defective and incomplete worldview that we have to perpetually re-appropriate and overcome (1961, 79). Given this task as finite beings, we need a means of concretizing truth when we are able to

appropriate it. This is how we can transcend the “real world” dominated by the encrusted truths of metaphysics and the “objective world” of scientific positivism and technological advance. Heidegger believes that art, and in particular poetry, is best able to fix truth in place: “*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry*” (*Poetry*, 79). Poetry is the art form *par excellence*, and therefore the most effective tool for fixating truth, because it uses language in a way that other forms of writing cannot. In fact, poetry and thinking are considered by Heidegger as synonymous undertakings that, in his words, inhabit the same neighborhood of Being (*Language*, 80). To see how the language of poetry relates then to the access of consciousness sought after by phenomenology will lead us to a better understanding of its importance for Heidegger.

In a series of lectures over the works of Friedrich Hölderlin, Heidegger contends that the origin of language cannot be found in the everyday, useful language of information, but is to be found in the ineffable singularity of the name. Naming here for Heidegger is the prime function of language: “language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time... Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to their being from out of their being*” (*Poetry*, 71). The language proper to the singularity of the name is poetry and in poetry, then, lies the origin of all language (Haase and Large, 59). The poet’s use of language is surprisingly enough like the naming of things. What is different about the naming of poetry is that it attempts to say one thing in its particular existence (“This flower that blooms...”), whereas the naming of things by informational language creates categories of things such as “flowers” or “horses.” When

a poet names, for example, “this flower,” this is not to begin a rudimentary description that would lead to a greater understanding of flowers in general, but to say this one flower that does not and never did exist as an object of knowledge. There is a tension in poetry that arises from its pursuit of naming the ineffable.

Heidegger sees this pursuit as a process of bringing things into being because poetry enjoys a “privileged position in the domain of the arts” since “language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the open for the first time” (*Poetry*, 73). To return to our task of linking together pre-reflective consciousness and reflective thought, it would seem that language in its most primordial act of naming things accomplishes the disclosure of and the historical occurrence of Being. Bringing things into being through the act of designating their title is a transcendent activity that conjoins the perceptual recognition of said object and the reflective possibilities of the perceiver. Therefore, language and Being are equally primordial. Although this brief summation of Heidegger’s thoughts on artistic production will be enlarged later in this thesis, it is now necessary to outline Merleau-Ponty’s considerations on art in order to arrive at a sufficient understanding of how language production effects consciousness.

For Merleau-Ponty, painting is the genre of artistic expression that occupies the majority of his studies in aesthetics. While this avenue of investigation will be explored in more detail later, it is to Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on the privileged position of artistic expression in general that will constitute the focus of this limited analysis. For him, art and philosophy have the same primary function: the creative disclosure “of ontological place, the ‘creative’ expression of the origin of the essential time/space in which we always already dwell” (Burch, 359). Two basic conditions constrain the otherwise

untrammelled creative power of artistic expression and philosophy, rendering them both essentially finite. They are both bound to the historical specificity of the body-subject's "place" and the elusive "silence" and "invisibility" of Being's disclosure (Burch, 359). For Merleau-Ponty, the responsibility of philosophy is to work as a mediating link between this primordial silence that exists as a backdrop to all experience (*l'invisible*) and the expressive power of *le visible*: speech, literature, art, etc: "la philosophie est la reconversion du silence et de la parole l'un dans l'autre" (1964, 169). Thus, against the infinity of the invisible that already and always surrounds and penetrates Being, the body-subject has the creative tools (art, philosophy) to recapture or to re-enact the elusive power of creative inauguration while language calls forth the body-subject to embrace communicative traces left behind and to create novel expressions.

Furthermore, according to Merleau-Ponty, we always already inhere in the origin of truth that is to be recovered by philosophical and artistic disclosure. But he goes even further in saying that artistic production possesses a privileged status with regard to philosophy. It is here that Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger agree on some basic points. While Heidegger focused on "the privileged position of poetry in the domain of the arts" (*Origin*, 70) because language, when understood correctly, is the original way in which beings are brought into the open clearing of truth, in which world and earth, mortals and gods are bidden to come to their appropriate places of meeting (*Origin*, 72). This originary vision of language for Heidegger means that poetry is the product of our linguistic power to uncover the truth of what is ("the saying of the unconcealedness of beings" [*Origin*, 72]) and the artistic drive to produce novel utterances. For Merleau-Ponty, this latter disposition toward creating original expression is the sole birthplace of

authentic language production. And although he does not make reference to poetry frequently, what he does say is indicative of his emphasis on the body-subject as integral to the dissemination of the truth as an aesthetic product.

Without intending to beleaguer a point already well-established in this thesis, we feel it is necessary to reiterate the role of the body-subject at this juncture. In order to understand the function of poetry (or aesthetic production in general) in Merleau-Ponty's thought, it is important to recognize the primacy of the body-subject in how artistic products transmit their messages in cultural contexts. The body-subject being the point of orientation for the emergence of the truth means for Merleau-Ponty that we as individuals have to be recognized as necessary for concepts such as style, language, and aesthetic beauty to come into their complete being: "Il est assez connu qu'un poème, s'il comporte une première signification, traduisible en prose, mène dans l'esprit du lecteur une seconde existence qui le définit comme poème" (1945, 176). Such cultural objects have an existence in and of themselves as purely physical entities, but their value to us overtime depends on our dialogue with them: "le poème ne se détache pas de tout appui matériel, et il serait irrémédiablement perdu si son texte n'était exactement conservé; sa signification n'est pas libre et ne réside pas dans le ciel des idées : elle est enfermée entre les mots sur quelque papier fragile. En ce sens-là, comme toute œuvre d'art, le poème existe à la manière d'une chose..." (1945, 176). In order for the meaning of a work of art to come into being, there must be a direct contact on the part of the individual who engages the work and a second intermediary medium that both the body-subject and the poem access, language.

Language allows poetry to communicate in a way that is transcendent to the speech that the body-subject uses on a daily basis. Here Merleau-Ponty parts with Heidegger, for the latter considers speech to be a far more effective means of communication than the written word. For Merleau-Ponty, there is indeed an aspect to the spoken word that makes it unique: “la parole signifie non seulement par les mots, mais encore par l’accent, le ton, les gestes, et la physionomie, et que ce supplément de sens révèle non plus les pensées de celui qui parle, mais la source de ses pensées et sa manière d’être fondamentale” (1945, 176). This revelation of the body-subject’s being emphasizes the role of speech as the medium through which not only everyday conversation takes place, but also through which in part the essential being of the individual is realized. However, Merleau-Ponty also qualifies this corporal aspect of speech as a bit limited when compared to the written word when he continues the previous citation with:

... la poésie...est essentiellement une modulation de l’existence. Elle se distingue du cri parce que le cri emploie notre corps tel que la nature nous l’a donné, c’est-à-dire pauvre en moyens d’expression, tandis que le poème emploie le langage, et même un langage particulier, de sorte que la modulation existentielle, au lieu de se dissiper dans l’instant même où elle s’exprime, trouve dans l’appareil poétique le moyen de s’éterniser. (1945, 176)

Considering Merleau-Ponty’s earlier description of written/printed language as “fragile,” we would have to ask whether or not the language alluded to here is itself thought of as recorded in print or simply language as it exists as a human faculty? The term “appareil poétique” would certainly indicate the former, for poetry, as it is conventionally held, is

primarily a written form of art. This “*langage particulier*” that the author speaks of must then be a valorization of written language that stands in contrast to the Heideggerian notions of speech as the truest unconcealment (“*Saying*”) of what is (*Language*, 35, *Being*, 28-29) and of Language itself as neither an activity nor an expression of man, but that which speaks existence (*Poetry*, 194). This brief definition of speech for Heidegger’s philosophy is somewhat oversimplified. While his well-known preference for lecturing to audiences caused him to write many of his texts in the form of an oration, he nonetheless did not mean that *human* speech was the medium for the unconcealment of Being. It is the speaking of Language that renders this possible (*Poetry*, 205-206). The significance of this type of speaking will be addressed elsewhere in this thesis.

This brief comparison of the conceptualizations of poetry in the philosophical vision of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty has been purposefully held brief in order that we may now return to the issue of language production and how it relates to culture. As we have revealed from his reflections on poetry and language, language production for Heidegger poses problems for the true understanding of Being because everyday speaking does not have access to the unconcealed, essential nature of language that was available to the Greeks (*Poetry*, 23). Heidegger finally conceives of poetry as quite a curious phenomenon with regard to everyday language by saying, “Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (*melos*) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer” (*Poetry*, 205). Language has become a degraded form of its former self. This has happened because the call referred to in the last quote is what beckons mortals to listen and to heed the appeal of Language speaking (*Poetry*, 204-207). The main thrust of

Heidegger's later writings on language centers around this process of man finding a way to turn back to the original call of Language and to carefully find the way back to a poem that is not "used-up." Therefore, the connection between culture and language in the Heideggerian sense has to be a negative one in that the overall outcome of cultures continually appropriating the language of prior civilizations is shown to be deceptive and insidious.

In addition, Heidegger's treatment of poetry has implications for our distinction between pre-reflexive consciousness and reflective thought that was touched upon earlier and which accompanies our examination of language production and intersubjectivity. In turning back to the call of the saying of language, it is clear that Heidegger eschews what would be considered traditional cultural standards for using language to talk about language: "the reflective use of language cannot be guided by the common, usual understanding of meanings; rather, it must be guided by the hidden riches that language holds in store for us, so that these riches may summon us for the saying of language" (*Language*, 91). Like Merleau-Ponty, truly tapping into the way that language speaks and calls us into its saying requires a suspension of everyday considerations of language production. A radically new kind of reflective thinking is necessary for the task of finding the way to language for Heidegger. In everyday speech, we as body-subjects only touch upon the surface of a phenomenon that, to be understood properly and to be embraced as completely as it can possibly be embraced, must be seen as always and already surpassing our culturally-learned capabilities to recognize its call.

For Heidegger, this call refers not only to the saying of language, but to our very lived existence as well "because where we already are, we are in such a way that at the

same time we are not there, because we ourselves have not yet properly reached what concerns our being, not even approached it. The way that lets us reach where we already are, differing from all other ways, calls for an escort that runs far ahead" (*Language*, 93). Likewise for language, we must find a different way to reach its essential being (the Saying of language) by not only unlearning the encrusted and misleading meanings that words now hold for us, but by also realizing that we are already entangled in the entire process of the saying without realizing it: "The undertaking of a way to speech is woven into a kind of speaking which intends to uncover speech itself in order to present it as speech and to put it into words in the presentation --- which is also evidence that language itself has woven us into the speaking" (*Language*, 112). Therefore, Heidegger is proposing that reflective thought is already bound up in pre-reflective consciousness but that a new means of our using reflective thought must be established for us to access the Saying of language:

We might perhaps prepare a little for the change in our relation to language. Perhaps this experience might awaken: All reflective thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking. The two belong together by virtue of that Saying which has already bespoken itself to what is unspoken because it is a thought as a thanks. (*Language*, 136)

The granting of poetic status to reflective thought is certainly a contrast to Merleau-Ponty's assessment of reflective contemplation. As far as language is concerned, it seems that Heidegger is not preoccupied with the same phenomenological orientation of Merleau-Ponty that posits a tacit *cogito*/pre-reflexive consciousness as the determining

factor for a return to things, for a legitimate source from which origins of phenomena can be reached, and for an access to essential beings.

In his examination of the Saying of language, Heidegger maintains that reflective thought is not necessarily a condemned, degraded mode of gaining contact with the essences of things. It is rather a process that must be re-assessed in terms of its ability to transform itself back into a way of approaching the language received from prior generations that allows for greater receptivity and awareness (“the possibility of an innate transformation of language” [*Language*, 136]). To put things in basic terms, our thinking about and with language is in need of reparations before we can start to have some assurance that we are on the path that leads to the essence of language. Hence the title *On the Way to Language*. The way to language demands a re-worked reflective thought process that in a sense is a synthesis of reflection and pre-reflective consciousness. From this heightened linguistic consciousness, we might then find the uncovering of a true correspondence between language and meaning where reflective thought would be something other than what it is currently. What would it then be?

Perhaps here it would be best to abandon such terms as “pre-reflective” and “reflective thought” when trying to comprehend Heidegger’s notions on language. In reality, the use of terms that describe pre-reflective cognition with regard to language belong more to the analysis of Merleau-Ponty than Heidegger. Taking into account Heidegger’s writing style in *On the Way to Language* might be a more effective means of understanding his conceptualization of authentic language production because it is in this work that he employs a more poetic and non-metaphysical writing style. In order to realize how we might get to a comprehension of authentic speech, i.e. poetic language,

Heidegger provides us with a visual description of the journey from the degenerate and deceptive language of our everyday experience to the essential nature of language. The language of the poetic work “speaks by answering to that journey upon which the stranger is leading on ahead. The path he has taken leads away from the old degenerate generation. It escorts him to go under in the earliness of the unborn generation that is kept in store” (*Language*, 191). The stranger is the poet following the call of the Saying of language, and the space between him-/herself and ourselves (the “leading on ahead”) is the distance that must be made up in order for us to follow the way to language. The “unborn generation” is indeed a progeny that is withheld from the decadent environment of encrusted and misleading language. This imagery is analogous to man’s current situation in terms of language production but with one variation.

Heidegger continues directly from the last citation: “The language of the poetry whose site is in apartness answers to the home-coming of unborn mankind into the quiet beginning of its stiller nature” (*Language*, 191). The variation from man’s current relationship with language is just this “stiller nature” that awaits the return of man to this nature’s regenerative offer of authentic language production. Two points must be made here. First, it seems that man possesses a withheld connectedness with the essential being of language inside of himself that is a salvation and that must be re-appropriated. At the same time, it is as if man withholds authentic language from himself by not recognizing that the metaphysico-technological world and all preceding generations after the ancient Greeks has hidden both authentic language and the way to access said language. If indeed these observations are true, then the question of an origin for language is answered with the ability of man to refurbish his thinking so as to get to this origin that has always and

already existed inside of his being to begin with. This type of notion is the product of phenomenological pursuits for Heidegger and to a lesser extent Merleau-Ponty as well. While Merleau-Ponty's stance on the notion of origins has already been addressed, it is a topic for further exploration later in this thesis when the subject of an interiority of language is examined. For the moment, let us turn our attention to what Ferdinand de Saussure has to contribute to the Merleau-Pontean thoughts on language that have just been expounded upon, and several key concepts that await to be connected with the previous analysis.

The Interiority of Language

The concept of the interiority of language is an elusive thing to define. Merleau-Ponty makes ample references to this notion throughout his early offerings, but never actually provides a definition. He does refer from time to time to Saussure as a kind of sounding board for working out his own ideas on this concept, thus a great deal of the following analysis will be devoted to some of the ruminations of the most prominent member of the structural linguistic movement on this subject. Of course, this means taking a good look at the *Cours de linguistique générale* which is always a fascinating snapshot of what structuralist thought looked like during the first half of the last century. Beyond Saussure, we will also enlist the help of Merleau-Ponty's contemporary, Jean-Paul Sartre, in order to better understand the interiority of language by analogizing it with the Sartrean notion of consciousness. Finally, given Merleau-Ponty's interest in psychology, we will examine what the Gestalt psychology movement has to say about this equivocal term thereby introducing briefly the next major area of analysis, emotional intellect.

The difficulty that arises from analyzing what is meant by an interior of language in Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* is due simply to a lack of a formal definition of the concept. The same applies for Merleau-Ponty's texts in large part, but this point will be taken up later. So, we are confronted with tantalizing references to said linguistic interior or interiority without a thoroughly developed conceptualization of its essential being. Therefore, the justification for an attempt to clarify the meaning of these expressions would logically encounter no resistance.

It is quite interesting that Saussure chooses to assign an interior to language because this term, at least at first glance, tends to evoke some sort of three-dimensionality in the minds of most readers. To have an interiority or interior implies that an exterior also exists that is separate from this inner domain, so that interior would then also indicate a physical separateness between objects. What is intriguing about Saussure's lexical choice is that any physicality associated with the phenomenon of language is, for him, an impossibility:

... la langue est une forme et non une substance. On ne saurait assez se pénétrer de cette vérité, car toutes les erreurs de notre terminologie, toutes nos façons incorrectes de désigner les choses de la langue proviennent de cette supposition involontaire qu'il y aurait une substance dans le phénomène linguistique. (*Cours*, 169)

It is true, however, that Saussure uses terms such as “unités matérielles” and “élément concret” when speaking of linguistic constructions, but their intended meanings can clearly be interpreted as simply having to do with the written or printed roots, suffixes,

and prefixes that constitute interchangeable components forming the visual counterpart of spoken language (*Cours*, 189-192) and also the sounds that compose their phonetic counterpart (*Cours*, 163-166). Indeed, Saussure goes on to mention the dependence that the spoken word has on writing, for writing provides a degree of certainty for the conservation of speech¹ (*Cours*, 193). However, with words printed on the surface of pages obviously being two-dimensional representations of sounds, the search for the meaning of interior in this context still remains a pressing concern.

The general impression that one has of Saussure's term "intérieur" is one of an impenetrability brought about by the fact that the diachronic and the synchronic aspects of language are at once both autonomous and interdependent (*Cours*, 119-124, 127-129, 140). The interior of language is this inaccessible and impregnable space created by these two seemingly contradictory yet complimentary conditions. Saussure, in analyzing the consistency with which both synchronic and diachronic approaches seem to naturally develop within a variety of scientific disciplines, reveals that "En procédant de la sorte (de deux disciplines étant nettement séparées au sein d'une même science) on obéit, sans bien s'en rendre compte, à une nécessité intérieure : or c'est une nécessité...qui nous oblige à scinder la linguistique en deux parties..." (*Cours*, 115). Thus, there is an interior force in linguistic analysis that operates beyond the awareness of speaking subjects. To borrow a description from Merleau-Ponty, language ceases to be "cet appareil fabuleux qui permet d'exprimer un nombre indéfini de pensées ou de choses avec un nombre fini de signes" (1969, 8) because it cannot express its interiority other than by proposing two

¹ This is not to imply that Saussure sees written language as a complete and perfect guarantor of the conservation of a given language at all times and in all places. Indeed, he does make some limited references to variations between written signs and phonology that occur over time (50-54) and to a few misleading generalizations that occur due to "le caractère trompeur de l'écriture" (55-58).

qualities that a priori exist in an illogical relationship. This is why Merleau-Ponty characterizes Saussure's description of the interiority of language as "non-logique" (1969, 35).

This is not to say that an interior of language renders language unmanipulable, for this clearly is not the case. It is the interiority itself that is not able to be manipulated by the speaking subject because for Saussure our thinking process is a chaotic experience (*Cours*, 156) that receives organization and coherence from linguistic signs: "sans le secours des signes, nous serions incapables de distinguer deux idées d'une façon claire et constante... la pensée est comme une nébuleuse... Il n'y a pas d'idées préétablies, et rien n'est distinct avant l'apparition de la langue" (*Cours*, 155). It is between the given state of our thinking being raw nebulousness (perhaps not unlike the pre-reflexive Cogito of Sartre) and the state of our thoughts formed by language that the interior comes into being. The essential being or essence of this interior then is not accessible to reflection because it is a force that allows thought to come into existence, according to Saussure, through its power to link our nebulous thinking process to sounds that language communities recognize and agree upon as being representative of said thought (*Cours*, 156). The inaccessibility of this interiority is akin to the Sartrean conceptualization of consciousness in that there exists "pour la conscience, la nécessité d'être ce qu'elle n'est pas et de ne pas être ce qu'elle est" (*L'Être et le néant*, 110). An explanation of this rather cryptic yet monumental statement for existentialism and its application to Saussure's conceptualization of language's interior will now help us to understand the operational level upon which said interior interfaces with human linguistic production.

One way of describing Sartre's understanding of consciousness is to view it as an elusive phenomenon that grants all the access that human beings have in engaging and being a part of perceptual reality. Having offered this rather over generalized description, we feel that dividing Sartre's brief yet challenging summation of consciousness in half and rewording each part in a slightly more expanded version might provide a better understanding for how it relates to the interior of language for Saussure. First, "la conscience n'est pas ce qu'elle est" refers to the aspiration of consciousness to always become self-consciousness. This is an attempt on the part of consciousness to achieve the self-identity of a thing, which it cannot do. It is always going to fail in its endeavor to reach self-consciousness and self-identity, but it always wants to do so nonetheless. So, consciousness is not what it is (*The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 25). As for the second half, "et (la conscience) est ce qu'elle n'est pas" means that this attempt aimed at in the first part (to realize self-consciousness and the subsequent self-identity of a thing) is an effort by consciousness to become other than itself.

Therefore, consciousness literally is what it is not in that whatever it is always trying to become is always something other than itself. In a way, this "something other" is outside of consciousness and is helping to define consciousness because it is what consciousness can never be. It is within these apparently contradictory conditions (Sartre admits "sa nature [celle de la conscience] est d'enfermer en soi sa propre contradiction" [*L'Être*, 127]) that consciousness can be circumscribed linguistically. Therefore, this brief and abridged look at the difficulty in defining consciousness for Sartre can serve as an introduction and perhaps a model for approaching an explanation of what Saussure, and eventually Merleau-Ponty, mean by an interior of language. Interestingly, even Sartre

grants an interior to his idea of consciousness (*La Transcendance de l'ego*, 24), and this notion will now be drawn into our discussion of linguistic interiority.

Previously, we referred to consciousness as being an elusive phenomenon, and no doubt the preceding attempt at explaining Sartre's concise and rather abstruse definition of consciousness supports such a characterization. However, in reality, it is not like just one phenomenon among all others. As a matter of fact, Sartre qualifies the term "phenomenon" in this context with : "une conscience pure est un absolu tout simplement parce qu'elle est conscience d'elle-même. Elle reste donc un « phénomène » au sens très particulier où « être » et « apparaître » ne font qu'un" (*La Transcendance*, 25). Without going too far into detail, it is necessary to underscore that "la conscience n'est pas à elle-même son objet. Son objet est hors d'elle par nature et c'est pour cela que d'un même acte elle le *pose* et le *saisit*. Elle-même ne se connaît que comme interiorité absolue" (*La Transcendance*, 24). Clearly, this last statement provides us with a chance to create a vital link between Sartre's treatment of consciousness and the Saussurean viewpoint on the interior of language.

There must exist an irrefutable inwardness or interior for both consciousness and for language because human subjects can only intuit such fundamental phenomenon. Consciousness and language are granted to human beings as operations that are directly available to their cognition², but this direct access contains within it its own contradiction

² This notion is supported by both Saussure and Merleau-Ponty. Saussure envisions the unity between language and thought by this comparison : " la langue est encore comparable à une feuille de papier : la pensée est le recto et le son le verso ; on ne peut découper le recto sans découper en même temps le verso ; de même dans la langue, on ne saurait isoler ni le son de la pensée, ni la pensée du son..." (*Cours*, 157). Merleau-Ponty makes reference to this direct access between cognition and language with: "la parole n'est pas le « signe » de la pensée, si l'on entend par là un phénomène qui en annonce un autre comme la fumée annonce le feu. La parole et la pensée n'admettraient cette relation extérieure que si elles étaient l'une et l'autre thématiquement données ; en réalité elles sont enveloppées l'une dans l'autre, le sens est pris dans la parole et la parole est l'existence extérieure du sens" (1945, 211-212).

(as mentioned by Sartre *l'Etre* p. 127, see below): conscious and speaking beings inhere to consciousness and language, but do not possess the power to rationalize and to make inferences about the interior or absolute inwardness that itself is a necessary aspect of these primordial phenomena. Although we are enveloped by our consciousness there is still an inaccessible component that eludes our ability to fully conceptualize it and we are on the outside, so to speak, of this interiority.

Although these selected quotes certainly do not encapsulate the entirety of Sartre's reflections on consciousness, they do present us with examples of the language that the philosopher uses in defining such an elusive phenomenon as consciousness. While consciousness not being an object for itself and its object by nature being outside of it are very straightforward and readily understandable declarations from a lexical standpoint, the idea that consciousness knows itself only as absolute inwardness (*The Transcendence of the Ego*, 41) speaks to the burden that a concept such as consciousness (in the Sartrean sense) places on the linguistic capacities of both the author and his readership. Echoing this awareness of the limitations of language, Saussure admits that "en matière de langue on s'est toujours contenté d'opérer sur des unités mal définies" (*Cours*, 154). Likewise, in targeting a phenomenological principle of this difficulty, Sartre approaches the limits of what language, even specialized terminology, can do in the way of handling innovative philosophical positions while remaining within the confines of vocabulary that is self-explanatory.

With this characterization of Sartrean consciousness as evasive and yet primordial in mind, the interior of language could be assigned the status of a phenomenon that is necessary for human subjects to communicate, but that itself cannot be

communicated about with what it grants to speakers in order that they may communicate about everything else. This analogy would indicate that the notion of an interior in language would be quite problematic, if not impossible, for formal analysis. Yet, even with the limitation of only being able to approach the subject of an interior for language in this way, much insight can be gained from comparing one more specific description of Sartrean consciousness with Saussurean linguistic interiority. For Sartre, “la conscience se tient par rapport à cet être sur le mode d’être cet être, car il est elle-même, mais comme un être qu’elle ne peut pas être. Il est elle-même, au cœur d’elle-même et hors d’atteinte, comme une absence et un irréalisable, et sa nature est d’enfermer en soi sa propre contradiction” (*L’Être*, 127). As mentioned earlier, there are contradictory conditions within Sartre’s conceptualization of consciousness that help us in understanding the dilemma faced by both himself and Saussure. The intertwining of these opposing circumstances under which consciousness manifests itself form an interiority (“au cœur d’elle-même et hors d’atteinte”), or perhaps a nexus, that defies description by ordinary linguistic means. Likewise, Saussure must struggle in his attempts to describe an interior within language in a credible yet comprehensible manner. To this endeavor we will now turn.

While Merleau-Ponty credits Saussure with having insisted on an interior of language (1969, 35), it is interesting to note the specific expressions that the founder of structural linguistics uses in discussing this necessity for language production: “l’intérieur d’une même langue/d’un même idiome” (*Cours*, 160, 183, 315), “l’organisme intérieur de l’idiome/ l’organisme linguistique interne” (41, 42), “la linguistique interne” (43, 261), and “[un] système interne” (44). Even though these terms do not always appear to

be completely interchangeable, they share a common denominator that establishes an irrefutable theme throughout the text: the organization of linguistic units of meaning according to how they differ from one another and their systematic interfacing creates an interior for language. Nonetheless, external forces and phenomena (“la linguistique externe” [*Cours*, 43, 261]) certainly do play a role for Saussure. However, these exterior factors are, for him, of marginal importance and do not constitute a subject for productive linguistic study (*Cours*, 261-264). One prominent literary theorist has described external forces of language transformation for Saussurean linguistics as being merely temporary disturbances around which language as a whole reorganizes itself (*Literary Theory*, 96). While this notion of transitory disturbances for language’s equilibrium is very relevant to our interpretation of linguistic interiority, it will be addressed more thoroughly after the present comparison of internal and external linguistics has been completed.

While Saussure does place more of a premium on internal linguistics, he does not totally ignore the limited relevance that the study of the external characteristics of language might obtain for his overall linguistic analysis. Indeed, he admits that disciplines such as comparative linguistics do in fact enjoy an incalculable number of possibilities for study and offer an unlimited field of comparison (*Cours*, 263-264). However, Saussure also places an interesting qualification on these seemingly unbounded avenues of investigation that directly addresses the importance of an interior for language: “A cet égard les possibilités (de la diversité des langues, de la variété de leurs familles, par exemple), bien qu’en nombre incalculable, sont limitées par certaines données constants, phoniques et psychiques, à l’intérieur desquelles toute langue doit se constituer...” (*Cours*, 263). Clearly, two notions from this citation must be addressed:

that of the “psychic”³ and that of the added dimension that the term “interior” now incorporates.

The term “interior” now takes on another connotation. While the term “psychic” in Saussurean thought translates as “abstract” for contemporary readers (see footnote below), it is from the interior of particular factual constants of language production that all languages actually form themselves. There are phonetic and mental elements in the structure of language that possess interiorities. This reality is indicative of the manifold nature of the concept of interior for Saussure’s linguistics. While this multiplicity for the interior of language will be addressed shortly, a look at the one major analogy to which the author makes reference throughout the text will provide a means of integrating many of the different ways he uses the term “interior.”

To return to how Saussure conceptualizes an interior of language and what it entails, we first should consult his infamous analogy of language with the game of chess:

Une comparaison avec le jeu d’échecs le [le fait que la langue est un système qui ne connaît que son ordre propre] fera mieux sentir. Là, il est relativement facile de distinguer ce qui est externe de ce qui est interne : le fait qu’il a passé de Perse en Europe est d’ordre externe ; interne, au contraire, tout ce qui concerne le système et les règles. Si je remplace des pièces de bois par des pièces d’ivoire, le changement est indifférent pour le système : mais si je diminue ou augmente le nombre de pièces, ce

³ The use of the term “psychic” (used with considerable frequency by Merleau-Ponty as well, especially in *la Prose du monde*) must seem somewhat misplaced for most contemporary readers of philosophy and linguistics. As explained by De Mauro in the introduction to *Cours*, “La facilité avec laquelle, au deuxième tiers du Xxe siècle, nous pouvons adopter des termes comme *abstrait*, *abstraction* est, comme nous le verrons, inconnue à la fin du siècle dernier, alors que, dans le sillage de Kant, cent ans de pensée philosophique avaient couvert ces deux termes de valeurs négatives, au point qu’ *abstrait* et *abstraction* signifiaient unanimement « laissé de côté », ou indûment et faussement laissé de côté. C’est pourquoi Saussure, saisissant pourtant et définissant parfaitement le caractère abstrait des entités linguistiques, est contraint d’éviter l’usage d’ *abstrait*, exposé à des malentendus indésirables. Il finit ainsi par parler d’entités *psychiques* (terme qu’il distingue soigneusement de *psychologique*)...” (*Cours*, vii-viii)

changement-là attient profondément la « grammaire » du jeu... Ainsi dans chaque cas on posera la question de la nature du phénomène, et pour la résoudre on observera cette règle : est interne tout ce qui change le système à un degré quelconque. (*Cours*, 43)

That which is internal to the system consists of those elements that participate with one another in effectuating interplay and change amongst themselves. So, the interior of a language is more of an interrelationship of units invested with values (or meanings) than it is a partitioned domain of privilege that defines itself simply by what is exterior to it. The emphasis being here that interior implies a self-serving and self-perpetuating cohesion between words (that themselves possess an interior [*Cours*, 159, 166]) or chessmen, and that it is what exists between them (the differences) that might constitute an interior.

The notion of a cohesive interplay between linguistic signs leads to the realization that Saussure sees a linguistic interior emerging from a self-transformational power that is inherent to language. The interiority of language could be said to occur from certain inalterable conditions intrinsic to language that are out of the purview of the individual speaker. Saussure maintains an idea about language change that is a particularly important example of the immutability of language that creates this interior: “le signifiant... n’est pas libre, il est imposé. La masse sociale n’est point consultée, et le signifiant choisi par la langue ne pourrait pas être remplacé par un autre... un individu serait incapable, s’il le voulait, de modifier en quoi que ce soit le choix qui a été fait...” (*Cours*, 104). Very much like the impenetrability that was discussed previously, this immutable nature of language forges an internal arrangement between signifiers that rejects extraneous agents of change. However, this situation naturally gives way to an

internal dynamic, as evidenced by a nuance that the editors of *Cours* append in a footnote: “la langue se transforme sans que les sujets puissent la transformer. On peut dire aussi qu’elle est intangible, mais non inaltérable” (108). Language is therefore credited with having a self-transformational power that speaks directly to the inaccessibility to language change and evolution by which its very speakers must abide. However, if language is not inalterable and if speaking subjects cannot account for change either individually or collectively, how exactly does our interpretation of Saussure’s linguistic interior deal with the fact that languages do indeed evolve over time?

To answer this question is to add yet another dimension to our conceptualization of language’s interior as it is revealed in Saussure’s text. By looking at the aforementioned idea of a self-transformational model for language with greater scrutiny, it becomes clear that, by itself, the ability of a language to make self-directed adjustments and changes does not actually account for events or circumstances outside of a linguistic interiority that might effectuate change within its system of signs. As mentioned earlier, external forces of language change can best be thought of as temporary disturbances or instances of disequilibrium for the overall, internal system of a language (*Cours*, 206-207). A language encounters an exterior challenge to its stability, vacillates for a time, regains its balance, and then continues onward having reorganized itself around this passing agitation (*Literary Theory*, 96). Viewing the interior of language from this perspective calls for the necessity of a counterbalancing mechanism (apart from language’s self-transformational capacity) that acts like both a buffer for outside disruptions and a subsequent means of assimilation. At this point perhaps a slight

adjustment to our rather liberal use of the terms “impregnable” and “inaccessible” for linguistic interiority needs to be made.

Continuing with the theme of a linguistic interior as being impervious to conscious change on the part of language speakers, we see that Saussure assigns a kind of solidarity to this interiority by claiming that “jamais le système n’est modifié directement ; en lui-même il est immuable ; seuls certains éléments sont altérés sans égard à la solidarité qui les lie au tout” (*Cours*, 121). So, there is a unity, indeed another dimension to language’s interior, that connects the elements that constitute a particular system of signs and that lends itself to speaking subjects with no reservations as to its own conservation or its ability to adjust to exterior, transformational challenges. Due to the fact that all of these observations about the interior of language in Saussure’s text contain a considerable amount of speculation on our part, we feel it is necessary to address one potentially major critique before returning to the subject of values within linguistic signs in order to conclude this analysis.

An argument against the way in which we have construed the interior of language in Saussure’s text presents itself rather obviously at this point: our analysis *personifies* this interior, granting what would traditionally be considered an abstract product of linguistic studies the qualities and abilities of a living entity. We have indicated that the internal system of language lends itself to speakers, as if this interior was consciously making a decision in favor of humanity. Also, some of our explanations have demonstrated that a self-preservational mentality abides in this interiority like similar instincts that emanate from man’s cognitive apparatus. Language encounters moments of disequilibrium from outside, disruptive forces and adjusts to them as if dealing

strategically with a problem or temporary challenge. In addition, because of its impregnability, the interior of language has been characterized as having to impose itself upon the social masses as “le produit social déposé dans le cerveau de chacun” (*Cours*, 44) like a universally shared, identical copy of a dictionary (*Cours*, 38). The list of examples of such personified attributes within the interior of language could continue. However, for the sake of brevity, let us now answer these criticisms and expand our conceptualization of this interiority at the same time.

To these charges we rely on Saussure himself to provide two separate answers that reveal both the breadth of his knowledge of philology and neogrammarian linguistics that dominated the language study of his day and the certainty of his own ability to articulate unthought-of ideas about *la langue* that would surpass the contributions of these two fields of linguistic analysis. His first, and brief, response to the critique of the personification of language comes in the form of a footnote that he offers as a type of apologia for comparative philology:

La nouvelle école, serrant de plus près la réalité, fit la guerre à la terminologie des comparatistes, et notamment aux métaphores illogiques dont elle se servait. Dès lors on n'ose plus dire : « la langue fait ceci ou cela », ni parler de la « vie de la langue », etc., puisque la langue n'est pas une entité, et n'existe que dans les sujets parlants. Il ne faudrait pourtant pas aller trop loin, et il suffit de s'entendre. Il y a certaines images dont on ne peut se passer. Exiger qu'on ne se serve que de termes répondant aux réalités du langage, c'est prétendre que ces réalités n'ont plus de mystères pour nous. Or il s'en faut de beaucoup ; aussi n'hésiterons-nous pas à employer à l'occasion telle des expressions qui ont été blâmées à l'époque. (*Cours*, 19)

While this very diplomatic and open-minded compromise responds directly to the drawbacks of personifying the phenomenon of language, we also want to establish a way in which Saussure deals with this difficulty in a more discursive manner. To a more expansive argument for language having a life of its own we now turn.

Simply stated, Saussure grants a consciousness to language. In order to understand how this consciousness comes into being, it is necessary to make a connection between Saussure's thoughts on the sign, the building blocks or subunits (*des sous-unités*) of signifiers, and the analogies that provide important evidence of a deconstructive-reconstructive mechanism within language.

The concept of the sign is formed by two parts that complement one another in a purely arbitrary manner. One half of the sign involves the signifier that can be defined as the configuration of sound elements or other linguistic symbols representing a word or other meaningful unit. Coupled with this verbal designation, the signified is the thing or concept (as it actually exists in the physical world or the domain of human abstractions) denoted by the signifier. Leaving the signified to the side, we see that in Saussure's approach to isolating the irreducible components of written words, the signifier is composed of "*sous-unités*," or subunits, for which the author gives the examples of "*racines, préfixes, suffixes, (et) désinences*" (*Cours*, 258). These subunits link the concept of the sign with the production of new verbal expressions through analogy because they help the signifier to materialize while they themselves are defined and made essential to the process of language expansion. By virtue of their role in analogical word formation language obtains a consciousness according to the author's critique of his own findings: "On sait que les résultats de ces analyses spontanées se manifestent dans les

formations analogiques de chaque époque; ce sont elles qui permettent de distinguer les sous-unités... dont la langue a conscience et les valeurs qu'elle y attache" (*Cours*, 258). If in Saussure's linguistic edifice language possesses a consciousness and the ability to make value judgments, then it must be capable of performing the aforesaid functions such as imposing itself on speaking subjects and having a self-preservational awareness of external forces of change.

It is perhaps through Saussure's considerations on analogies that another irrefutable description of the interior of language presents itself in the form of the deconstructive-reconstructive mechanism mentioned previously. There is no question as to the centrality of analogies in the life of a language⁴: "qu'il s'agisse de la conservation d'une forme composée de plusieurs éléments, ou d'une redistribution de la matière linguistique dans de nouvelles constructions, le rôle de l'analogie est immense ; c'est toujours elle qui est en jeu" (*Cours*, 237). What is key about this insight is that analogy exists as a *constant* condition operating between the basic elements of meaning for a language. If analogy is constantly engaged in either maintaining the status quo of a linguistic form or in reconfiguring the components of another, then it stands to reason that analogical formations indicate that this process is at the core of the essential being of language, or its interiority. Saussure shows that this is the case with: "L'activité continuelle du langage décomposant les unités qui lui sont données contient en soi non seulement toutes les possibilités d'un parler conforme à l'usage, mais aussi toutes celles des formations analogiques" (*Cours*, 227). For Saussure there is a totalizing operation of constant breakdown and reformulation of signifiers that results in a self-containment, or a

⁴ There are, however, other processes that contribute to the production of new linguistic "unités" for Saussure, "l'étymologie populaire" (*Cours*, 238-241) and "l'agglutination" (242-245), that are very closely associated with analogies all the same.

type of closed system (*Cours*, 139) with regard to “unités,” for language because this all-inclusive operation contains within itself all the possibilities of units of meaning for both the system as a whole and for its analogical innovations. But exactly how does this continual deconstruction and reconstruction promote the idea of an interior of language?

As it has been conceived so far, it is clear that an understanding of the interior within a language involves viewing this interiority from many angles. It is inaccessible to its speakers, self-regulating in terms of growth and expansion, and immutable to the degree that the solidarity of its internal system always remains intact in spite of temporary, yet relentless, disruptions. What has also become clear from our analysis is that all of these characteristics are patently interrelated. There are only subtle distinctions to be made between each facet of language’s interior. Alongside these descriptions, the perpetual tearing down and rebuilding of new units of meaning through analogy introduces the idea of a finite quantity of subunits that are supplied to language prior to any creative input on the part of its speakers. In furthering his analysis of the generative process that creates analogical formations, Saussure warns that:

C’est donc une erreur de croire que le processus générateur ne se produit qu’au moment où surgit la création ; les éléments en sont déjà donnés. Un mot que j’improvise, comme *in-décor-able*, existe déjà en puissance dans la langue ; on retrouve tous ses éléments dans les syntagmes tels que *décor-er*, *décor-ation* : *pardonn-able*, *mani-able* : *in-connu*, *in-sensé*, etc., et sa réalisation dans la parole est un fait insignifiant en comparaison de la possibilité de le former. (*Cours*, 227)

Two properties of “sous-unités” underscored here bring to light another aspect of linguistic interiority. First, the entire inventory of subunits are to be found within the available syntagmatic constructions⁵ that make up the words of a given language. Secondly, these subunits exist prior to those instances when by analogy a speaker creates a new linguistic form.

Therefore, speakers cannot actually create new “sous-unités,” but they can formulate new “unités,” or words. It is this set of circumstances that constitutes the additional sense of interiority mentioned above. For Saussure, the building blocks of words exist individually as immutable and yet interchangeable and manipulable for their users. Collectively, they form a closed system due to their functional plenitude. An interior for language is arrived at due to there being the possibility of speakers to be as creative as they want in finding new arrangements for subunits, but by their also being excluded from adding to the a priori changeless pool of sub-units. Shut out of this domain, speaking subjects can only participate on one level of linguistic creativity while being aware all the while of their inability to access the primordial stratum of the most elemental units of meaning.

At this point perhaps a closer look at Saussure’s considerations on the aforementioned values, or meanings, that obtain in the linguistic domain would help us in furthering our understanding of the concept of the interior of language. Admittedly, there is a structural binary between internal and external linguistics (*Cours*, 43, 261). But instead of only such a relation between interior and exterior, there is also a dynamism

⁵ It is worth noting that Saussure uses the term “syntagmatic” (that which concerns the relationship of linguistic elements as they occur sequentially in the chain of speech or writing) here in a way that most other linguists use the term “morphological” (that which concerns the system of word-forming elements and processes).

within the interior that is assured by the relationship between our thoughts and their accompanying speech sounds or “la matière phonique” that allow the former to materialize. To resume with an earlier thought, Saussure bases his idea of linguistic value on the premise that language is basically amorphous and indistinct thoughts rendered organized by phonetic material, or sounds (*Cours*, 155). Looking at the definition of this “matière phonique,” we see that “la substance phonique n’est plus fixe ni plus rigide ; ce n’est pas un moule dont la pensée doit nécessairement épouser les formes, mais une matière plastique qui se divise à son tour en parties distinctes pour fournir les signifiants dont la pensée a besoin” (*Cours*, 155). Thus, something quite fluid and dynamic, if not squarely enigmatic, is at work here for the nebulousness of thought to be transformed into a single or series of phonemes understood by a collectivity of same-language speakers.

Saussure speaks to this mystifying process with: “La pensée, chaotique de sa nature, est forcée de se préciser en se décomposant... il s’agit de ce fait en quelque sorte mystérieux, que la « pensée-son » implique des divisions et que la langue élabore ses unités en se constituant entre deux masses amorphes” (*Cours*, 156). What the author seems to be asserting here is that two phenomena occur that are central to the process of a particular thought aligning itself to certain sounds. He is allocating space for a mysterious zone of indistinction to act as a conduit between thought and phonetic material and he is attributing to language the ability to rectify the chaotic divisions implied by said zone of ambiguity. From what has been discussed prior to this last deduction, we can say in closing that Saussure’s notion of an interiority for language is multifaceted in that it does not pertain to only one aspect of the overall linguistic edifice, the sign (159, 166) for example, but to other key elements as well: the particular language as a whole (115, 160,

183, 187, 315), the phonetic material (or sounds) available to speakers (70, 71, 78, 100, 108, 263), the psychic (or abstract) nature of linguistic entities (263), and even “l’image intérieur” of the spoken word in discourse (98). However, of these various features that help to constitute Saussure’s vision of linguistics, what is discussed the most and articulated the best in terms of having an interior remains “l’objet concret... le produit social depose dans le cerveau de chacun, c’est-à-dire la langue” (44). Language, having its own internal system (44), envelops all other notions of interiority in that all of the other elements credited with having an interior are subsumed under the blanket term “language.”

We feel as though a brief transition needs to be offered at this point between the previous examination of our interpretation of Saussure’s thoughts on the interior for language and what will eventually be a detailed comparison with and extension of these ideas in view of how Merleau-Ponty conceives of his version of a linguistic interiority. Given that Merleau-Ponty was not a structural linguist, but a phenomenologist, it must be stressed that there is a very limited coincidence between what each theorist considered to be most relevant in terms of language study. The present transitional explication will be an effort to quickly outline the very basic and foundational differences that exist between the two thinkers by virtue of their divergent ideological orientations: structuralism on the one hand influenced considerably by the progress of the natural sciences (*Cours*, 134, 510) and the erroneous claims of nineteenth century comparative philology (*Cours*, 16-19, 118) and (*Course*, xv), and phenomenology on the other with a marked interest in cognitive psychology. To pass over such differences with absolutely no mention would cast the eventual analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s reflections on the interior of language in

perhaps too harmonious of a light with those of Saussure, thus inviting readers to believe that this one point of concurrence is only one of many. As it will be shown, this is not the case. Therefore, the common link between these two influential figures, the interior of language, becomes an even more compelling subject for study.

Although we recognize the almost universal acknowledgement and appreciation of the major tenets held in Saussure's *Cours*, our brief comparative analysis of these principles with those of Merleau-Ponty must begin with material that will seem embarrassingly rudimentary for students of structural linguistics. In viewing the phenomenon of language in the broadest of perspectives, Saussure insists upon dividing this human faculty into two conceptual categories. To one category he attaches the label *la langue*, conceiving language here as an abstract system or structure that allows subjects to speak. The other category, *la parole*, deals with the actual, random utterances of individuals in particular social contexts. Saussure chooses to focus his research energies on *la langue*, for he considers *la parole* to be much too random a phenomenon for the requirement of replication of material data for the scientific method or for the emphasis that structural theory places on uncovering systemic interrelations (i.e., oppositions and differences) between signs (*Cours*, 30, 38, 172-173). *La langue*, on the other hand, is a monolithic system that has the support of a collective consciousness ("l'esprit collectif des groupes linguistiques" [19], "la conscience linguistique" [136, 211], "la conscience collective" [140]) that unifies speaking subjects (see also *Cours*, 30, 32, 38, 100-101, 112-113).

As has been shown, an interior for *la langue* exists in Saussure's conceptualization of linguistics, and this notion will be supported indubitably by

Merleau-Ponty in his own reflections on language as well. However, due to his philosophical orientation, Merleau-Ponty develops a theoretical focus that places the situational usage of language at the forefront of analysis. Thus, his version of a linguistic interiority will emerge from within the random and dynamic exchanges of *la parole*. With a return to the aforementioned “collective consciousness” purported by Saussure, we will see how Merleau-Ponty would conceive of such an idea, and this will lead us directly to his conceptualization of an essential phenomenon for his notion of language’s interior, *l’intention significative*. However, we feel it essential to first offer a brief overview of Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the unifying potential of dialogue before attempting to unveil the relationship that exists between this signifying intention and the inner dimension of language.

On the subject of a collective consciousness, Merleau-Ponty consistently argues that it is through the spontaneous use of language in dialogue with other speaking subjects that such a consciousness could be said to exist, but he never truly endorses the term “collective” in this context: “Nos consciences ont beau, à travers nos situations propres, construire une situation commune dans laquelle elles communiquent, c’est au fond de sa subjectivité que chacun projette ce monde « unique » (1945, 409). What he does emphasize time and time again as being a unifying operation between body-subjects is the simple act of their addressing one another through speech. Therefore, it is clear that Merleau-Ponty disagrees with Saussure on the relative importance of *la parole* in comparison with *la langue*. In reality, it seems quite likely that he would choose to emphasize *la parole* (in the form of dialogue) in the wake of Saussure’s rather conspicuous dismissal of the subject.

Considering the importance of self-actualization in the life of the existentialist subject, verbal communication with others naturally assures the possibility that what is most unique and creative about individuals might enter into the marketplace of ideas. Merleau-Ponty considers verbal exchanges to be of such central importance in understanding how individual subjects relate to the Other and how they develop their own ideas (1953, 83 and 1969, 183) that he construes dialogue as the act par excellence for the emergence of transcendental, or authentic, speech by which ideas begin to exist (1945, 448). With the primacy of dialogue now well established in terms of how Merleau-Ponty conceives of new concepts and utterances coming in to existence, let us move forward to how he understands two novel ideas of his own, the interiority of language and the significative intention.

Before moving on to our interpretation of what Merleau-Ponty intends by the term *intention significative*, a long-awaited look at of how he conceives of an interior for language seems at this point unavoidable. While this exposition will constitute the last portion of our discussion of said interior, it will be important for us to describe it in such a way as to reveal how it influences Merleau-Pontean considerations on literature. Indeed, our entire treatment of the notion of a linguistic interiority has been offered up as a means of understanding the difficulties that various schools of literary thought have had in relating language to literature. To show how this understanding will come about will comprise an important part of our overall study. For now, let us examine closely what our author says about language's interior.

In a way, our previous declaration that Merleau-Ponty flatly avoids giving a formal definition of the interiority of language (see page 1) is somewhat contestable. He

states unequivocally that “Il y a donc, certes, un intérieur du langage, une intention de signifier qui anime les accidents linguistiques, et fait de la langue, à chaque moment, un système capable de se recouper et de se confirmer lui-même” (1969, 51). Obviously, he views the interior of language and the notion of a signifying intention as synonymous. What grows out of this correspondence, however, is Merleau-Ponty’s conceptualization of the existential reality of speaking subjects in situation and how they take advantage of the expressive power of language in general, but at the same time are forced to conform to the specific limitations that their particular language imposes on them.

Two points must be reiterated here for purposes of clarifying how language functions on two different but related levels for speakers. On one level for Merleau-Ponty, the relationship between the body-subject and the phenomenon of language as a generalized human faculty is not one of bondage or circumscription (1969, 29, 146). Even with the strictures that a given language places upon its speakers, body-subjects are participants in an activity that constantly surpasses the material signs that make up language and transcendentally makes possible the meaning of said signs (1969, 110-111). On another level, the one of the specific language (French, Russian, or otherwise) used by speaking subjects, Merleau-Ponty agrees that languages do have their own particularities that make such things as direct translations between them infeasible (1969, 38-39). They therefore contain their own grammatical and syntactical peculiarities that can be seen as limitations when making comparisons between them.

In reality, however, research such as comparative grammatical analysis is of a second order and of considerably less importance for Merleau-Ponty’s approach. It is not through the conscious application of grammatical rules that a speaking body-subject in

situation communicates: “Car enfin, sans avoir fait l’analyse idéale de notre langue, et en dépit des difficultés qu’elle rencontre, nous nous comprenons dans le langage existant” (1969, 40). It seems more likely for Merleau-Ponty that, in spite of the difficulties that speakers encounter in striving to express themselves fully and at all times, there exists a perpetual condition of linguistic creativity that emerges through the possibility for speaking subjects to produce novel utterances, neologisms, and original literary forms: “Nos actes d’expression dépassent leurs données vers un autre art. Mais ces données elles-mêmes dépassaient elles aussi les actes d’expression antérieurs vers un avenir que nous sommes, et en ce sens appelaient la métamorphose même que nous leur imposons” (1969, 97-98). Expression on the part of the body-subject for Merleau-Ponty is seen as a transcendent existential process that obviates formal analyses of language that result in such things as official grammars (1969, 40-41).

It is from these previous considerations on the participatory emphasis of the speaking subject’s inherence to language that we see Merleau-Ponty begin to disagree selectively with the Saussurean concept of linguistic interiority. As for our interpretation of the inaccessibility that partially characterized Saussure’s interiority, Merleau-Ponty considers language accessible to speaking subjects precisely *because* it has an interior. In fact, he is so confident in his understanding of this accessibility that he couches it in terminology that evokes the certainty of the Cartesian cogito:

Il y a un « je parle » qui termine le doute à l’égard du langage comme le « je pense » terminait le doute universel. Tout ce que je dis du langage le suppose, mais cela n’invalide pas ce que je dis, cela révèle seulement que le langage se touche et se comprend lui-même, cela montre seulement qu’il n’est pas objet, qu’il est

susceptible d'une reprise, qu'il est accessible de l'intérieur. (1969, 35)

It is necessary that we be alert to the subtle ways in which Merleau-Ponty both agrees and disagrees with Saussure. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that language is not an object and that it has a type of consciousness.

Here we have not only a major insight into what an interiority of language is, but also a very revealing indication of how Merleau-Ponty approaches the subject of language in a global sense. Merleau-Ponty does not want to overanalyze or to overphilosophize the phenomenon of language (1969, 164-165). He does not want to denature its elusive, mysterious qualities: "la parole...est prégnante d'une signification qui est lisible dans la texture même du geste linguistique...et tout effort pour fermer notre main sur la pensée qui habite la parole (l'intention significative) ne laisse entre nos doigts qu'un peu de matériel verbal" (1953, 81). It seems as if he has a profound respect for what this faculty of human existence has the potential to give to its speaking subjects. Merleau-Ponty sees an entire world within the expressive operation of language by the speaking subject (1969, 183) that will surpass our ability to define it or capture it totally, but that will also offer up an indefinite amount of discoveries. He sees more potential to get interested in the operations of language on the part of the researcher than the vast majority of theorists and philosophers who use these expressive operations to construct their arguments but that for various reasons are not willing to own up to this fact and to give language its due. No doubt, there is not a hint of a structuralist approach being used here. With this notion of expression and how it manifests itself in the lived reality of the body-subject now entering into our picture of linguistic interiority, let us resume our interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's interior of language.

What emerges from the exploration of language's interior in Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre is the possibility within it to look at his philosophy in a broad scope. It is necessary to keep in mind is that Merleau-Ponty, no matter how abstruse or avant-garde his notions of language might be, never extricates language and its interior from the context of the lived, existential experience of the body-subject, primarily in dialogue situations. As mentioned previously, his selective acceptance and rejection of Saussurean concepts functions as a backdrop for his analysis of the ways in which speaking subjects interface. It also opens the door to his treatment of the existence of other subjectivities by the subject:

Puisque je parle et puis apprendre dans l'échange avec d'autres sujets parlants ce que c'est que le sens d'un langage, alors l'histoire même du langage n'est pas seulement une série d'événements extérieurs l'un à l'autre et extérieurs à nous... La conscience radicale de la subjectivité me fait redécouvrir d'autres subjectivités, et par là une vérité du passé linguistique. Les hasards ont été repris intérieurement par une intention de communiquer qui les change en système d'expression, ils le sont encore aujourd'hui dans l'effort que je fais pour comprendre le passé de la langue. L'histoire extérieure se double d'une histoire intérieure qui, de synchronie en synchronie, donne un sens commun au moins à certains cycles de développement. (1969, 36)

While a closer look at the communicative intention has been postponed for later, it is worth mentioning now that this intention is only lent to the aforementioned subjectivities or to human consciousness (much like the five senses), for it is a universal phenomenon that resides within the interior of language. It is this signifying intention that holds together language through the precarious path that it follows from synchrony to

synchrony. This explication echoes that of Saussure's internal system to language that only transforms itself from within while adjusting to the shocks and the challenges to its cohesiveness brought on by the constant attempts by speakers and groups of speakers to make changes to the system.

It is from this internally-based means of change for language that Merleau-Ponty agrees with Saussure about the existence of an internal system, while himself advocating an interiority for the moments of linguistic evolution. In considering how new linguistic expressions come into being, Merleau-Ponty reveals his own fascination and perhaps even a feeling of awe at what occurs for such a creation to take place. For him there is a mysterious transformation of that which is purely contingent into that which is rationally integrated into a greater linguistic whole. In addition, Merleau-Ponty sees "ce moment fécond de la langue" emerging between two contradictory, yet fully rational, conditions: "L'événement est trop hésitant pour qu'on imagine quelque esprit de la langue ou quelque décret des sujets parlants qui en soit responsable. Mais aussi il est trop systématique, il suppose trop de connivence entre différents faits de détail pour qu'on le réduise à la somme des changements partiels. L'événement a un intérieur..." (1969, 49).

What many of the previous citations concerning language's interior have mentioned explicitly, and what now seems to beg to be examined in its entirety, is Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the significative intention, *l'intention significative*. As with the notion of a linguistic interiority, the significative intention is an idea that Merleau-Ponty develops through the course of several deliberations that allow it to be analyzed in various contexts. Unsurprisingly, the "philosopher of ambiguity" proffers no concise or patent definitions of the concept. However, the main difference between these

two abstractions is that language's interior is a phenomenon that the body-subject reaches out toward, while the *intention de communiquer* is a condition with which the speaking subject seems to be infused. The reason why we feel an examination of the signifying intention to be a necessary complement to our analysis of the interior of language is that this intention to communicate is a way of better comprehending the interiority to which we have devoted so much consideration. Before venturing forth with our look at the significative intention, we consider a brief overview of some of Merleau-Ponty's most critical philosophical ambitions to be beneficial for keeping concepts such as this intention and the interior of language in their proper perspective.

Due to the very limited scope of ideas such as the signifying intention, a step back in order to obtain a broader outlook on what Merleau-Ponty wished to accomplish with his philosophy seems now to be an absolute necessity. Specific concepts like a linguistic interiority or an inherent intention to communicate within speaking subjects really have no preponderance over broader Merleau-Pontean categories such as the body, temporality, or even language considered in its phenomenological entirety. In placing so much importance on notions that are definitely relevant to any lengthy analysis of Merleau-Ponty's ruminations on language, but that are nonetheless derivative from his major themes, our study runs the risk of losing sight of this philosopher's more generalized aspirations for the role of phenomenology in the world of existentialist thought.

Merleau-Ponty states clearly that phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking (1945, ii). In addition, he observes that phenomenology has no other starting point than the facticity of both man and the world (1945, I). Given

these two principles, the endearing qualities of phenomenology for existentialists reside in the fact that it unquestioningly focuses on the lived reality of people in situation while admitting that its own stylized way of doing philosophy exerts an unavoidable influence on its objectives *prima facie*. Dealing with this influence is best done by giving relevance to a science that was, relatively speaking, enjoying a considerable celebrity during the latter half of the nineteenth century and during the duration of Merleau-Ponty's lifetime: psychology.

To say that Merleau-Ponty is a product of the philosophical and scientific climate of the first half of the twentieth century is admittedly an innocuous assertion, but it nonetheless is relevant to understanding his own brand of phenomenological methodology. Anyone with a passing knowledge of Merleau-Pontean thought is well aware of his preoccupation with psychology, and especially with what concerns human cognition. Understanding how Merleau-Ponty reacted to the developments of psychological study of his era is paramount for being alert to the psychological subtleties that permeate his reflections on language use by body-subjects.

Psychology from the nineteenth century onward can be seen in basically two ways. On the one hand, this science developed through debate between differing schools of systematic thought concerning the mind such as associationism, structuralism⁶, and functionalism. On the other hand, there was also substantial experimentation and research in various areas that formed the hard data that supported the diverse positions that constituted the aforementioned debate. In terms of the twentieth century, structuralism, because of its reductionist and deterministic leanings owing to its advocacy of strict and

⁶ A school of psychology founded by the German psychologists Wundt and Titchener in the 1890's that used the controlled methods of introspection to study mental experience by analyzing elements such as sensations, ideas, and feelings and the ways they combined with one another.

controlled methods of introspection, gave way to more the humanistic psychological approaches of psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and Gestalt psychology. This takes place largely due to the fact that associationism and structuralism offered up only piecemeal analyses of experience that divided the scientific study of mental life into atomistic elements. Gestalt psychology, in adopting the methods of phenomenology, sought to describe direct psychological experience with no restrictions on what was permissible in that description. This school introduced the study of the qualities of form, meaning, and value within perceptual experience, ideas that prevailing psychologists had either ignored or considered outside the confines of science. It is in the context of this break between these humanistic orientations of psychology and their predecessors that Merleau-Ponty's psychological disposition can best be grasped.

For the founders of the Gestalt movement in psychology, perceptual experience, and especially vision, simply could no longer be thought of as a one-to-one relation between the sensations of such experience and the physical stimuli that caused them. Perception is more complicated, variegated, and overwhelming than that when all direct psychological experience with the world is brought under analysis. The nervous system of the observer and the observer's experience do not passively register the input in a piecemeal way. Rather, the neural organization as well as the perceptual experience springs immediately into existence as an entire field with differentiated parts. According to the law of *Prägnanz*, the neural and perceptual organization of any set of impinging stimuli forms as good a Gestalt, or whole, as the prevailing conditions allow. What follows from this new way of construing perception is that Merleau-Ponty will now frame his basic concepts in ways that will emphasize the relational unity that makes of

their constituent elements more than just the some of their parts. There will be a synergistic and in some ways an ineffable and indefinable residue that results from the coming together of component parts, but that at the same time binds these essential features and perhaps manages and guides them. While this notion of synergism will enlighten our understanding of the significative intention, let us now finish our look at how Gestalt psychology not only influences Merleau-Ponty's ideas on perception, but his approach to defining other concepts as well.

This brief glimpse at some of the basic tenets of Gestalt psychology has provided us with a valuable insight into how Merleau-Ponty not only conceived of perception, but how he would form his ideas about the human faculties that would naturally follow from initial perceptual experience: reflective consciousness, language, and the like. These human capacities themselves can be considered as examples of Gestalt-like unities. Likewise, concepts whose plausibility is based upon the essentiality of said perceptual faculties, e.g. the interiority of language or the significative intention, can be considered as touched by Gestalt influences. Given that Gestalts can function either separately or interrelatedly, the temptation of venturing into a detailed analysis of the hierarchies and the collateral relationships that might exist between Gestalts in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is indeed great. However, it is our intention to simply keep fresh in the reader's memory the general idea of what a Gestalt represents for the purpose of returning to the notion of the *intention significative*. In addition, our strategy will include the alignment of the Gestalt's basic message with our previous examination of Merleau-Ponty's interior of language as we now formally consider the concept of the significative intention.

Due to our experience of detailing Merleau-Ponty's thoughts about an interior for language, the whole idea of a significative intention that lurks somewhere behind language production causes us to start its examination with no real expectations of obtaining a pithy definition that dovetails perfectly with the major points of our previous analysis. Always true to his moniker as the "philosopher of ambiguity," Merleau-Ponty construes his most basic concepts such as the significative intention, the interior of language, or perceptual faith in ways that are definitely compelling without rendering these constructions as mere objects whose essential being can be circumscribed by the standards of scientific objectivity. Like the interiority of language, the significative intention receives thorough textual development while still leaving room for additional interpretation or construction. While certain Merleau-Pontean conceptualizations can thus be considered at times incomplete or lacking in definitive synthesis, this incertitude should not be looked upon as a shortcoming of the theorist. It is as integral a part of how the philosopher goes about his work as is his entire philosophical approach. Only the overall phenomenological orientation of Merleau-Ponty can be considered as systematic and having a certainty of purpose.

Adopting the practical methods of Husserl, most phenomenologists saw their personal travails as a contribution to the work in progress that was phenomenology. From this point of view it becomes clear that to do a phenomenology of all things experienced, or to do a complete phenomenological analysis of any one phenomenon, was too implausible a task for only one researcher. This condition explains the open-ended character of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical constructions. In speaking of the foundational move that constitutes the beginning of phenomenological studies, Merleau-Ponty insists

that “le plus grand enseignement de la réduction est l'impossibilité d'une réduction complète. Voilà pourquoi Husserl s'interroge toujours de nouveau sur la possibilité de la réduction” (1945, viii). This admission has considerable implications for all research that follows, including the development of concepts such as the significative intention. If according to Merleau-Ponty “la phénoménologie se laisse pratiquer et reconnaître comme manière ou comme style, elle existe comme mouvement, avant d'être parvenue à une entière conscience philosophique” (1945, ii), then it follows that a dynamic quality prevails within this movement that resists totalizing self-definitions or self-analysis. An end result of all of this fluidity and stylized thinking is that philosophy becomes a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing (1962, ix). However, it is necessary to give Merleau-Ponty credit for realizing the potential indeterminacy that can result from mere descriptive thought and for anchoring his arguments in the materiality of the world and of the human body. It is with this perspective in mind that we shall now give our undivided attention to the notion of the significative intention.

To understand the concept of *l'intention significative* is to return to the one basic reality of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy that speaks directly to our lived experience of the physical world: it is through the undeniable, a priori establishment of our corporeality that thoughts and language are possible (1945, 226). If there are no human bodies in place that house consciousnesses and thereby perceptual capacities, then there can be no means of thoughts forming themselves through the medium of a particular language (1945, 448) that itself is a culturally instituted phenomenon (1945, 217) and that simply awaits its acquisition by body subjects. Although Merleau-Ponty is not one to dwell upon the maddening question of the origins of languages, he would at least admit to granting

primordial conditions to his conceptualizations of the expressive intentions of speaking subjects. Again, the corporeal nature of human perception begins the understanding of this primordially of expression: “Toute perception, et toute action qui la suppose, bref tout usage de notre corps est déjà *expression primordiale*... l’opération qui d’abord constitue les signes en signes... plante un sens dans ce qui n’avait pas... ouvre un champ, inaugure un ordre, fonde une institution ou une tradition...” (1969, 110-111).

This view of perception as the foundation of expression solidifies the body as the ground from which the significative intention will emerge. How this signifying intention relates to the thoughts and to the expressive capacities of the body-subject will be the next point of clarification.

Merleau-Ponty describes the significative intention at times as if it is both a super-lingual force and a type of expressive void that are in search of appropriate verbal receptacles from among those words available in a given language (1960, 113). From this perspective, this intention seems to have a consciousness of its own: “L’intention significative se donne un corps et se connaît elle-même en se cherchant un équivalent dans le système des significations disponibles que représentent la langue que je parle” (1960, 113). It does not seem linked in any way with speaking subjects, other than being bound to a primordial want or need (*privation*) or lack (*manque*) that accompany body-subjects in their most innate and quintessential linguistic state:

Exprimer, pour le sujet parlant, c’est prendre conscience ; il n’exprime pas seulement pour les autres, il exprime pour savoir lui-même ce qu’il vise. Si la parole veut incarner une intention significative qui n’est qu’un certain vide, ce n’est pas seulement pour recréer en autrui le même manque, la même privation,

mais encore pour savoir *de quoi* il y a manque et privation. (1960, 113)

It follows from this that the significative intention functions a great deal like the interiority of language in that it is itself a phenomenon difficult to circumscribe but nonetheless necessary in order to make communication take place. The body-subject is able to understand what is nascent and arriving to his/her consciousness thanks to the significative intention that gives itself over to words.

Like the interior of language, the significative intention resists our attempts at facile definitions. Returning to our objective of how it relates to the thoughts and expressive capacities of the body-subject, Merleau-Ponty's own efforts at revealing the essence of this intention border on the mystical: "l'intention significative... n'est pas une pensée explicite, mais un certain manque qui cherche à se combler, de même la reprise par moi de cette intention n'est pas une opération de ma pensée, mais une modulation synchronique de ma propre existence, une transformation de mon être" (1945, 213-214). It is not often that a theorist offers up an analysis that includes both an examination of a particular subject of study *and* revelatory comments as to how his/her thinking processes relate to said subject. Merleau-Ponty, in staying true to his doctrine of targeting the description of phenomena rather than their explanation or analysis, is forced to see the essential being of the body-subject as the recipient of an adjustment brought on by the significative intention. He opts to focus on the one element, the speaking subject, in this transformational process that can be interpreted in various ways with phenomenological rigor without betraying his commitment to description.

In reality, as speaking subjects, we exist in a state of passivity with regard to the communicative purport of the significative intention. Thought cannot grasp the

operational radicality of this intention, but it can attempt to speculate as to its nature and to put into words what this propensity accomplishes in the individual speaker. Body-subjects are not given the option of avoiding participation with the significative intention. At the same time, if what Merleau-Ponty intends by the creative novelties that are produced by this intention to communicate is true, it is not a proclivity that shows itself in the form of such new expressions on a constant basis. To examine closely what the process of this signifying intention entails is to realize how out of the ordinary Merleau-Ponty considers this experience to be: “l’intention significative nouvelle ne se connaît elle-même qu’en se recouvrant de significations déjà disponibles, résultats d’actes d’expression antérieurs... (elles) s’entrelacent soudain selon une loi inconnue, et une fois pour toutes un nouvel être culturel a commencé d’exister” (1945, 213). Seen in this light, the significative intention must manifest itself rather infrequently even though in its muteness it does constantly accompany the mentality of speaking subjects.

Recalling the fact that Saussure considered any given language as consisting of a finite number of meaning-bearing sub-unities that can be endlessly reconfigured together to fashion new expressions, a significant similarity now comes to light with Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that pre-existing meanings are subject to manipulation by the significative intention. In fact, an even more compelling correspondence between each theorist’s concept of the signifying intention can be had if a brief return to Saussure’s famous analogy between the game of chess and language in *Cours* is made:

Il n’y a qu’un point où la comparaison (entre le jeu de la langue et une partie d’échecs) soit en défaut : le joueur d’échecs a l’intention d’opérer le déplacement et d’exercer une action sur le système ; tandis que la langue ne prémédite rien ;

c'est spontanément et fortuitement que ses pièces à elle se déplacent -- ou plutôt se modifient... Pour que la partie d'échecs ressemblât en tout point au jeu de la langue, il faudrait supposer un joueur inconscient ou inintelligent. (*Cours*, 127)

While the notion of intentionality, insofar as it applies to phenomenology, would of course not necessarily correlate to Saussure's objective in the realm of linguistics, the message is clear as to what he means by intention in this context: within the mind of individuals a rational intentionality operates to modulate all systems of culturally encoded and interrelated units of meaning *outside* the purview of linguistic production. The break here in the analogy between chess and language reveals that an operational intention must exist in language production apart from the cognitive capacities of speaking subjects.

Obviously, it is extremely important to be clear as to how the significative intention compares to generally held ideas on intentionality in the purely philosophical sense. More specifically, it is necessary to see at what point the intention to communicate aligns itself with the generalized intentionality that functions in the mind of speaking subjects and that encompasses all other mental experiences. In order to pursue this objective, let us now quickly define what intentionality is and then see how this definition will contribute in specific ways to our ongoing examination of the significative intention.

Following the conclusions of Brentano, intentionality is a property of all mental phenomena whereby they refer to either existent or non-existent objects or entities outside of themselves. For example, it is impossible to hear without hearing a sound, to hope without hoping for something, or to strive without striving for some particular goal. Taking this idea a couple of steps further, it can be assumed that intentionality is simultaneously the thought of and the targeting of an object, and also the bringing into

play of a meaning since the object arises or comes into being by virtue only of the signifying project or intention of consciousness toward it. This all seems admissible, but this conceptualization creates a particular difficulty. The problem of intentionality is that of understanding the relation that exists between a mental state, or its expression, and the thing that it is about. Intentional relations seem to depend on how the object is specified, or on the mode of presentation of the object. In other words, the aforementioned meaning that is generated by the intention of consciousness and that accompanies the contemplation of and the directedness of the given object opens up a middle ground in this process that questions the legitimacy of language to link up all three elements: thought, target, meaning.

Perhaps language is the real issue in this tripartite ambiguity. Considering this dilemma from a purely linguistic perspective offers a unique advantage in trying to define intentionality. Rather than an ontological or metaphysical particularity of mental experience, an alternative definition has this concept as being thought of as a feature of language. This interpretation is due to the fact that the linguistic forms in which we communicate desires, beliefs, and fears have a binary presence in the world of speakers, involving both the objects referred to, and the mode of presentation under which they are thought of. Remembering a basic notion of the power of language for Merleau-Ponty, the object referred to only comes into being due to its being given a name by language (1945, 460). From this it holds that the mind is essentially directed onto existent things with the help of language. As to the means of presentation by which things are thought of, this establishes the mind as extensionally related to these things in that they are the particular ideas or entities that apply to or fall under the concept of the linguistic presentation that

the mind has explicitly chosen to act as a signifying label. The mind has thus reached over toward objects of intention through the linguistic process. Now that we have defined intentionality and have seen how it has problematic ties with language, let us return to the significative intention of Merleau-Ponty.

The real benefit of attempting an analysis of the significative intention is that, in its own way, it serendipitously leads us to a better understanding of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical project as a whole. Given that there is a problem in understanding the relationship that obtains between a targeted object, how it is expressed, and the thought of said object, it is understandable that a phenomenologically-based description of an innate propensity within speaking subjects would be offered as a means of synthesizing these three phenomena back into a lost, primordial, and unanalyzed inherence to the linguistic world. This is the significative intention. Merleau-Ponty bases his claim to the justifiability of mere descriptive summarizations of the phenomenon of language by flatly stating that "il n'y a pas d'analyse qui puisse rendre clair le langage et l'étaler devant nous comme un objet" (1945, 448). It is crucial to note that not only for language, but for any given subject of phenomenological inquiry, we are forced to admit to an insurmountable analytical deficiency:

L'acte de parole n'est pas clair que pour celui qui effectivement parle ou écoute, il devient obscur dès que nous voulons expliciter les raisons qui nous ont fait comprendre ainsi et non autrement. On peut dire de lui ce que nous avons dit de la perception et ce que Pascal dit des opinions : dans les trois cas, c'est la même merveille d'une clarté de première vue qui disparaît dès qu'on veut la réduire en ce qu'on croit être ses éléments composants. (1945, 448)

So, the main thrust of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is not to create a series of analytical deconstructions of phenomena that would bring to light the essential elements of their inner workings. On the contrary, in allowing his descriptions to simply flow, the author realizes that he must strive to remain in the domain of the ephemeral "immediately apprehended clarity" (*clarté de première vue*) where human understanding receives its only chance to truly have a phenomenological experience of the world and to instantaneously match that experience with its cognitive abilities.

The significative intention is a means of adjusting to the shock that the phenomenologist feels at each passing moment of being linguistically overwhelmed by the sheer impossibility of matching up his/her own language production to the constant bombardment of perceptual experience. Functioning on the margin of inauthentic speech (re-)production that is typified by memorized or ingrained habitual utterances for specific cultural contexts, it is a guide that allows speakers to occasionally formulate novel statements. Merleau-Ponty considers the significative intention to be a catalyst for the emergence of thought in a way that harkens back to the basic Saussurean emphasis on the difference that exists between signs:

Une langue est moins une somme de signes qu'un moyen méthodique de discriminer des signes les uns des autres, et de construire ainsi un univers de langage, dont nous disons par après — quand il est assez précis pour cristalliser une intention significative et la faire renaître en autrui --- , qu'il exprime un univers de pensée... (1969, 45)

Not only does the intention to communicate inspire thoughts in the speaking subject, but also exhibits an inclination toward establishing its influence over body-subjects in an interpersonal context.

Considering the arguments that existentialism and phenomenology can levy against notions of a collective consciousness between speaking subjects, this interpersonal transference of the creative power of the significative intention demands closer inspection. Some rather surprising qualities seem to be attributed to this intention from the previous discussion. First, the communicative intention is seen as autonomously entering the thought processes of and stimulating the minds of speaking subjects. Secondly, it inspires authentic speech production by passing transcendently from mind to mind through the medium of language. While these attributes of this intention might not hint at a full-blown collective consciousness between speaking subjects, they certainly carry with them the sense that there is something shared and passed along from subject to subject (for example, the fleeting instances of authentic language production, that curious moment when the other says exactly what one was thinking, and the times when neologisms seem to demand to be created for special purposes) that cannot be captured or mastered by any one speaker.

Even though the meanings of all the words of a given language could, in an extreme case, be mastered by a speaking subject, there is, of course, more to speaking than significations in isolations: “Il est vrai que la communication présuppose un système de correspondances tel que celui qui est donné par le dictionnaire, mais elle va au delà, et c’est la phrase qui donne son sens à chaque mot” (1945, 445). This citation might seem void of any real insight for the process of the significative intention, but it underscores an

essential reality for speaking subjects of which Merleau-Ponty does not want to lose sight. Words, in a rather inscrutable way, cannot be trusted to deliver the same meanings over time to those who use them. It is because it has been used in various contexts that the word gradually accumulates a significance that it is impossible to establish absolutely (1945, 445). To counteract this problematic, the intention to communicate ensures a dynamism within the manipulation of sedimented, available meanings, and this linguistic propulsion is something that transcends its beneficiaries:

...quant au sujet qui parle, il faut bien que l'acte d'expression lui permette de dépasser lui aussi ce qu'il pensait auparavant et qu'il trouve dans ses propres paroles plus qu'il ne pensait y mettre... La parole est donc cette opération paradoxale où nous tentons de rejoindre, au moyen de mots dont le sens est donné, et de significations déjà disponibles, une intention qui par principe va au delà et modifie, fixe elle-même en dernière analyse le sens des mots par lesquels elle se traduit. (1945, 445-446)

The signifying intention therefore is considered a mechanism that pulls languages and their speakers along through time. While this phraseology makes of this intention something that is not immediately given over to perception, and thus problematic for phenomenological inquiry, Merleau-Ponty stays true to form by anchoring the experience of apprehending the significative intention with immediate clarity in human corporeality.

What offers an undeniable solidarity to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is his unrelenting emphasis on the body and its perceptual capacities as the ground for abstractions even as hard to define as the significative intention. Indeed, perhaps the most obvious thematic that runs through his entire oeuvre is the use of analogies that feature the body and the five senses as correspondents to language and the utilization of language.

In the context of the significative intention Merleau-Ponty asserts that language plays the same limited role in the work of expression that colors do in painting. If body-subjects do not have eyes, or more generally senses, there would be no painting at all, yet a painting “tells” viewers more than the mere use of the senses can ever do (1962, 452). Moreover, “le tableau par delà les données des sens, la parole par delà celles du langage constitué doivent donc avoir par eux-mêmes une vertu signifiante, sans référence à une signification qui existe pour soi, dans l’esprit du spectateur ou de l’auditeur” (1945, 446). This and the preceding analyses of the significative intention bring us to an interesting point: Merleau-Ponty is advocating an intention whose existence, while not immediately perceivable by the senses, is explicated by the untrammelled and creative power that speech has over mere constituted language. He adds an idea of Claudel here to clarify what this power is trying to do for the mind: “Par le moyen des mots... nous voulons... d’une émotion ou même d’une idée abstraite constituer une sorte d’équivalent ou d’*espèce* soluble dans l’esprit” (1945, 446). Yet, there is still something problematic about the way in which our examination of the significative intention has developed. There seems to be a gap between this intention and the body-subject’s perceptual abilities when looked at from a purely phenomenological point of view. Perhaps a return to how Merleau-Ponty conceives of consciousness, or that which represents the beginning of any ontological grasp that the body-subject has upon experience and thereby would make possible such an intention, could alleviate our concerns about how the speaking subject arrives at an understanding of this innate propensity.

One of the safest statements that can be made about the objectives of the phenomenological and existential movements in the philosophical world is that they both

devote ample research energies to the study of consciousness. To study *Phénoménologie de la perception* or *L'Être et le néant* is to at some point be confronted with how each philosopher formally conceptualizes consciousness. Nothing can be more central to the understanding of how a theorist constructs his/her major concepts concerning experiential observations (e.g. space, perception, temporality) than a close reading of how he/she conceives of consciousness as the initial ground from which all such conceptualizations proceed from our awareness of ourselves and of our environment. Realizing the illuminating potential that might come from applying an understanding of consciousness to other elusive concepts, we have already made a brief reference to how Sartre construed consciousness in our analysis of Saussure's interiority of language. This was done to acquire a better understanding of the latter concept by using the former as a type of model. For the present discussion of the significative intention, our objective in examining Merleau-Ponty's reflections on consciousness is not to seek a model that would enhance our comprehension of said intention, but to simply see how the two concepts interface.

The reason for this direction is that our previous analysis of the significative intention makes of it an innate propensity toward self-expression within the mentality of speaking subjects without the benefit of unveiling within Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre the justification for its acquisition by perceptual means. In other words, our examination of this intention to communicate has drifted more and more away from the principles of phenomenology and closer and closer toward abstractions that call our entire approach to understanding it into question. Taking into account the stated philosophical orientation of our thesis, there must be some sort of grounding, a priori state of consciousness that can

serve as a foundation for and make sense of the intention to communicate. The solution to this problem resides in perhaps Merleau-Ponty's most understated philosophical construction for what concerns any study of his reflections on language: the tacit cogito.

Like his contemporary Sartre, Merleau-Ponty redirects our attention backward from the Cartesian cogito and establishes the necessity of an unspoken cogito that exists before any and all reflection: "je ne pourrais pas même lire le texte de Descartes, si je n'étais, avant toute parole, en contact avec ma propre vie et ma propre pensée et si le Cogito parlé ne rencontrait en moi un Cogito tacite. C'est ce Cogito silencieux que Descartes visait en écrivant les *Méditations*..." (1945, 460-461). Merleau-Ponty sets about the task of articulating this unarticulated cogito with due gravity. It seems as if he is aware that he is engaging in a task that is rife with potential pitfalls. As the author mentions in the preface of *Phénoménologie*, analysis and examination of phenomena, as opposed to their description, entails movement away from the standards of phenomenological inquiry. Therefore, the way in which he presents his ideas about a concept such as the tacit cogito can be said to be just as important as the content of those thoughts. Equally important is what he does not say in his descriptions of such a foundational subject of study. When Merleau-Ponty asserts that "toute la question est de bien comprendre le Cogito tacite, (et) de ne mettre en lui que ce qui s'y trouve véritablement" (1945, 461), he is acknowledging the difficulty that arises from using the culturally instituted tool of language to describe consciousness that does in no way constitute said language.

Not only does Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the tacit cogito consider this fundamental self-presence to exist before any philosophical rationale, it also precedes and calls for a linguistic intentionality:

Le *Cogito* tacite, la présence de soi à soi, étant l'existence même, est antérieur à toute philosophie, mais il ne se connaît que dans les situations limites où il est menacé : par exemple dans l'angoisse de la mort ou dans celle du regard d'autrui sur moi. Ce qu'on croit être la pensée de la pensée, comme pur sentiment de soi ne se pense pas encore et a besoin d'être révélé. (1945, 462)

Similar to the interior of language and the significative intention, the reality of this presence of oneself to oneself does not reveal itself under the parameters of ordinary, lived experience, rather it only dawns upon the body-subject in extreme situations where the continuation of said existence is called into question. How this cogito connects with the significative intention is only too clear: there is a propensity created by this pure presence of self to self toward expression. What is considered to be thought about thought as pure feeling of the self cannot yet be thought and demands to be revealed. So, there is the starting point for the significative intention.

The movement from the tacit cogito to the spoken cogito is really a shift from pure existence, "l'épreuve de moi par moi" (1945, 462), to an engagement with the world of reflection and social interaction. In a way, Merleau-Ponty wants to avoid considering the tacit cogito as a clearly definable condition on the order of a philosophical certitude as the reflexive consciousness, or more specifically the infamous Cartesian doubt: "le *Cogito* tacite n'est *Cogito* que lorsqu'il s'est exprimé lui-même" (1945, 463). Finding

expression for itself then is the only way for it to potentially become everything else that it is not and to found the body-subject's much more articulated grasp upon the world. The tacit cogito is a consciousness that conditions language: "la conscience qui conditionne le langage n'est qu'une saisie globale et inarticulée du monde...et s'il est vrai que tout savoir particulier est fondé sur cette première vue, il est vrai aussi qu'elle attend d'être reconquise, fixée, et explicitée par l'exploration perceptive et par la parole" (1945, 462-463). The role of the body and language being reiterated once again and on this fundamental level of existence further indicates that consciousness and verbal production are inextricably linked in a way that will have serious implications for the part of this thesis that deals with non-verbal communication. Before, this section is reached, however, we would wish to explore the realm of emotional intelligence first in order to underscore the importance of the body-subject's awareness of the Other in the communicative process.

Emotional Intelligence and Merleau-Ponty

It is without a doubt that reading Merleau-Ponty is at times a journey of inspiration. Many times within even his most erudite text, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, one can receive messages that seem to be more attuned with a communion of spirits between reader and author. Merleau-Ponty provides new ways of looking at human relationships that are both phenomenologically-based and capable of incorporating emotional insights into the study of inter-subjectivity. Contemporary psychological research has placed a premium on the formal examination of affective states in the human subject. While this field of endeavor is still growing in its early stages, it has without a doubt influenced not only scholarly thought, but public awareness of emotional experience as well. It is fascinating how Maurice Merleau-Ponty described human affective capacities more than fifty years ago, well before this subject of study grew into an area of academic pursuit. We will first offer a formal examination of exactly what this type of intellect has come to be recognized as, then we will present notions on this subject from Merleau-Ponty that will hopefully grant him a new appreciation as a theorist.

Finding ways to validate that which has been left unexamined and unappreciated in the oeuvre of a philosopher by means of advances in contemporary scientific research is a task that all serious students of philosophy seek out with both anxiety and relish. Anxiety because making this type of connection invites the academic community into areas of personal interest and passion on the part of the researcher that leave him/her vulnerable to a myriad of criticisms, many of which he/she could never envision. Relish in that extending certain messages within the passionate research of an intellectual idol into the here and now both reawakens the scholarly world to the past relevance of said research and re-establishes it within a framework of contemporary advancement in the study of the human mind. The objective of the next section of this thesis will be to reveal how Merleau-Ponty's considerations on the role of emotions within the context of communicative skills were crucial for the development of a new phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity. Given the recent emergence and importance of the study of emotional intelligence in contemporary psychology, this study will also show that his thoughts on how affective states are conveyed among interlocutors lay the groundwork for studies in emotional intelligence by virtue of his phenomenological emphasis on understanding interpersonal communication.

In order to reach these objectives, we have chosen first to examine exactly what the term "emotional intelligence" has come to mean for not only the discipline of psychology, but for the general academic public that appreciates solid scientific inquiry into issues that enhance its ability to gain new insights into various areas of study. While emotional intelligence has been a popular topic of study for the last fifteen years in American psychological circles, an introductory definition may be found in

considerations of anger offered by Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics*: “Those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way at the right time, or with the right persons; for such a man is thought not to feel things nor to be pained by them, and, since he does not get angry, he is thought unlikely to defend himself” (IV, chap. 5, p. 1126a). This critique of potential flaws in affective responses reveals the extent to which individuals often remain unaware or indifferent to the social ramifications of their misplaced and inappropriate emotional reactions. In view of such crucial mistakes that can negatively affect intersubjective relations, emotional intelligence is seen as a conscious and pro-active programme of emotional management effectuated by the individual.

What this management involves is summarized by the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* as the ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and to label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide one’s thinking and behavior (241). Sometimes equated with the term “social intelligence,” this faculty, while emerging from the psychological experience of the individual, is exercised predominantly by each person intersubjectively in cultural contexts. The ability to comprehend the emotional messages of the Other is paramount to being emotionally intelligent, and every skill the individual makes use of to perceive, appraise, and regulate his/her own emotional states is equally important for carrying out the same operations on the affective status of other people. Now that we have a preliminary, working definition of emotional intelligence and have underscored its relevance to interpersonal communication, let us continue on by seeing how this topic of research interest is situated in the topography of contemporary academic pursuits.

The term “emotional intelligence” surfaced occasionally in psychological literature during the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, but the concept was first formally defined in nineteen-ninety by the American psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. These researchers designated four types of competencies that fall under the purview of this aptitude: (a) the ability to recognize, evaluate, and express emotions accurately; (b) the ability to access and evoke emotions when they facilitate cognition; (c) the ability to understand emotional messages and to make use of emotional information; and (d) the ability to regulate one’s own emotions to promote growth and well-being ().

The methods used to evaluate emotional intelligence were in the beginning largely limited to self-report measures of individuals’ perceptions or appraisals of their own competencies and experiences in areas of functioning associated with such an intelligence: spousal relations, interactions with co-workers, familial relationships, and the like. Because this methodology functions outside the parameters of objective scientific analysis and focuses more on intersubjective connections that naturally include that which is most complex, ambiguous, and dynamic about the affective realm of human experience, it echoes the phenomenological approach that Merleau-Ponty takes in describing the lived reality of body-subjects in interpersonal, communicative contexts.

What is important for the purposes of placing Merleau-Ponty’s insights into the interplay of emotions and intersubjective communication is that affective states are really forms of non-verbal communication that demand to be put into language for there to be any true understanding on the part of the body-subject of both itself and of the experience of other subjects. Merleau-Ponty calls for a concurrence between the gestures and intentions of two body-subjects in order for there to be any mutual understanding,

including emotional comprehension between two subjects (1945, 215). This makes of him one of the first existentialist/phenomenological theorists to consider that an emotional intellect is possible through the recapturing of the intention of gestures on the part of the spectator.

In reality, the idea of being able to totally and perfectly capture the essence of a given emotional state is really quite challenging. Due to the overwhelming suddenness and intensity of an emotion's presence in the life of subjects and the possibility of a combination of emotions occurring simultaneously, it is commonplace for individuals to be incapable of verbalizing exactly what their feelings are at a given moment. What is certain about emotion in the life of the subject is that, while generalizations about the relationship between causal factors and the subsequent affective responses (e.g., the death of a loved one causing sadness) can certainly be posited, the lived reality of emotions is actually unpredictable a considerable amount of the time. The problem with how existentialism has dealt with the subject of emotions is that either this school of thought has ignored affective analysis or it has relegated emotions to the status of merely culturally-engrained responses to habitually experienced circumstances. The former is, of course, an oversight and the latter is a complete oversimplification. The following analysis will show that Merleau-Ponty represents a significant, yet not complete, improvement of the latter approach that advocates a synthesis between enculturated affective reactions and biologically programmed responses.

Merleau-Ponty's outlook on affective concerns allows for the attunement to the emotional states of the Other while never compromising his stance on the major intersubjective principles that form a vital part of his philosophy. In fact, his elaborations

on how emotions function in interpersonal communication, while infrequent, tend to buttress and add a great deal to his notions of the gestural origins of language. It is this idea of a gestural beginning for the establishment of conventional forms of language that holds the key to understanding how emotional states can be communicated between body-subjects. Also, it requires that we always keep two things in mind. First, Merleau-Ponty views gestures through a phenomenological lens that places the description of perceived phenomena always at the forefront of any kind of analysis. Indeed, the term “analysis” is perhaps not really the right word here, for a formal separation of perceived phenomena into their constituent elements runs counter to the principles of phenomenological inquiry. What really springs to mind, and this constitutes the second idea that we need to bear in mind, is the use of the antonym of analysis in order to describe what Merleau-Ponty has a tendency to do in a lot of cases throughout his work: synthesis.

The way in which Merleau-Ponty synthesizes concepts is not always blatantly obvious. In other words, there is never a formal pronouncement of two ideas being synthesized, nor does he employ the term “synthesis” outright in most cases. Rather, synthesis in his thought process stems from his phenomenological orientation. For example, with regard to gestures, he states flatly that “Le sens des gestes n’est pas donné mais compris, c’est-à-dire ressaisi par un acte du spectateur. Toute la difficulté est de bien concevoir cet acte et de ne pas le confondre avec une opération de connaissance” (1945, 215). There is a bringing together of the act of a gesture and its recapture by the spectator that, far from being an intellectual operation, is there in the identification of the spectator’s own conduct with that of his/her counterpart (1945, 216). The synthesis here

comes from the fact that a mutual confirmation happens when gestural communication is achieved that bypasses cognitive engagement. What must be remembered when these self- and other-affirming synthetic operations seem too problematic or overly simplistic is that Merleau-Ponty is striving for an understanding of intersubjectivity as a transcendent experience based on the immediacy of perception and the thrown corporeality of the body-subject.

Furthermore, the experience of others has been distorted by intellectual analyses according to Merleau-Ponty, and a return to a primeval state of unarticulated openness to the world is necessary in order for there to be a clear picture as to how communication between consciousnesses occurs, emotional or otherwise. Just as he eschews any scientific conception of the physical world for phenomenology, he also refutes the ability to comprehend the gestures of the Other by intellectual means. So, to understand how any kind of initial transfer of information between body-subjects takes place, be it on an emotional or gestural-symbolic level, also calls for a suspension of the tenets of intellectualism and scientific positivism:

...je ne comprends pas les gestes d'autrui par un acte d'interprétation intellectuelle, la communication des consciences n'est pas fondée sur le sens commun de leurs expériences, mais elle le fonde aussi bien : il faut reconnaître comme irréductible le mouvement par lequel je me prête au spectacle, je me joins à lui dans une sorte de reconnaissance aveugle qui précède la définition et l'élaboration intellectuelle du sens. (1945, 216)

Again there is a type of synthetic movement here by which the body-subject becomes one with its intersubjective environment before any intervention on the part of its cognitive

abilities can produce a representation of experience for itself. Thus, existing prior to the intellectualized and therefore derivative existence of objective thought, the immediately perceived realm of gestural communication functions in what could be considered an uncontaminated and direct interfacing with the body-subject, free of cultural bias and influence.

Likewise, Merleau-Ponty considers emotions to operate at this same level of immediate apprehension by offering “on voit bien ce qu’il y a de commun au geste et à son sens, par exemple à l’expression des émotions et aux émotions mêmes: le sourire, le visage détendu, l’allégresse des gestes contiennent réellement le rythme de l’action, le mode d’être au monde qui sont la joie même” (1945, 217). He extends this emotional mode of being in the world that the body-subject both experiences and projects to what he terms the “emotional content” of the word that does not, incidentally, have its origin in some “naïve onomatopoeic theory” (1962, 217). At the same primordial level where gestures serve as the foundation for conventional language forms (that themselves are mere traces of said gestures’ communicative purity and directness), he grants a place of privilege not only to expressions of emotion as a means of communication, but to the legacy that emotions establish for language as it is traditionally understood. The relationship between emotions and gestural language in Merleau-Ponty’s view of the origins of interpersonal communication is crucial for our eventual analysis of his contributions to the foundations of the concept of emotional intelligence. Before entering into such an analysis, let us examine closer his considerations on the emotion-gestural language connection and then proceed with his thoughts on emotions proper.

The relationship between emotions and gestures for Merleau-Ponty is really a signifying unity that reiterates our previous notions of the synthetic penchant in his thought process. Gestures are emotions made public and they do not require onlookers to conjure up mental representations of affective states nor to recall their own experience of particular emotions:

Soit un geste de colère ou de menace, je n'ai pas besoin pour le comprendre de me rappeler les sentiments que j'ai éprouvés lorsque j'exécutais pour mon compte les mêmes gestes. Je connais très mal, de l'intérieur, la mimique de la colère, il manquerait donc, à l'association par ressemblance ou au raisonnement par analogie, un élément décisif --- et d'ailleurs je ne perçois pas la colère ou la menace comme un fait psychique caché derrière le geste, je lis la colère dans le geste, le geste ne me *fait pas penser* à la colère, il est la colère elle-même. (1945, 215)

This really speaks to the communicative power that emotions potentially have in the lives of body-subjects. We say potentially, because, as has been noted in our brief description of what emotional intelligence is, attunement to the emotional states of other subjects is necessary for such communication to occur. Merleau-Ponty is making a very salient point about emotional intelligence without formally addressing the subject. He relates that individuals do not need to and really cannot evoke their own experiences of a given emotion in order to perceive and understand the affective states of another person. This is saying two things. First, the intellect of the body-subject is not capable of producing viable imitations of emotional states for the individual to then experience in plenitude. Second, the perception of an emotional message is not based upon or aided by cognitive processes that are at work behind gestures.

We are inclined to agree with the fact that it is not immediately apparent how a concept like emotional intelligence can be linked with the philosophical reflections of a phenomenologist such as Merleau-Ponty. He himself never employs the expression “emotional intelligence,” and most likely would be surprised if these two terms would be associated with one another as a result of his ruminations on the phenomenological life of the subject. Therefore, in order to sufficiently link Merleau-Pontean thought with such an unlikely topic, we must first look closely at what he says about emotions and human sexuality in order to see how he sets the table for emotional intelligence to be a resultant subject of study for his personal approach to phenomenology. After this brief examination of affectivity and sexuality, a much more substantial look at how he relates emotions to language will be offered in order to complete the present analysis.

Merleau-Ponty initiates his treatment of affectivity in *Phénoménologie* by placing it in the context of human sexual relations. This is a strategic move that, while limited to the emotion of love and its byproduct in the realm of volition, desire, opens up a brief analysis of affective states that reveals their legitimacy as a subject of philosophical inquiry and their importance to his overall philosophy. In this endeavor he is far from subtle:

Si donc nous voulons mettre en évidence la genèse de l'être pour nous, il faut considérer pour finir le secteur de notre expérience qui visiblement n'a de sens et de réalité que pour nous, c'est-à-dire notre milieu affectif. Cherchons à voir comment un objet ou un être se met à exister pour nous par le désir ou par l'amour et nous comprendrons mieux par là comment des objets et des êtres peuvent exister en général. (1945, 180)

From this introductory orientation of his thought concerning affectivity, it would seem that Merleau-Ponty could follow with nothing else than a detailed examination of how emotions affect every aspect of the lived experience of body-subjects, including a look at how, if he so pleased, an affective intelligence might be articulated. Unfortunately, this is the case in only a very limited way. Instead of truly focusing on love or desire, the author aims more for a description of problems with sexual responsiveness as they are experienced by individuals whose perceptual capacities have undergone change. While this is no great surprise given his emphasis on the corporeality of the subject throughout his work, it is only later in his considerations on language and intersubjectivity that we find a greater quantity of material to support our claim that he initiates theoretical inquiry into the concept of emotional intelligence. However, before moving in this direction, let us examine what kernels of information concerning affective consciousness that he does afford us in his chapter entitled “Le Corps comme être sexué.”

Reminiscent of his style of beginning chapters by featuring erroneous viewpoints of either traditional idealist or empiricist thought on particular subjects, Merleau-Ponty describes how conventional wisdom understands emotional states by relating that “on conçoit d’ordinaire l’affectivité comme une mosaïque d’états affectifs, plaisirs et douleurs fermés sur eux-mêmes, qui ne se comprennent pas et ne peuvent que s’expliquer par notre organisation corporelle” (1945, 180). This establishes a faulty ground for apprehending affectivity purely as an instinctual and biological phenomenon in contrast to which the author advocates emotions as being a distinctive form of consciousness. This type of awareness has its origins in a vital zone of sexual possibilities that lies somewhere between automatic responses and mental representations of libidinal acts (1945, 182).

Interestingly, he speaks of these representations in terms of being a type of intellect: “Si l’on admet que chez l’homme elle (l’affectivité) se « pénètre d’intelligence », on veut dire par là que de simples représentations peuvent déplacer les stimuli naturels du plaisir et de la douleur...” (1945, 180). Naturally, he does not intend that this is the only means by which emotions are generated. Nonetheless, this perspective does present us with an idea that clearly has man as being a manipulator of affective states. From this point of view, Merleau-Ponty moves, as mentioned just above, to a mediating position that sees affectivity as a special form of consciousness.

As mentioned previously, Merleau-Ponty focuses his discussion of affective states as they are linked with sexual responsiveness in the chapter under consideration. This has the effect of making his reflections on emotional awareness and intelligence even more striking because he sees the body as a central element in his schema of affective consciousness. Current psychological deliberations on emotional intelligence stress corporeality as being the initial pathway through which instinctive affective responses of “fight-or-flight” begin the entire process of emotional production. Perhaps more specifically, the important dichotomy between the limbic and autonomic nervous systems has come to the forefront of considerations on how feelings are produced and experienced by the individual, but these ideas will be addressed more thoroughly in due time. For the moment, let us return to what Merleau-Ponty says about the body and affective production in order to fully understand how he interfaces with today’s notions of emotional intelligence.

Alongside psychology’s considerations on the body as the conduit through which emotions emerge, Merleau-Ponty claims unequivocally that initiatory intersubjective

corporeal responses to sexual stimuli must be the starting point for an emotional consciousness far different from the notions of conventional wisdom:

Il faut qu'il y ait un Eros ou une Libido qui animent un monde original, donnent valeur ou signification sexuelles aux stimuli extérieurs et dessinent pour chaque sujet l'usage qu'il fera de son corps objectif... Chez le normal, un corps n'est pas seulement perçu comme un objet quelconque, cette perception objective est habitée par une perception plus secrète : le corps sexuel est sous-tendu par un schéma sexuel, strictement individuel, qui accentue les zones érogènes, dessine une physionomie sexuelle et appelle les gestes du corps... lui-même intégré à cette totalité affective. (1945, 182)

This emotional totality does not appear to be grounded in conventional interpretations of what constitutes emotional experience. What it hints at is a pre-existing interpersonal knowledge that subtends intersubjectivity and that has its vital connection between the bodies of subjects. Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty sees this networking as a type of consciousness unknown to conventional cognitive psychology.

There is a dimension that surpasses the boundaries of the traditionally held principles of cognitive abilities of his time as they interact with emotional experience. Again, Merleau-Ponty deliberates on affectivity through a sexual lens, but this is due to the primacy of human physicality that permeates the entirety of his thought. Therefore, perception is what is at the center of this interpersonal and immediate communication of desire and passion. In speaking of erotic perception, he approaches the subject with the cautious reserve exhibited by contemporary researchers of emotional intellect that signals a hesitant but fascinated insightfulness: "On devine ici un mode de perception distinct de

la perception objective, un genre de signification distinct de la signification intellectuelle, une intentionnalité qui n'est pas la pure « conscience de quelque chose » (1945, 183).

Erotic perception takes place in the world between two bodies and not in a consciousness (1962, 181). According to Merleau-Ponty, there is an immediacy at work in sexual responsiveness that evades conscious reflection. For the subject, the sight of another body has a sexual meaning, not when he/she contemplates, even confusedly, its possible relationship to sexual organs or to pleasurable states, but when it exists for his/her body, for that power that is always available for bringing together in an erotic situation the stimuli applied and adapting sexual conduct to it (1962, 181).

This reiterates a major principle concerning Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of intersubjectivity, and points toward the essence of a life enhanced by emotional intelligence. For our theorist, interpersonal relationships are initially activated by the thrown nature of both our individual corporeality and our social existence, or the undeniable existence of other corporeal subjects. Merleau-Ponty then qualifies this dual thrown reality of one's body and that of others in an affective manner, choosing to deny any traditional cognitive or intellectual processes behind the communication and apprehension of emotional states: "Il y a une « compréhension » érotique qui n'est pas de l'ordre de l'entendement puisque l'entendement comprend en apercevant une expérience sous une idée, tandis que le désir comprend aveuglément en reliant un corps à un corps" (1945, 183). From this linking of bodies, the individual body-subject then has the opportunity to attune itself to the emotional experience of others. This opens up communicative possibilities that diverge greatly from the conventional ideas of intelligence that see cognitive powers as tools merely for learning from experience,

adapting to new situations, understanding abstract concepts, and manipulating the environment. Far from these undoubtedly useful concerns, emotional intelligence is something that springs into existence by virtue of the thrown intersubjectivity that defines social existence. It is made manifest only as an intentionality that reaches over to the other (the other not being an abstract concept, creative project, or piece of data) and grasps at an attunement to the affective states of others.

Merleau-Ponty believes that successful, long-lasting relationships with others result from “un mouvement spontané” (1945, 183) (“a spontaneous impulse” [1962, 182]) through which the individual taps into an infinity of intersubjective possibilities that allows for what our philosopher calls acts of authentic thought and intuitive understanding (1962, 182). This last expression is very important for comprehending Merleau-Ponty’s general grasp on intentionality and how his considerations thereof correspond roughly to contemporary notions of emotional intelligence. Psychologists today see affective intellect as an important social skill lacking in many people because of its dissimilarity with the type of academic intelligence that is so prized by institutions of higher learning, modern science, and technico-industrial concerns. This lack results from the fact that intuitive impulses and what could even be called “intuitive-based reasoning” are seen as intellect writ unpredictable, even wild, and therefore unreliable for the purposes of the scientific method and its applications to practical matters. However, and it is Merleau-Ponty who emphasizes this point, it is intuition that serves as the guide in emotional communication, and not calculating, deductive rationality. Individuals intuit the affective reality of others, attempt to “read minds” in order to gain access to the

emotional states of others, and try to put themselves in the place of others in order to vicariously feel their feelings.

To put the notions of erotic comprehension and interpersonal affectivity in an even broader perspective within Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, it is communicative impulses such as these that serve as examples of a drive inherent to human existence, intentionality. This intentionality literally makes life what it is for the body-subject in situation. According to our theorist, we discover both that sexual life is one more form of original intentionality, and also bring to view the vital organs of perception, motility, and representation by basing all these processes on an "intentional arc" which endows experience with its degree of vitality and fruitfulness (1962, 182). Sexual life is not limited to the genital or instinctual, but is a general power that the subject enjoys by taking root in different settings, of establishing himself through different experiences, and of gaining structures of conduct (1962, 183). Thus, we understand that affectivity does not reside in consciousness for Merleau-Ponty, and this would seem to disqualify any notion of an emotional intelligence within his thought.

However, this is to ignore the reality that the philosopher has opened up for us. Affectivity is its *own* type of consciousness. Although his use of the term "affectivity" is more bound up in erotic encounters than the experience of pure emotion, his examination of affective states speaks to an understanding of them which is far from either an unpredictable, instinct-generated model of emotion or a culturally-encoded paradigm of feelings that see the subject as helplessly inept as to their management. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that as long as Merleau-Ponty bases his considerations of interpersonal affectivity on sexuality, concepts such as desire are the closest thing that he can substitute

for true emotional responses such as love and hate. Therefore, now that we have gleaned Merleau-Ponty's initial insights on the subject of emotional intelligence from "Le Corps Comme Etre Sexué," let us now explore his much more detailed analysis of such an intellect as he relates it to language production.

Apart from the domain of sexuality, what makes Merleau-Ponty an even more viable precursor to the theoretical development of emotional intelligence is his insistence on emotions being inextricably linked with how the body-subject verbalizes its experience of the world. It is important to recall briefly that, for Merleau-Ponty, an orator does not think before or even while speaking, but rather it is the case that his speech is his thought (1962, 209). To understand how this synthesis of speech and thought relates to emotion is to realize exactly what a profound importance Merleau-Ponty placed upon the affective dimension in the body-subject's engagement with the world. Unlike most of his existentialist contemporaries, he allows an importance place for emotions within his philosophy and even goes so far as to theorize that an emotional essence resides at the seat of all linguistic capabilities: "S'ils (les mots que je sais) persistent en moi, c'est plutôt comme l'Imago freudienne qui est beaucoup moins la représentation d'une perception ancienne qu'une essence émotionnelle très précise et très générale détachée de ses origines empiriques" (1945, 210). While the Freudian Imago is best understood as an unconscious representation of another person or stereotype that orientates the subject's way of apprehending others, it functions at such an influential level within the psyche of the subject that it greatly impacts feelings and behavior.

However, as far as Merleau-Ponty is concerned, the Imago is not so much a stereotype that calls forth mental representations for the body-subject, but a generalized

affective approach that the individual takes into intersubjective contexts. It is key for understanding how words come to be used by the speaking subject. Merleau-Ponty refutes mental representations of words, or verbal images, within the parameters of language production, and maintains that a “highly specific emotional essence which is yet generalized” operates in the place of such representations and is responsible for the “near-presence of words” (1962, 209) that allows for their use by speakers. Therefore, this emotional essence functions as a generalized medium through which the speaking subject reaches over to retrieve words that are the traces of gestural-emotional meanings that have long since lost their original status. At the same time, this essence is “highly specific” in that in particular interpersonal contexts, distinctive emotional states and reactions naturally occur once words have been called forth and communication has been completed. What remains to be determined is how Merleau-Ponty views verbal and non-verbal forms of communication as interactive processes that allow for interlocutors to identify emotions in others.

The realm of emotional communication offers yet another opportunity for Merleau-Ponty to use a synthetic approach in explaining how affective states, conventional language, and forms of non-verbal communication interface to make the transmission of feelings possible. To do so, he goes all the way back to linguistic origins, insisting that we need to seek the first attempts at language in emotional gesticulations whereby man superimposes on the given world the world according to man (1962, 219). It is not abundantly clear how our theorist connects or shows the evolutionary progression between the notions of emotional gesticulations and resultant conventional forms of language. Therefore, it is very important to pay strict attention to what Merleau-

Ponty does and does not say about the relationship between emotions and language when he speaks of intersubjective communication.

He refutes naturalistic conceptions of language that try to reduce language to emotional expression (1945, 219) while still acknowledging the power of giving shape to stimuli and situations that emotions wield over the body-subject's engagement in the world: "déjà l'émotion comme variation de notre être au monde... manifeste le même pouvoir de mettre en forme les stimuli et les situations qui est à son comble au niveau du langage" (1945, 220). While this observation seems to grant quite a powerful influence to emotions over language production, it does not come without a caveat. Merleau-Ponty states unequivocally that there are no "natural signs" in man (1945, 219), meaning that he produces and understands only signs that carry the mark of cultural approval: "On ne pourrait parler de « signes naturels » que si, à des « états de conscience » donnés, l'organisation anatomique de notre corps faisait correspondre des gestes définis. Or en fait la mimique de la colère ou celle de l'amour n'est pas la même chez un Japonais et chez un occidental" (1945, 220). The fact that emotions are not expressed in the same way gesturally across cultural boundaries is really only half of the equation that is emotional expression. The other half calls for a refocusing on the role of the body-subject's corporeality, and this has interesting ramifications for how Merleau-Ponty conceives of affective communication.

At this juncture, Merleau-Ponty's ideas on how emotions are conveyed interpersonally take on a more traditional existentialist tone. Returning to his remark about the differences in behavior associated with love and anger between Japanese society and those of the West, it is clear that he wants to avoid granting a universal nature

to emotions. However, it is not clear that he draws a distinct line between emotional states within the psyche of the body-subject and their observable, behavioral expression in social contexts:

...la différence des mimiques recouvre une différence des émotions elle-mêmes. Ce n'est pas seulement le geste qui est contingent à l'égard de l'organisation corporelle, c'est la manière même d'accueillir la situation et de la vivre. Le Japonais en colère sourit, l'occidental rougit et frappe du pied ou pâlit et parle d'une voix sifflante. Il ne suffit pas que deux sujets conscients aient les mêmes organes et le même système nerveux pour que les mêmes émotions se donnent chez tous deux les mêmes signes. Ce qui importe c'est la manière dont ils font usage de leur corps, c'est la mise en forme simultanée de leur corps et de leur monde dans l'émotion. (1945, 220)

The reason for the indistinctness that appears between emotions and their expression is that Merleau-Ponty simply synthesizes these two phenomena. He does so by making of them a transcendent operation where “the simultaneous patterning of body and world in emotion” (1962, 219) indicates that only successful emotional communication can be produced by this synthesis. This view actually assumes that an operational intelligence lies behind the seemingly automatic patterning of emotions to their appropriate cultural setting.

In fact, this is what Merleau-Ponty arrives at in continuing his discussion of emotional communication. Without expressly meaning to posit an emotional intelligence that operates when the body-subject channels its affective resources to meet the demands and expectations of specific social contexts, our theorist's synthesis of emotions and their

expression demands such a conclusion. This is so because his assertion that it is not enough for two conscious subjects to have the same organs and nervous system for the same emotions to produce in both the same signs leads to a contradiction in Merleau-Ponty's deductions about emotions proper. At one point he says that differences in behaviors associated with emotions corresponds to differences in the emotions themselves (1945, 220). Yet, with regard to the "same organs and nervous system" argument, he has also asserted that cross-culturally the *same* emotions produce different signs, such as anger producing smiles in one society and red faces in another. For these two positions to hold true, a third agent, perhaps the aforementioned emotional essence, or better yet an operational intelligence, must be in operation in order to manage the "differences in the emotions themselves" and for emotions to ever have any kind of real and meaning-bearing existence in the lives of body-subjects. Otherwise, the experience of emotions would be haphazard and vague, owing nothing to causal forces and social contexts.

Moreover, even in disregarding the contradictory in Merleau-Ponty's conclusions on emotions and their observable expression, it still is clear that it is the latter that constitutes the major subject of his research focus. Simply stated, he spends much more time in describing the interpersonal expression of affective states than he does in delineating what emotions are themselves. For example, "L'usage qu'un homme fera de son corps est transcendant à l'égard de ce corps comme être simplement biologique. Il n'est pas plus naturel ou pas moins conventionnel de crier dans la colère ou d'embrasser dans l'amour que d'appeler table une table" (1945, 220) is an offering that perfectly illustrates this penchant. However, it is the transcendent usage of the body that hints that

something is operating behind whatever particular bodily reaction is solicited by a given emotional state. Indeed, “transcendent” is the word in the entirety of Merleau-Ponty’s considerations on interpersonal relations that holds the most potential for extending many of his ideas on affective states to those held by contemporary psychology, among them, of course, would be an emotional acumen. Before exploring how transcendence in Merleau-Ponty’s intersubjectivity can create such a connection, we must attend to one problematic aspect of his thoughts on emotions that, when compared to our interpretation of same, simply can no longer go unaddressed.

At this point we elect to delay expounding upon how Merleau-Ponty develops his notion of emotional essence and we also choose to suspend our own conclusions on the operational intelligence hinted at briefly in the previous discussion. The reason for this abrupt suspension is that our philosopher proffers yet another synthesis directly following our previous citations that, if left unqualified, precludes any connection with his considerations on emotions and our idea that emotional intelligence exists in a latent form therein. However, this synthesis represents only a temporary dilemma in our endeavor to establish contact between contemporary notions on emotional intelligence with Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of the role of emotions in the context of a transcendent intersubjectivity.

Directly following his thoughts on the transcendent use that man makes of his body, the author offers a classic existentialist version of how emotions operate in the realm of human relations: “Les sentiments et les conduites passionnelles sont inventés comme les mots. Même ceux qui, comme la paternité, paraissent inscrits dans le corps humain sont en réalité des institutions” (1945, 220). Considered in isolation, this

assertion would tend to render irrelevant any idea of an emotional intelligence or of an affective management capability within the mentality of the body-subject. According to this viewpoint, feelings are culturally generated responses to specific social situations that are sanctioned by the human collectivity and that become engrained in the psyche of individuals. Therefore, there would be no real possibility of intervention by any sort of strategic affective disposition into this rather deterministic patterning of human emotions.

However, Merleau-Ponty does not present this succinct and peremptory conclusion about passional conduct and feelings without giving it the same synthetic treatment that has come to qualify so many of his ideas on the lived experience of the body-subject. What he synthesizes this culturally deterministic model of emotions with is, unsurprisingly, its virtual opposite: the viewpoint of the purely biological as the causal agent of affective states. Picking back up directly from the last citation, he asserts that:

Il est impossible de superposer chez l'homme une première couche de comportements que l'on appellerait « naturels » et un monde culturel ou spirituel fabriqué. Tout est fabriqué et tout est naturel chez l'homme, comme on voudra dire, en ce sens qu'il n'est pas un mot, pas une conduite qui ne doive quelque chose à l'être simplement biologique --- et qui en même temps ne se dérobe à la simplicité de la vie animale, ne détourne de leur sens les conduites vitales, par une sorte d'*échappement* et par un génie de l'équivoque qui pourraient servir à définir l'homme. (1945, 220-221)

So, Merleau-Ponty describes a synthesis of the “natural” and the manufactured at work behind all emotions and passional conducts that nonetheless grants a primordial status to the natural/biological. While his considerations on the biological reality of human

relations is certainly pertinent for our discussion of emotional states, what is even more important for the subject of emotional intelligence is that Merleau-Ponty admits that “un génie de l'équivoque pourrait servir à définir l'homme” (1945, 221) mediates the synthesis of the natural and the culturally accepted in the realm of the affective.

This “genius for ambiguity” even has implications for speech production by the body-subject, but this will be addressed shortly. The recourse to an operational ambiguity, while seemingly buttressing the synthesis of the biological and the social in emotional expression, alludes to another power within the mentality of body-subjects that completes the articulation of affective experience. In helping to define the lived reality of the individual, this equivocality reveals a schism in the body-subject's experience that results from the lack of correspondence that exists between the biologically inspired world of affective states and the socially driven domain of reflective thought. Merleau-Ponty admittedly makes a cogent argument for the synthesis of the natural and the manufactured in emotional experience, and then allows for the genius of ambiguity to shore up matters concerning the communication of affective states. For what concerns our interest in showing Merleau-Ponty as a precursor to emotional intelligence studies, this is not a problem. The fact that he wants to synthesize biological impulses with culturally encoded behavioral responses indicates that he sees the division that separates them. It is from this separation of immediate, instinctual affective response and emotional reaction guided by reflective thought that we will now begin our formal analysis of how Merleau-Ponty serves a point of reference for the initial philosophical contributions to the subject of emotional intelligence.

Perhaps the one word that comes to mind when we look closely at how Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on affective communication and contemporary psychological notions of emotional intelligence interface is *limitations*. In speaking generally about Merleau-Pontean philosophy, it is with unabashed confidence that we characterize his contributions to the understanding of man's existence as one that constantly heeded the finiteness and the contingency that are inherent to the human condition. We are body-subjects that have both limited means of perceptually apprehending our physical environment and a perpetual sense of uncertainty in cognitively grasping the goings-on that constantly overload our ability to mentally process them. These rules of thumb lay the foundation for how we conceive of Merleau-Ponty as a harbinger for emotional intelligence studies. Limitations as to how our emotional processing in situation and our capacity to reason after the fact interrelate are evident in Merleau-Ponty's thought and will make the connection between it and what neuroscience has said recently about basic emotional production by the brain.

Contemporary American psychology sees emotional intelligence as a faculty that has been ignored by the scientific community for far too long. Part of the reason for this inattention has been the emphasis on standardized examinations as an assessment of academic-related learning, e.g., Intelligence Quotient tests and the Scholastic Aptitude Test here in the United States, as being the most relevant indicators of what most Western societies consider intellect. Coupled with this bias is the always increasing demand made upon contemporary society by modern industrial economies for workers that possess advanced technical expertise and knowledge. Intelligence, as a product of this environment, is equated with the ability to deal with the practical concerns of scientific

research and its applicability to the needs of highly specialized industries. Lost along the way of this type of development has been any attention to the notion that not only are there mental capacities that meet such technical and scientific demands, but that there are also capabilities for emotional growth within the mind that can and need to be developed as well. What has been found wanting in the life of individuals in Western industrial democracies is any external incentive to promote emotional intelligence, and thereby make of intersubjectivity a science that fosters growth in interpersonal communication skills and a more complete comprehension of the Other. In other words, no expansive, profit-generating emotional economy exists alongside and is equivalent to the technico-scientific economy that stimulates the use of those areas of the brain that are capable of meeting its own needs.

Therefore, contemporary emotional intelligence studies have as their point of departure a general sense of the limitations that most individuals are bound by due to the pro-scientific/technical intellectual climate that dominates mental life. Typical obstacles include the fact that the majority of people are unaware that affective intellect exists and that it can be developed just as academic and scientific intelligence can be. The public education complex has seen its role as largely dictated by the scientific community which is evidenced by the premium placed on the natural and applied sciences since the Industrial Revolution. To conceive of a curriculum based on emotional analysis in the current academic climate would be an absurdity beneath any consideration for most educational administrators. Even psychology has realized that it has ignored the concept of emotional intelligence up to only very recent times. Finally, philosophy has been

negligent as well, opting for the most part to leave emotions on the margins of any detailed analysis.

This is why Merleau-Ponty's ideas about emotions are so insightful, because his conceptualization of intersubjectivity actually alludes to many of the basic tenets that contemporary psychology attributes to emotional intelligence. This is not to say that he completely addresses the issue of affective intellect, or that he dwells on emotional states throughout his oeuvre. A more effective stance would be to underscore the notion that his interpretations of emotive experience are important for understanding emotional intelligence from a philosophical perspective, and for understanding his overall philosophical considerations from an affective point of view.

For Merleau-Ponty, there is a precision involved in being attuned to and in understanding the emotional states of others that is dependent on the emotional repertoire of the observer. This call for accuracy in interpersonal communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is necessary also for even more fundamental identifications to be made between body-subjects: "L'autre conscience ne peut être déduite que si les expressions émotionnelles d'autrui et les miennes sont comparées et identifiées et si des corrélations précises sont reconnues entre ma mimique et mes « faits psychiques » (1945, 404). Obviously, the comparison and subsequent recognition of emotional expressions between interfacing subjects plays as a monumental role for Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in what concerns matters of the first magnitude conscious-wise. This clearly promotes successful emotional communication to a rather surprising level, and thus speaks to a need for at least a precocious affective awareness, if not an emotive intellect.

However, what must be emphasized here is that the ideas of comparing emotional states and recognizing precise correlations between their physical manifestations do not precede perception. They are observations that are a product of it (1945, 404), and their detection and their similarities are therefore subject to the post-perceptual reflective capacities of the particular body-subject who discerns them. So, emotional apperceptions function on the level of conscious reflection while the experience of emotional states remains prior. Merleau-Ponty offers at one point a concise but cryptic definition of emotions proper by referring to them as “des variations de l’être au monde” (1945,220), and this certainly orientates our understanding of them towards being primordially bound up with lived experience. Better yet, he does finally include a qualifying remark about affective experience that allows us to see where their elemental inherence in being plays out for body-subjects:

Je perçois autrui comme comportement, par exemple je perçois le deuil ou la colère d’autrui dans sa conduite, sur son visage et sur ses mains, sans aucun emprunt à une expérience « interne » de la souffrance ou de la colère et parce que deuil et colère sont des variations de l’être au monde, indivises entre le corps et la conscience, et qui se posent aussi bien sur la conduite d’autrui, visible sur son corps phénoménal, que sur ma propre conduite telle qu’elle s’offre à moi. (1945, 409)

Emotions match the very unity of the body-subject gestalt in that they are undivided between the body and consciousness. As “variations of our belonging to the world” (1962, 415), affective states lend themselves to two interpretations that have important implications for our analysis of emotional intelligence.

As mentioned previously, feelings and passionate conduct are invented just as words are, but with the accompanying qualification that this inventedness is inseparably connected with the purely biological aspect of man's existence (1945, 220). Therefore, there is a creative ability behind emotional displays that would make of the body-subject a strategist who devises the most effective way of conveying affective states. Along with this creativity, the indivisibility of emotions between the body and consciousness indicates that their experience invokes a total involvement by all capacities that the body has at its disposal, perceptual and cognitive. Thus, creativity in expressing is a task that involves the entirety of the body-subject's faculties. However, these interpretations of how the individual formulates and transmits affective expressions ignores the essential other half of communication between body-subjects that is the reception of emotional messages. It is in considering how the perceived affective states of the other affect observers that Merleau-Ponty continues to open avenues of awareness of what constitutes nascent emotional intelligence.

It is important to recall that limitations within the body-subject's ability to deal with the infinite and constant bombardment of sensations, images, and other information presented by perceptual experience are a central concern for how Merleau-Ponty construes emotional communication. Emotional intelligence, for both contemporary psychology and our theorist, is intended more as an acute awareness of both abilities and deficiencies to receive and transmit emotional information on the part of the individual, and not as a perfectible skill that would approach genius status. Merleau-Ponty speaks to the limitations of vicariously experiencing the affective state of another with the following:

Mais enfin, le comportement d'autrui et même les paroles d'autrui ne

sont pas autrui. Le deuil d'autrui et sa colère n'ont jamais exactement le même sens pour lui et pour moi. Pour lui, ce sont des situations vécues, pour moi ce sont des situations apprésentées. Ou si je peux, par un mouvement d'amitié, participer à ce deuil et à cette colère, ils restent le deuil et la colère de mon ami Paul : Paul souffre parce qu'il a perdu sa femme ou il est en colère parce qu'on lui a volé sa montre, je souffre parce que Paul a de la peine, je suis en colère parce qu'il est en colère, les situations ne sont pas superposables. (1945, 409)

At first glance, these summations would seem to preclude any notion of an emotional intelligence in Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on interpersonal affective communication. But this would be true only if emotional intelligence was considered something approaching an omniscience. The realization that body-subjects cannot force an emotional response within themselves that would correspond to the affective reality of another *is* emotional intelligence. The lessons to be taught by affective experience are not degraded by this separation between individual emotive episodes, rather they are helped to define themselves through it.

Merleau-Ponty's clarifications on the understanding of other body-subject's emotional experiences are the starting point for genuine awareness of what individuals are capable of in the affective realm. Attuned to the situation involving the other, the body-subject recognizes and understands another, separate emotional reality and realizes at the same time that this affective actuality cannot and should not be confused with or be determined by its own emotional states of the present moment. In addition, there is no need to attempt a borrowing of an "internal" emotional state in order for the body-subject to know what it is that another is experiencing. In other words, there is attunement and recognition without need for access to any personal affective experience. The feeling of

an emotion is not necessary to know that that particular emotion is engaging the perceptual and cognitive capacities of a fellow body-subject.

An important point must be made in order to avoid what might seem to be a contradiction in how Merleau-Ponty conceives emotional communication. Previously, it was mentioned that body-subjects recognize affective expressions in other subjects by matching them with their own repertoire of emotional responses in given situations (1945, 404). The key term here is *matching*, and not, as has just been pointed out, *reproducing* the same emotion within their psyche in order for successful communication to take place. That point being clarified, what might have been construed as conflictual within the process of emotional recognition by body-subjects actually lends itself to revealing yet another commonality between Merleau-Pontean thought and the principles of emotional intelligence. By matching an emotional reaction from another individual to one in its affective repertory, the body-subject is carrying out an operation that involves a suspension of its own penchant for immediate emotional response in the face of a particular interpersonal situation. In addition, whether consciously or unconsciously, a selection of one among many affective reactions is made that transforms the passive observer into a receptive agent that takes up the intentions of the other and completes the emotional exchange.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty is also very aware of how body-subjects can make conscious, and even manipulative, decisions about the effects of emotions on their lives and the implications that this has for their interpersonal relationships. While topics such as this might strike students of philosophy as trivial or pedestrian, it is precisely because Merleau-Ponty devotes space for the discussion of interpersonal emotional

communication that his considerations on intersubjectivity carry the weight that they do. The point was made earlier that other existentialist thinkers leave the subject of affective analysis on the margin of their more pressing concerns such as liberty or consciousness. To this we would add that Merleau-Ponty is not exactly placing emotions at the center of his understanding of intersubjective experience. Nonetheless, what he does say about emotional states always seems to be integral for gaining insight into his conceptualization of interpersonal exchange.

For example, in terms of an individual's conscious and total commitment relationship-wise to another body-subject, Merleau-Ponty advises that such unions do not cause the committed party's sources of self-directedness and of intentionality to vanish. Rather, they reaffirm the certainty of one's own conscious decisions as the way in which the other's experience of reality is actually apprehended:

Le conflit du moi et d'autrui ne commence pas seulement quand on cherche à *penser* autrui et ne disparaît pas si on réintègre la pensée à la conscience non théorique et à la vie irréfléchie : il est déjà là si je cherche à vivre autrui, par exemple dans l'aveuglement du sacrifice. Je conclus un pacte avec autrui, je me suis résolu à vivre dans un intermonde où je fais autant de place à autrui qu'à moi-même. Mais cet intermonde est encore un projet mien et il y aurait de l'hypocrisie à croire que je veux le bien d'autrui *comme le mien*, puisque même cet attachement au bien d'autrui vient encore de moi. (1945, 409-410)

While this observation itself does not directly speak of emotive experience, what Merleau-Ponty opens the door to here is a better understanding of what does and does not happen to the individual's thought process when relational commitment to the Other is

effectuated. Merleau-Ponty's objectivity in viewing interpersonal strategies as ultimately having their origins in the self-centered and self-projected reality that dominates the individual's decisions is both refreshing and cogent for our conception of emotional intelligence. Sacrifice and devotion *are* conscious mental projections by the self that pave the way for emotional awareness of others. Affording others as much importance as oneself in relationships is clearly speaking toward an attunement to their overall lived reality, which, of course, includes emotions.

Furthermore, although Merleau-Ponty rarely employs Sartrean terminology such as bad faith or shame, in the context of blind sacrifice to another he underscores a fundamental precept of emotional intelligence that corresponds with the notion of responsibility in the existential sense: the fact that we ultimately choose how we react to and interact with others. When he says that the interworld is really just a project of the observer and that "il y aurait de l'hypocrisie à croire que je veux le bien d'autrui *comme le mien* puisque même cet attachement au bien d'autrui vient encore de moi," (1945, 409-410) he is speaking to the core reality of being affectively intelligent and the most essential way of living with responsibility as an existentialist. In terms of self-sacrifice, when the body-subject thinks of itself as doing something *for* some other subject, it is, in effect, denying its own responsibility. Whatever an individual does is done because he/she chooses to do it, and that choice is made with the satisfaction of the doer always in mind. So, what a body-subject offers up as emotional communication in the realm of the interworld is, in the final analysis, a matter of its own responsibility and decision making, and not the product of haphazard, instinctual drives that emanate from its purely biological nature.

With this notion of emotional responsibility in mind, let us examine closely at what Merleau-Ponty has to say about what must be regarded as the most significant affective relationship that body-subjects enter into, the monogamous love-inspired arrangement made between two consenting adults. Aware that, like their perceptual and cognitive capacities, the abilities of individuals to achieve complete control over emotional commitments are fraught with imperfections and uncertainties, he approaches monogamy with a skeptical eye. His skepticism lies not with the institution of marriage, or other similar arrangements, but more with the ability of two body-subjects to feel and to communicate love in a reciprocal fashion where a sense of balance is attained in terms of their commitments to one another. This outlook has important implications for his understanding of intersubjectivity when considering cognitive issues as well, but even more importantly, it reiterates Merleau-Ponty's stance on the responsibility that body-subjects have in ordering their own emotional worlds and in at least attempting to be aware of the genuine emotional role that they play in the life of the Other.

The central idea behind this aspect of emotional intelligence is reciprocity in interpersonal relationships. Merleau-Ponty states unequivocally that in the absence of reciprocity there is no alter Ego, or trusted counterpart, since the world of one partner takes in completely that of the other, so that one feels disinherited in favor of the other (1962, 416). To return to the previously mentioned love bond between two subjects, our theorist clarifies what a lack of mutual commitment results in:

C'est ce qui arrive dans un couple où l'amour n'est pas égal des deux
côtés : l'un s'engage dans cet amour et y met en jeu sa vie, l'autre demeure libre,

cet amour n'est pour lui qu'une manière contingente de vivre. Le premier sent fuir son être et sa substance dans cette liberté qui demeure entière en face de lui. Et même si le second, par fidélité aux promesses ou par générosité, veut à son tour se réduire au rang de simple phénomène dans le monde du premier, se voir par les yeux d'autrui, c'est encore par une dilatation de sa propre vie qu'il y parvient et il nie donc en hypothèse l'équivalence d'autrui et de soi qu'il voudrait affirmer en thèse. La coexistence doit être en tout cas vécue par chacun. (1945, 410)

This passage reveals Merleau-Ponty's commitment to rendering clear as much as possible all aspects of intersubjectivity as well as his precocity with regard to emotional intellect. It does so by demonstrating the precarious nature of emotional bonds that exist between subjects. Simply stated, emotions are not an intersubjective phenomenon to be taken lightly. Relationships are *ipso facto* emotional undertakings that require conscious maintenance on the part of the co-participants, and entering into a relationship carries with it the burden of an inherent emotional ineptitude that constantly threatens the possibility of a stable and continued coexistence.

Just as we are thrown into existence, possess an undeniable corporeality that connects us to the physical world, and have a priori at our disposal a language that allows us to function in the social sphere, we are also thrust into an intersubjectivity that is transcendent in that relations between body-subjects ensure the fact that each individual escapes from his/her own private sphere and reaches out to infinite possibilities for self-transformation through contact with others. For this interpretation of the term transcendent to be understood with clarity, it is necessary to recall Merleau-Ponty's own basic definition: "Quand je dis que les choses sont transcendantes, cela signifie que je ne les possède pas, que je n'en fais pas le tour, elles sont transcendantes dans la mesure où

j'ignore ce qu'elles sont et où j'en affirme aveuglément l'existence nue" (1945, 423).

This helps our understanding of emotional communication because of all phenomena that arise from interpersonal relationships, affective states are not things possessed nor circumambulated by those who experience them. In addition, they certainly do not lend themselves to objective analysis such as factual information and statements of logic, and yet there is no denying their existence in the lives of body-subjects. Adding to this the difficulty with which emotional states are often times successfully communicated between individuals, we realize that indeed this transcendence is rife with inconsistencies when we seek an explanation as to how it interacts with subjects. To how we can have knowledge of the transcendent will now unveil how Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is geared toward an emotional intelligence.

Directly before his definition of transcendence, our theorist offers up the following problematic explanation of how the individual grasps the transcendent: "L'expérience même des choses transcendantes n'est possible que si j'en porte et j'en trouve en moi-même le projet" (1945, 423). While this

Merleau-Ponty stresses that it is only if body-subjects withdraw into the core of their thinking nature and make of themselves inhuman spectators of the world that their gazes have the power to transform others into objects and to deny them (1945,414). Through communication, however, individuals take up and understand the actions of others, and ensure that their lives are not observed like mere insects (1945,414). Just as certain is the idea that emotional production by the body-subject also comes into being through the communicative exchange.

At this point, we do not want to stray very far from how Merleau-Ponty construes the role of language in the context of emotional expression. It is necessary to remember that language production, gestural communication, and emotional expression are all transcendent operations carried out by the body-subject. However, even though Merleau-Ponty considers these acts to be transcendent, they are not without limitations. It is from his commentary on the limitations associated with how body-subjects express themselves and with how human understanding presents itself to itself that our theorist enters into the domain of emotional intelligence. What is crucial for understanding emotional intelligence is that Merleau-Ponty is shunning the utilization of the type of intellect that is used in traditional scientific examinations. To comprehend the gestures, both symbolic and emotional, of the Other is to revise how we use our perceptual capacities in doing so, and to be aware of the importance of having an active, fluid acumen in this domain. In order to further our understanding of this domain, we will now focus more on what Merleau-Ponty has to say about a subject we have only begun to examine: non-verbal communication.

Non-Verbal Communication and Merleau-Ponty

One of the most challenging subjects to write about is non-verbal communication (NVC). We are reminded of this fact each time the description of a particular phenomenon is necessary, but the use of language is not a possibility. Along with emotional intelligence, NVC has in recent years become a subject of study that is appreciated for its ability to increase the effectiveness with which people interface. It is applicable to what we have examined in Merleau-Ponty's contributions primarily due to his insistence on the primacy of the human form in interpersonal contexts. Modern theorists contend that up to ninety percent of emotional communication is effectuated through non-verbal means. Therefore, there will be a significant amount of our analysis on affective awareness integrated into this portion of the thesis. In addition, we will venture into the interesting realm of linguistic-creation in Merleau-Ponty's vision in order to try to establish a link between NVC and his need for philosophical neologisms. We will review certain notions about the interiority of language and inter-subjectivity as well.

While Merleau-Ponty has been given the moniker “the philosopher of ambiguity,” perhaps an equally appropriate epithet could be “the philosopher of non-verbal communication.” His considerations on the role of language in the life of the body-subject are certainly well appreciated, but his accompanying thoughts on communication apart from language cannot be ignored if we are to adequately understand such ideas as the significative intention and the interior of language. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty’s delineation of these concepts is really an attempt to articulate powers and conditions of language that, in spite of the best efforts of speakers, remain incapable of being completely expressed verbally. The objective of the following analysis will be to show that because language holds over and against its users an inaccessibility, non-verbal forms of communication surface in the lives of speaking subjects that Merleau-Ponty will interpret in his own unique manner as “style.”

As has been made clear previously, the physical body is at the center of all philosophical considerations for Merleau-Ponty. This is crucial for the present analysis in that his entire insistence upon the primacy of human corporeality is supported by many generally held principles of modern psycho-linguistics, not the least of which is the widely held notion that approximately ninety percent of all emotional communication is non-verbal (1995, 97). *The Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* defines non-verbal communication (NVC) as “any form of communication apart from language” (495), including paralinguage which is comprised of non-verbal aspects of speech that convey information to listeners such as accent, loudness, pitch, rhythm, and tempo (529). Included in this domain are facial expressions which can be summed up as the affective

display communicated via the musculature of the skull which itself is sufficiently complex to enable a vast range of expressions (265).

In fact, there is an entire field of scientific endeavor interested in the communicative power of gestures, kinesics, that classifies various bodily movements into roughly four categories (392). The specific nature of these categories indicates the degree to which they are understood automatically cross-culturally. For example, emblems are gestures that substitute for words, such as waving the hand to indicate a departure or placing a forefinger to one's lips to ask for silence. Illustrators are physical gesticulations that accompany speech and depict what is being expressed verbally such as moving hands apart in order to demonstrate the size of a large fish. Adaptors are gestures that usually involve self-touching as a way of coping with emotional reactions to various situations socially, such as putting a hand over the mouth due to surprise. Finally, regulators accompany speech and help to coordinate the taking of turns in face-to-face communication, such as the raising of a hand in order to indicate that one has not finished speaking.

What these labels reveal is that gesticulations are much more central to interpersonal communication than commonly believed. Because they are not articulated verbally they do not register automatically as communicative acts. Yet they convey, sometimes in the single movement of a hand, a great deal of information without a single word being uttered. However, what is also important about non-verbal forms of communication is that they can function just as verbal communication does in what concerns that which is not expressed explicitly. Sociology offers the equilibrium hypothesis to explain important collective behaviors that happen when a reduction in

communication is a premium for members of a group. This hypothesis maintains that participants in a social interaction who feel that the degree of intimacy conveyed by certain channels of non-verbal communication is inappropriate to the level of intimacy expected of the relationship will tend to compensate for this disparity by reducing their level of intimate involvement conveyed through other channels. For example, when crowded situations such as underground trains force people to stand closer together than is ordinarily appropriate with strangers, they tend to reduce the level of intimacy by engaging in less eye contact.

Taking this kind of scenario into consideration opens up the entirety of human experience to new levels of examination. Non-verbal communication can be seen as permeating almost every type of social interaction imaginable when minimalist tendencies in communication are considered to impart as much meaning as overt communicative acts. Simply stated, the realm of NVC is ubiquitous in the lived existence of the body-subject. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a social scenario in which individuals do not communicate non-verbally. In the face of the Other NVC is a condition that is constant, and largely not a matter of choice. This is what makes it so important for understanding Merleau-Ponty's views on inter-subjectivity. Both interpersonal relationships and NVC can be seen as a priori results of being "thrown" in the world. Certainly we have had the opportunity to explore the importance of inter-subjectivity within Merleau-Pontean thought. For now, we feel it important to continue our examination of current themes in NVC in order to fully appreciate how Merleau-Ponty grasps the subject with regard to space and territoriality in interpersonal settings.

Alongside kinesics another field of inquiry has opened up in recent years that deals with how body-subjects establish zones of territory around themselves and how they manipulate said areas of control: proxemics. When investigating this subject of interest we must keep in mind that it is only in its beginning stages as an accepted and an applied science within the field of sociology. Therefore, it has not been refined, much less perfected. Like kinesics, this social science is divided into four areas of interest: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance. These zones represent different areas in which body-subjects move, and most importantly, areas that increase as intimacy decreases. Intimacy does indeed carry an affective component in this scheme of things, thus establishing proxemics as a study in both NVC of various types and emotional forms of non-verbal communication. Space is seen as having the power to communicate certain facts between individuals, largely through the use of physical signals that accompany the maintenance of certain lengths of proximity.

Intimate distance can actually be physical contact between people, in which case it is termed *close*, or *far*, in which it is a space from between six to eighteen inches. When it is a case of close intimate distance a particular body-subject is considered to be overwhelmingly aware of a partner or partners. This phase is more appropriate for lovers, very close friends, and children around parents. The far intimate phase of intimate distance in reality sounds a bit misleading because it is still possible for physical contact to happen in this area, but it is not always acceptable. If we recall our summary of equilibrium theory, far intimacy can lead to a reduction in certain expressions of NVC due to an assessment of inappropriate distance for the body-subjects in question. Physiognomy plays a key role in situations where strangers in large groups are forced

into confined spaces. Individuals will stiffen their musculature, especially in areas of the body that might potentially come in contact with a neighbor. In addition, a fixed gaze is forbidden between said strangers at this distance, but a brief look is allowed.

The second area in the proxemic scheme is the personal distance zone. This phase also has two distinctions, close and far. Close personal distance is from one and a half feet to two and a half feet. Physical contact is still possible at this level, but is limited to touching appendages for the most part. This zone is perhaps the most difficult to define in terms of intimacy because it can be entered into casually in particular social settings by strangers, such as celebratory gatherings, and it can still be considered too intimate to cross in private environments such as a domicile. However, as we progress to the far phase of personal distance that is measured at two and a half to four feet, the limit of physical domination is reached whereby we are no longer capable of easily touching others. There is therefore a degree of privacy with encounters at this distance, but not without the possibility of having personal discussions. This is the realm of public encounters with acquaintances, but this is not, according to the framework of proxemics, officially the public zone.

The social zone is comprised of a close and a far distinction as well. The close zone at the social level is from four to seven feet, and lends itself to impersonal business transactions and casual social gatherings. The far phase of this model has communicators from seven to twelve feet from one another. Formality dominates the social atmosphere in which this distance is used. Hierarchies of power tend to dictate that those participants of inferior status remain at a distance from the individual or individuals who either through position or circumstance hold a superior or coveted station. Interestingly, eye

contact now becomes mandatory due to the distance in question. There also is a certain amount of autonomy in this phase that allows for communicators to multi-task while in each other's presence. This is also the distance at which families in private function, each individual having enough personal space to pursue specific activities.

The farthest extent of our territorial bondage is represented by the public zone of distance. Again, we find a close and a far designation for this area, close being defined as twelve to twenty-five feet. This is a distance for informal gatherings where an individual addresses a group. The far phase of public distance, twenty-five feet or more, is generally reserved for public officials or celebrities who have to stay at a safe distance from those they address. These considerations on the space that exists between communicators continues to be an important part of how non-verbal forms of communication now are seen as having unlimited possibilities for formal assessment. We must now return to our discussion of Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on gesture-based communication in order to eventually bring together these previous clarifications on spatial proximity and his ideas on communication without language.

Before we begin our examination of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on NVC, it is necessary that we divide this realm of human communication into two parts. There is a gesture-based non-verbal form of communication that has largely been covered by our brief examination of the four categories that make up the field of kinesics. These are socially sanctioned and learned symbolic behaviors that are explicit and sometimes demonstrative in their nature. While they can be linked to emotional states, especially in the case of adaptors, they are for the most part indications that a specific behavior is sought from or a particular message is meant for a receiver. Emotional communication,

on the other hand, does not entail gesticulation necessarily. Rather, it is communicated through variations of facial expressions and is not always meant to be demonstrative. This is what constitutes an important distinction between it and gesture-based NVC. Interestingly, Merleau-Ponty will differentiate between these two forms of NVC in much the same way, treating emotions and gestures as separate phenomena within his views on inter-subjectivity.

In this way, our examination of non-verbal forms of communication will closely approach what has already been covered in our analysis of emotional intelligence. It should be obvious, even from what little has been put forth so far on the subject of NVC, that the two subjects are inter-related. Also of note is the fact that emotions and NVC are areas of interest mainly for the field of psychology. Looking back at our discussion of the interiority of language, we recall that psychology, and in particular the Gestalt school of psychologists, was an important influence on Merleau-Ponty's thought. Thus, it is natural that he would make forays into the realm of the affective from time to time in order to explicate facets of inter-subjective relations.

One point has to be made clear before we venture into describing how Merleau-Ponty's ideas correspond with notions on NVC currently. This is our interpretation of specific references that Merleau-Ponty has made about the body, without him ever explicitly inferring that NVC was a part of his view of the body-subject. In addition, Merleau-Ponty did not coin or use this term *per se* in his texts. As has been shown thoroughly, this philosopher did create expressions to stand for major concepts in his view of philosophy, but this is not one of them. Also, we will have to be very careful to distinguish between speech production by the body-subject and NVC moments for said

subject. A considerable part of Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the body-subject involves language production, as was shown in our section over language and intersubjectivity. We will be discussing powers that the human body has to communicate without language as they are delineated by Merleau-Ponty. With this however, we will also make inferences about and relate issues germane to contemporary ideas on NVC. With these clarifications in mind, let us proceed first with a review of what constitutes the body-subject.

Moreover, we feel it necessary to say that we are purposefully transforming some of Merleau-Ponty's ideas in order to show how they relate to currently held ideas on NVC. Many times it will be evident that he is moving in a somewhat different direction than our analysis, but his notions are still very suitable for drawing comparisons to communication without language. One point in particular presents itself above all others. As has been discussed previously, the concept of the body-subject sees language production and corporeality as an integrated whole. We will be working under the assumption that the body is a communicative device in this scheme, and we will highlight the fact that Merleau-Ponty places human corporeality at the center of the transmission of communication, even if that means spoken language has taken place. In a way, we will be splitting the body away from the concept of the body-subject, but only for purposes of underscoring how corporeality functions within Merleau-Ponty's vision of the communicative process.

As has been noted, Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the body-subject is the foundation for viewing him as being precociously attuned to contemporary views on NVC. Therefore, a review of his delineation of what the body-subject is necessary for the

purposes of this section of the thesis. One aspect of the communicative process is the simple act of perception of the world that surrounds potential communicators. At the center of the perceptive process for the body-subject is vision, and Merleau-Ponty shows a particular flair in dramatizing the phenomenon of the visual intake of information :

Mon corps, comme metteur en scène de ma perception, a
fait éclater l'illusion d'une coïncidence de ma perception avec les choses
mêmes. Entre elles et moi, il y a désormais des pouvoirs cachés, toute
cette végétation de fantasmes possibles qu'il ne tient en respect que dans
l'acte fragile du regard. (1964, 23-24)

At the beginning of all perception is the reality that the body is the initial anchor in the world of observing things, and others as well. There is an element of the unknown and the unknowable involved in this process where body-subjects operate with less than complete command over perceptual and cognitive powers, hence the quite vivid choice of vocabulary in the previous citation. The body, as a type of director for the motion picture that is perception, functions in an arena where there is a rift between objects and the body-subject's awareness of them. However, at the same time, a relationship exists between the body and the world that the author describes as "ce rapport magique, ce pacte entre elles (les choses) et moi selon lequel je leur prête mon corps pour qu'elles y inscrivent et me donnent leur ressemblance (1964, 189). Thus, there is a process of give-and-take between the body and the objects that surround it in Merleau-Ponty's vision that surpasses traditional philosophical conceptualizations of the subject-object duality.

Speaking more directly to the subject of inter-subjectivity, one of the aspects of the body-subject that supports a direct involvement with NVC is its self-identification through the other: “c’est justement mon corps qui perçoit le corps d’autrui et il y trouve comme un prolongement miraculeux de ses propres intentions, une manière familière de traiter le monde...” (1945, 406). This type of identification is the beginning of granting the Other the same capacities for sentiments and reactions that the perceiver employs. This citation also reveals the primacy of the human form in initiating the communicative process that is a process first and foremost of associating one’s own intentions with those of the Other. Looking at how the Other deals with experience allows for a moment of self-reflection where an underlying unity between communicating subjects emerges to establish an interpersonal bond between body-subjects. Merleau-Ponty insists upon a concurrence between the intentions and the gestures of two body-subjects in order for there to be any mutual understanding (1945, 215). This is crucial not only for the transmission of information, but for the comprehension of emotional states between subjects in situation. In what concerns NVC, the relaying of emotions takes place largely outside the realm of language production *per se*.

Returning to the Merleau-Pontean notion of a collective communicational unity, we are still on the level of body-to-body identification. The “miraculous prolongation” alluded to earlier introduces a moment in the life of the body-subject that Merleau-Ponty endows with a kind of magic: “chacun s’éprouve voué à un corps, à une situation, à travers eux à l’être, et ce qu’il sait de lui-même passe entièrement en autrui à l’instant même où il éprouve son pouvoir médusant (celui de l’autre)” (1964, 90). The transmission of knowledge between the other and the self happens instantaneously that

the subject experiences the dumbfounding power of the other's corporeality. Not only is the presence of the Other guaranteed a transformational power, but the gestures created by the Other are at the beginning of all communication as well.

Nonetheless, there must be a receiver of the gesture for the transference of intentions to be complete: "Le sens des gestes n'est pas donné mais compris, c'est-à-dire ressaisi par un acte du spectateur. Toute la difficulté est de bien concevoir cet acte et de ne pas le confondre avec une opération de connaissance" (1945, 215). Therefore, there is a bringing together of the act of a gesture and its recapture by a spectator that, far from being an intellectual operation, is in the identification of the spectator's own behavior with that of his/her co-communicator (1945, 216). There is an immediacy to this transmission that ensures that it is not an intellectual process but an instantaneous matching up of what the receiver's repertoire of known signals can provide in the face of the gesture perceived. The immediate nature of this communication cannot be emphasized enough, especially when NVC is under consideration. A mutual confirmation of established meanings for gestures between communicators ensures that a non-verbal means of transmitting information happens instantaneously. Non-verbal communication is so powerful because it naturally bypasses cognitive engagement.

As we saw previously, Merleau-Ponty calls for a suspension of the principles of scientific study or any other intellectual analysis when doing phenomenology, and, of course, when considering the body-subject:

...je ne comprends pas les gestes d'autrui par un acte d'interprétation intellectuelle, la communication des consciences n'est pas fondée sur le sens commun de leurs expériences, mais elle le fonde aussi bien : il faut reconnaître

comme irréductible le mouvement par lequel je me prête au spectacle, je me joins à lui dans une sorte de reconnaissance aveugle qui précède la définition et l'élaboration intellectuelle du sens. (1945, 216)

The body-subject integrates itself with its inter-subjective surroundings before any intervention on the part of its cognitive abilities can produce a representation of experience for itself. Thus, existing prior to the intellectualized and therefore derivative existence of objective thought, the immediately perceived realm of gesture-based communication functions in what could be considered an uncontaminated and direct interfacing with the body-subject.

We have been dealing for quite some time now with Merleau-Pontean ideas that dwell on the origins of phenomena such as language. To understand Merleau-Ponty's gesture-based theory of language is to realize that the philosopher intends first and foremost to establish a foundation for language production that would solve the problem of origins of language. Like all philosophers, the problem of establishing origins for phenomena such as language and culture is an obstacle of which the phenomenologists are quite aware. To be brief, Merleau-Ponty sees an a priori human embodiment in the world (*l'être-au-monde*) as a grounding of perceptual experience. Any description of this body-subject cannot be conceptually separated from describing the world. Although this body-subject is physical, it is not physical in the sense that animals, plants, and material objects are. Moreover, the physicality of the body-subject is neither the totality of what it is, nor the essence of its consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, this conceptualization of the body-subject is a means of overcoming the problem of mind-body dualism. The a priori

“throwness” of the body-subject in the world is an answer to the problem of origins for the problem of origins for the subject.

We have previously discussed the role of emotions in the communicative process for body-subjects. With gestures in mind, we choose to review some crucial observations by Merleau-Ponty on the subject of affective communication in order to elucidate what happens between body-subjects during an exchange. Gestures are emotions made public and they do not require onlookers to conjure up mental representations of affective states nor to recall their own experience of particular emotions:

Soit un geste de colère ou de menace, je n'ai pas besoin pour le comprendre de me rappeler les sentiments que j'ai éprouvés lorsque j'exécutais pour mon compte les mêmes gestes. Je connais très mal, de l'intérieur, la mimique de la colère, il manquerait donc, à l'association par ressemblance ou au raisonnement par analogie, un élément décisif — et d'ailleurs je ne perçois pas la colère ou la menace comme un fait psychique caché derrière le geste, je lis la colère dans le geste, le geste ne me *fait pas penser* à la colère, il est la colère elle-même. (1945, 215)

It is clear that the author sees gesture-based communication to be a pristine form of the transmission of information that has an immediate and direct effect on the recipient. It is interesting that Merleau-Ponty chooses in this example to attach an emotion to a particular gesture. This empowers the gesture in this case in ways that mere information such as “farewell” from a wave of the hand or “silence” from a forefinger to the lips simply cannot. The emotion-based gesture carries behind it a personal message that leaves no reason for which the receiver should equivocate. Individuals do not need to

evoke their own experiences of a given affective state in order to perceive and to understand the emotional status of another body-subject.

Merleau-Ponty insists on maintaining his analysis of gestures and emotions on an immediate level in terms of transmission of information between body-subjects. This attitude is, of course, indicative of his phenomenological orientation that advocates a return to things themselves in lieu of objective, scientific reasoning:

On voit bien ce qu'il y a de commun au geste et à son sens, par exemple à l'expression des émotions et aux émotions mêmes: le sourire, le visage détendu, l'allégresse des gestes contiennent réellement le rythme de l'action, le mode d'être au monde qui sont la joie même. (1945, 217)

Therefore, Merleau-Ponty provides for a privileged status for expressions of emotions as a means of communication, just as he sees gestures serving as the foundation for conventional language forms at a primordial level. We have already partially investigated these considerations in our section on emotional intelligence, but their relevance is even more clear in the present context. Non-verbal communication is not filtered through the conventions of language or cultural coding. It can certainly be misunderstood or ignored, but the fact remains that for the transmitter it is almost an unconscious act that is revelatory of immediate and instinctual affective reactions to stimuli.

When we look at Merleau-Ponty's ruminations on the subject of NVC, we are often lead to think that non-verbal forms of communication are endowed with special powers of clarity and automatic recognition. His writing is passionate and his choice of

lexicon is sometimes lyrical and otherworldly. Considering these to be serious phenomenological observations leads us to question the almost apodictic certainty that characterizes Merleau-Ponty's ideas. After all, there must be a receiver who successfully grasps what is intended for him/her in order for the transmission of feelings or ideas to take place. With regard to failed attempts at emotional or non-verbal communication where potential recipients through some means do not receive messages, one of the tenets of contemporary thought on NVC is that in order for there to be a successful transference of emotional information between communicators attunement to the affective states of both parties must be ensured. This is not a cognitive process as much as it is an observational concern.

Merleau-Ponty's insistence on constant re-examination of phenomenological technique calls for a consistent self-questioning that reveals how much in common his method of doing philosophy has with the contemporary attitude toward NVC. The term "body-subject" (*le sujet-corps*) as has been explained thus far in this section of the thesis is understood as having certain qualities and capabilities that lend it a totalizing or holistic character. It is certainly a new way of battling the problem of the mind-body duality, and it represents one of the more comprehensible linguistic creations that Merleau-Ponty used to buttress his phenomenology, if not the one most central to his thought. Its relation to NVC has been explored, and yet its imprint on this section of the thesis leads us to pursue some of the other synthetic conceptual creations of which Merleau-Ponty is the author. In a way, these creative linguistic neologisms function like NVC in that they stand for concepts that do not explain themselves using language in an ordinary way or with ordinary language.

One characteristic of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical ambition that becomes undoubtedly clear after even the most cursory overview of his corpus is an unbridled avant-gardism in the area of concept-building. With a closer look, this inventive spirit reveals itself as both a struggle against the commonly held notions of objective reasoning and a much called for embrace of the unorthodox in phenomenological inquiry. Like all philosophers who have encountered limitations in their ability to express themselves fully when dealing with the evanescent in human thought, Merleau-Ponty has an affinity for engaging and putting into words what could be best described as conceptual "fringe elements." These unconventional combinations of ideas emerge from the margins between accepted ideas and the thresholds that exist between these principles and the untested domains of philosophical pursuit: "l'intention significative," "l'intérieur du langage," and "la perception érotique" . While this description seems to apply to most philosophic activity, it is particularly cogent in underscoring Merleau-Ponty's contributions to the advancement of the prevailing school of thought of his time, phenomenology, and in seeing his avant-garde penchant as an inspiration for the growth of ideas that exceeds philosophical boundaries even to this day.

The attempt at circumscribing the unexplored notions that hauntingly accompany the more prominent concepts such as temporality, consciousness, and corporeality, are opportunities for Merleau-Ponty to let his philosophical persuasion, phenomenology, function according to its own prime directive of re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world and endowing that contact with a philosophical status (1962, vii). This direct and primeval contact must touch everything, for it seeks to define the essence of every phenomenon that presents itself to human perception. At the same time, it is an

established fact that Merleau-Ponty is cognizant of the cognitive and perceptual limitations of the body-subject, and that ambiguities during the process of finding essences are bound to surface (1962, 404). The recognition of the ambiguous, for which he was well known, is the birthplace of the unique, synthetic concepts and of the novel overhauls of mainstream ideas that dot the landscape of Merleau-Pontean thought. Among them there are four conceptualizations that are interrelated and that, while not being juxtaposed or linked expressly by the author, mutually foster an understanding of the intersubjective and communicative drama that takes place between interlocutors: the interior of language, the significative intention within language production, the erotic perception/comprehension that functions as the initial grasp that affectivity has on experience, and Merleau-Ponty's unique rendering of the intersubjective that results from interpersonal communication.

These conceptualizations come together to produce an understanding of intersubjective communication that has seriously informative insights on the problematic nature of how human beings interface socially even today. To ignore what Merleau-Ponty sporadically examines in his corpus about these four concepts is to deny him due credit in today's psychological circles that stress the importance and the dire need for individuals to express themselves more adroitly and with greater care for those around them that wish to do the same. This portion of our thesis does not claim that Merleau-Ponty himself ever considered himself to be the precursor to many of the contemporary notions of intersubjectivity that have been advanced in the interest of establishing a science of emotional intelligence. This is far from being the case. But he does devote a considerable amount of energy toward trying to better articulate novel interpretations of how language

by itself influences and interfaces with its operators from a phenomenological perspective. In addition, he creates a space for emotional analysis within the framework of interpersonal communication that upholds affectivity as a domain much in need of phenomenological inspection.

What these conceptualizations have in common, apart from their ground-breaking status as novel re-writings of the lived experience of interpersonal communication and of language as it is produced by its users, is something that goes beyond their mere subject matter. They point phenomenological study toward the realization that there are facets of intersubjectivity that simply do not offer themselves up to being described from the “direct and primitive contact with the world” mode of inquiry. This introduces a definitively transcendent aspect into how his phenomenology sees itself as doing philosophy. Due to Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the primacy of perception in the investigative process, it would seem that only those phenomena that unveil themselves to perceptual capacities could be considered apodictic philosophical certainties.

Thus, we have arrived at a point of uncertainty that must be scrutinized to see how Merleau-Ponty, while perhaps not labeling concepts such as the interiority of language as “transcendent,” clearly allows for such conceptualizations to exist outside the realm of the perceptually evident. While some students of phenomenology might have a conflict with the idea that certain phenomena are immanent to the body-subject’s experience of the world, while others are only transcendentally arrived at, Merleau-Ponty vows that his philosophy is a transcendent one (1962, vii). Therefore, let us explore the transcendent aspect that all four of the previously mentioned conceptualizations have in common that both alerts and challenges body-subjects to realize that certain facets of immanent and

thrown phenomena must be viewed as hybridized with an elusiveness and a mysterious quality.

We will now offer a series of brief introductions to the four aforementioned areas of interest that will serve as an overview of how they can be seen as establishing a novel phenomenological understanding of interpersonal relations. This will be an outlining of only their most basic postulations. From there each of the four individual subjects will be examined separately in much greater detail. We will first begin with a short look at how our philosopher introduces the evanescent and the ambiguous into his descriptions of the lived experience of intersubjectivity and language production on the part of the body-subject.

Making his own writing style mirror the wondrous qualities that he posits language as having, the often times surprising choice of vocabulary terms that punctuates his texts lends a rather non-philosophical and more phenomenally open-ended feel to his understanding of intersubjectivity. While considerations on the cogito, the corporeality of others, and the sexual rapport between the self and others are thoroughly and clearly presented by the author, communication between body-subjects is the central activity that Merleau-Ponty focuses on in order to build his version of intersubjectivity. Although entire chapters of Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre are devoted to very important philosophical concerns such as freedom, spatiality, and the cogito, closely studying his deliberations on interpersonal relations gives one the impression that the communicative give-and-take between individuals fosters a passion within the philosopher that is unparalleled by any other interest. For Merleau-Ponty, there is a power generated between two communicating subjects that is not easily perceived nor comprehended. Because of this

elusive experience, the language that he chooses to describe the process of interpersonal communication is often unsettling for what concerns philosophical inquiry. Thus, this description of intersubjectivity alone demands a full examination if we are to see how it enriches the pursuit of phenomenological investigation, but it also has implications for other key and related concepts that Merleau-Ponty develops in order that language production may be better understood from his unique perspective.

The interiority of language forces the users of language to realize that there are zones of language production that deny any complete knowledge on the part of the speaker or writer of his/her tongue. Language is a privilege for the body-subject, even though it is an *a priori* phenomenon given along with social existence. It ensures intersubjectivity and therefore the only chance for wellness that individuals have for maintaining a healthy interpersonal communication not only of their wants and needs, but of their emotional states as well. Nonetheless, language does not allow for itself to become an object for language producers. When Merleau-Ponty refers to it as a cultural object, he does not use the term “object” in the philosophical sense of it being a fixed or undynamic phenomenon, because the descriptions that he makes of language and the descriptive language that he uses throughout his corpus do not speak to a medium of communication of which body-subjects can ever attain a mastery. It is elusive, yet generous, surprising, yet frustrating. Yet, for Merleau-Ponty, it is precisely because language has an interiority that it is accessible to speaking subjects. For individuals in situation, this interior of language exists as a perpetual condition of linguistic creativity that emerges due to the endless possibilities for speakers to produce novel utterances, neologisms, and original literary forms. These limited descriptions of linguistic interiority

hint at a type of intentionality that resides behind language production and that will now be examined in an equally brief manner.

Likewise, the significative intention shares many of the same characteristics as the interiority of language. Like most of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical constructions, they are both greatly influenced by Gestalt psychological theory. This influence indicates that there is a relational unity between the constituent elements of said conceptualizations that is of a synergistic nature and that leaves to be explored a resultant residue that emerges from the coming together of such components. From this common ground, however, there are obvious differences in how these two concepts interface with the body-subject's experience of the world. The speaking subject is infused with the significative intention, while the interiority of language is a phenomenon that is sought out by speakers. Users of language exist more in a state of passivity with regard to the intention to communicate than in an active relationship to it. Also, the signifying intention seems to have a consciousness of its own, functioning as both a super-lingual force and an expressive void that are in search of appropriate verbal receptacles from among the words of a given language in order to materialize. These descriptions serve only as a beginning to how Merleau-Ponty views the significative intention's role in the life of the body-subject, but these brief delineations certainly do point toward a transcendence that demands further examination. This need, and the terrain opened up by the previous glimpses at the interiority of language and the transcendent vocabulary that characterizes the author's descriptions of intersubjectivity, brings us to perhaps the most intriguing and innovative of the four conceptualizations that our philosopher posits, erotic comprehension.

The term “erotic comprehension,” put forth in the chapter entitled “Le Corps Comme Etre Sexué,” encompasses a rudimentary understanding of how the body-subject engages affectivity. For Merleau-Ponty, affectivity is a special form of consciousness unknown to conventional cognitive psychology. It is essential to note that he links this type of awareness with sexual responsiveness between body-subjects, underscoring once again the primacy of corporeality in the lived experience of the individual. Even more important is the realization that there is an immediacy at work in erotic sensitivity that evades conscious reflection because it results from the thrown nature of both individual corporeality and the undeniable existence of other physical subjects. The linking of body to body occurs from a kind of spontaneous impulse and initiates a process that then has unlimited potential for the establishment of long-term relationships based on emotional attunement. According to Merleau-Ponty, the infinity of interpersonal possibilities allows for what he calls acts of authentic thought and intuitive understanding. Intuition plays the central role of guide for emotional communication, allowing body-subjects to intuit the affective states of others, to attempt to guess at their emotional realities, and to try to vicariously feel what others feel.

While even more compelling evidence exists in Merleau-Ponty’s texts for suggesting that he was a precursor to the theoretical development of emotional intelligence, at this point we consider it imperative to begin the formal and detailed examination of the many conceptualizations that have only been briefly touched upon in this introduction. After these separate studies, we will then launch into an analysis of the applications that the common themes and elements that emerge from said examinations have for the study of literature.

At this point we feel a re-examination of some of the points on language and inter-subjectivity in order to better understand our discussion of non-verbal communication. This will allow us to continue our discussion of neologisms and to clarify how the interpersonal dynamic causes Merleau-Ponty to create such labels.

For Merleau-Ponty, the use of language by the body-subject is analogous to its use of its own corporeality: “Quand je parle, je ne me *représente* pas des *mouvements* à faire: tout mon appareil corporel se rassemble pour rejoindre et dire le mot comme ma main se mobilise d'elle-même pour prendre ce qu'on me tend” (1969, 28). One does not need to represent or mentally visualize speech somehow in one's consciousness in order to speak, just as one does not “speak” internally to one's shoulder, arm, and hand in order to grasp an object. There is an automatic nature to the operations of the body for Merleau-Ponty: “Je meus mon corps sans même savoir quels muscles, quels trajets nerveux doivent intervenir, ni où il faut chercher les instruments de cette action” (1960, 83). An effort to grasp the object is certainly made, but it is on the level of a muscular memory reflex, learned through habitual and general application of the body in its physical environment. Likewise, speech flows with effort provided by the body along with everyday and general acquisition of language obtained through one's cultural milieu.

Merleau-Ponty does differentiate between the ways that a body-subject participates in these two domains, however. To use a Heideggerian expression, we are thrown into the world physically, while cultural participation, and specifically interaction with other body-subjects, happens more gradually: “Par l'action de culture, je m'installe dans des vies qui ne sont pas la mienne, je les confronte... je suscite une vie universelle, comme je m'installe d'un coup dans l'espace par la présence vivante et épaisse de mon

corps" (1960, 93-94). This confrontation between body-subjects should not be interpreted in the same manner as Sartrean existentialism would have it. As Merleau-Ponty states clearly, the body-subject is giving rise to a universal life by this encounter with the other. There is a bonding with the other (1945, 410) that happens during the engagement of conversation in which the thoughts of each participant weave a single fabric and each interlocutor "becomes" the other (1945, 407, 1969, 165). Antagonism and adversarial positions are not part of the Merleau-Pontean viewpoint of this process.

The untrammelled exchange of ideas and sentiments that build a collective sense of intersubjectivity define this confrontation and its ultimate objective:

Ce n'est pas même le mot à dire que je vise [quand je parle], et pas même la phrase, c'est la personne, je lui parle selon ce qu'elle est, avec une sûreté quelquefois prodigieuse, j'use des mots, des tournures qu'elle peut comprendre, ou auxquelles elle peut être sensible, et, si du moins j'ai du tact, ma parole est à la fois organe d'action et de sensibilité... (1969, 28)

Dialogue has a directionality that is modified by an attitude adopted by the speakers that is one of cooperation and recognition of the other's linguistic capabilities. This sense of cooperation gives language production two aspects that might seem contradictory. On the one hand, the way in which Merleau-Ponty describes the basic elements of the speech act is so straightforward that it has the effect of placing language production on the same level of primacy as that of perception. One speaker perceives another, is activated linguistically by the presence of this other, and uses language as an ability that is automatically granted to oneself: "Nous-mêmes qui parlons ne savons pas nécessairement

ce que nous exprimons mieux que ceux qui nous écoutent. Je dis que je *sais une idée* lorsque s'est institué en moi le pouvoir d'organiser autour d'elle des discours qui font sens coherent" (1953, 85). At the same time, however, he allows for a sensibility between interlocutors that suggests a tacit mental connectedness shared by said speakers. As proposed by the above citation, the listener in a conversation perhaps knows just as much about what the speaker is uttering as the speaker him-/herself.

The mental union existing between body-subjects alluded to above promotes the idea that a contradiction lies at the center of the distinction between the phenomenological, that to which consciousness has direct perceptually access, and the mentally transcendent. Merleau-Ponty rejects the Husserlian notion of the phenomenological reduction based on the argument that it is not something that can be observed by perceptual consciousness, or consciousness *tout court* (1945, 452). How does the mental connectedness that binds us together in language production come to be known by consciousness in Merleau-Ponty's scheme? The answer to this question lies in Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of *being-in-the-world* (1945, 413). This term, borrowed of course from Heidegger, allows us to view existence from points other than the traditional Cartesian *cogito*, the self or ego proffered by psychology, or from a privileged, disinterested spectator-consciousness transparent to itself and to the world. Being-in-the-world for Merleau-Ponty constitutes a relationship between the body-subject and Being in which there is a direct contact on the part of the body-subject with the world without mediation and without the world being "represented" to the body-subject's consciousness. The body-subject *consists* of this relationship with the world.

To return to the subject of language production, our question about the linguistic

connectedness that seems to exist between body-subjects can now be approached with the aid of the concept being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty provides us with a pithy summary of what his *cogito* is and is not near the end of *Phénoménologie*:

Ce que je découvre et reconnais par le *Cogito*, ce n'est pas l'immanence psychologique, l'inhérence de tous les phénomènes à des « états de conscience privés », le contact aveugle de la sensation avec elle-même, --- ce n'est pas même l'immanence transcendente, l'appartenance de tous les phénomènes à une conscience constituante, la possession de la pensée claire par elle-même, --- c'est le mouvement profond de transcendance qui est mon être même, le contact simultané avec mon être et avec l'être du monde. (1945, 432)

The *cogito* is constituted by its relationship with the being of the world and is at the same time in direct contact with this being. In addition, this rapport between the being of the world and the body-subject is transcendent and the being-in-the-world of the body-subject is transcendent as well. So, at the very center of Merleau-Ponty's ontology is a sense of transcendence that is both constitutive and relational with regard to the individual and the being of the world. To bring language production into this scheme requires the simple recognition that, for Merleau-Ponty, culture is a product of this transcendence that occurs as spontaneously as nature (1969, 106), and that language is given to us by culture (1945, 407).

In *Phénoménologie*, the author defines the cultural life in roughly structuralist terms, and includes with this definition the role that language plays therein: "Qu'exprime donc le langage, s'il n'exprime pas des pensées? Il présente ou plutôt il *est* la prise de

position du sujet dans le monde de ses significations. Le terme de 'monde' n'est pas ici une manière de parler : il veut dire que la vie 'mentale' ou culturelle emprunte à la vie naturelle ses structures..." (1945, 225). Language, being the "prise de position" of the body-subject in the world, exists on the same level as the being of the world and the being-in-the-world of the incarnate subject. That being said, cultural life borrows from the natural world its structures according to Merleau-Ponty. It is a reflection of nature while language is the device with which the incarnate body-subject founds the thinking and reflecting body-subject (1945, 225). As self-evident as our philosopher considers concepts such as "world," "culture," "body-subject," and "being-in-the-world," the question of where the grounding of language occurs is yet to be established. It is to this point that we must now proceed in order to continue our discussion of language production and then eventually its role in the constitution of intersubjectivity.

However, we need bear in mind the important distinction that exists between phenomenological approaches to philosophy and philosophical methods that seek a historical discussion of origins. Phenomenology does not accept as valuable or plausible the unequivocal establishment of historical origins for phenomena such as language, painting, or music. It does not deny the reality that at a certain point in time, a certain word might have been coined, or that a particular development in art such as three-dimensional perspective could be given an effective date of birth. However, Merleau-Ponty, who frequently emphasizes the importance of a given body-subject's social and historical milieu (1945, 217, 225, 231, 399-400) on his or her subjectivity, maintains that with regard to language it is ludicrous, from the phenomenological perspective, to attempt to pinpoint exact moments of linguistic change --- historical moments of change -

-- due to the fluid and always self-regulating nature of language:

... il faut renoncer à fixer le moment où le latin devient du français parce que les formes grammaticales commencent d'être efficaces et de se dessiner avant d'être systématiquement employées, que la langue reste quelquefois longtemps prégnante des transformations qui vont advenir et qu'en elle le dénombrement des moyens d'expression n'a pas de sens, ceux qui tombent en désuétude continuant d'y mener une vie diminuée et la place de ceux qui vont les remplacer étant quelquefois déjà marquée... (1960, 52)

This explication of language transformation follows Merleau-Ponty's view of temporality in that there is always an element of both the past and the future in the present (1945, 471). For the phenomenologist, this blending of traditional temporal boundaries obviates the need for origins in explaining phenomena because it renders origins unnecessary. What is more important is the phenomenological analysis of the body-subject's experience either over time or in relation to other body-subjects at any given point in time in the present. For Merleau-Ponty, finding the origin of some phenomenon with complete certitude would require the possession of a consciousness that is present to everything at all times and that has a total immediacy with perceptual sources. This being a subject for discussion later on in this thesis, we will move on to what Merleau-Ponty says about culture while keeping the previous citation at the center of our analysis.

The idea of an eternal intertwining of the past and the future in the lived present of the body-subject not only impacts our considerations of origins, it shapes the way we can look at language and culture as well. Language and culture are phenomena that we

live by and through just as we experience the world that is always already there for us like an inalienable presence before any reflection on our part (1945, I). Culture and language, being two dominant aspects of our social experience, extend beyond the limits of our perceptual and intellectual abilities: “ Il nous faut donc redécouvrir le monde social, non comme objet ou somme d'objets, mais comme champ permanent ou dimension d'existence... Notre rapport au social est, comme notre rapport au monde, plus profond que toute perception expresse ou que tout jugement” (1945, 415). From this notion of an a priori inherence in the natural and social worlds, we could assert that the search for an origin to culture or to language is really considered as an objective beyond the purview of the phenomenological approach. However, Merleau-Ponty considers some primordial form of community between body-subjects as mandatory in order for language production to originate (1969, 59-60). But exactly what founds this primeval interrelationship that exists before language emerges to sediment the body-subject's social milieu?

With this notion of a primitive form of communication in mind, we must return to Merleau-Ponty's gestural theory of language emergence to answer the question of foundational intersubjectivity. One point about language remains steadfast throughout Merleau-Ponty's corpus: language emerges in the phenomenal world and could not exist without this world or the body-subjects interacting with it: “s'il n'y avait pas eu un homme avec des organes de phonation ou d'articulation et un appareil à souffler, --- ou du moins avec un corps et la capacité de se mouvoir lui-même, il n'y aurait pas eu de parole et pas eu d'idées” (1945, 448). Thus, language is a founded phenomenon based upon human embodiment within the world, and must be understood in this context (Dillon,

186). As for the beginning of language production, Merleau-Ponty insists in *Phénoménologie* that the linguistic gesture delineates its own meaning (1945, 217). Therefore, in this scheme where signification inheres in the verbal gesture, words are linguistic gestures that have acquired institutional limitation within the conventions of culture (Dillon, 188). There is then a reciprocating relationship between the body-subject's primitive verbal gesticulations and the cultural context in which that body-subject exists:

La gesticulation verbale... vise un paysage mental qui n'est pas donné d'abord à chacun et qu'elle a justement pour fonction de communiquer. Mais ce que la nature ne donne pas c'est ici la culture qui le fournit. Les significations disponibles, c'est-à-dire les actes d'expression antérieurs établissent entre les sujets parlants un monde commun auquel la parole actuelle et neuve se réfère comme le geste au monde sensible. (1945, 217)

There is an accumulation of accessible meanings overtime that sediment and thereby establish a cultural context from which the body-subject may make reference in order to build a common vocabulary. These sedimentary meanings then gradually lose their gesticular characteristics. They become signs that are removed from the original gestural context, float freely from speaking subject to speaking subject, and ultimately undergo a gradual process of degradation that takes place over generations, that, according to Heidegger, is responsible for "the rootlessness of Western thought" (*Poetry*, 23).

At this point we feel that a review of certain points raised during our discussion of the interiority of language could provide even more insight into how language's

inaccessibility in a way forces non-verbal forms of communication to compensate for such an obstacle for communication between body-subjects.

The notion of a cohesive interplay between linguistic signs leads to the realization that Saussure sees a linguistic interior emerging from a self-transformational power that is inherent to language. The interiority of language could be said to occur from certain inalterable conditions intrinsic to language that are out of the purview of the individual speaker. Saussure maintains an idea about language change that is a particularly important example of the immutability of language that creates this interior: “le signifiant...n’est pas libre, il est imposé. La masse sociale n’est point consultée, et le signifiant choisi par la langue ne pourrait pas être remplacé par un autre...un individu serait incapable, s’il le voulait, de modifier en quoi que ce soit le choix qui a été fait...” (*Cours*, 104). Very much like the impenetrability that was discussed previously, this immutable nature of language forges an internal arrangement between signifiers that rejects extraneous agents of change. However, this situation naturally gives way to an internal dynamic, as evidenced by a nuance that the editors of *Cours* append in a footnote: “la langue se transforme sans que les sujets puissent la transformer. On peut dire aussi qu’elle est intangible, mais non inaltérable” (108). Language is therefore credited with having a self-transformational power that speaks directly to the inaccessibility to language change and evolution by which its very speakers must abide. However, if language is not inalterable and if speaking subjects cannot account for change either individually or collectively, how exactly does our interpretation of Saussure’s linguistic interior deal with the fact that languages do indeed evolve over time?

To answer this question is to add yet another dimension to our conceptualization of language's interior as it is revealed in Saussure's text. By looking at the aforementioned idea of a self-transformational model for language with greater scrutiny, it becomes clear that, by itself, the ability of a language to make self-directed adjustments and changes does not actually account for events or circumstances outside of a linguistic interiority that might effectuate change within its system of signs. As mentioned earlier, external forces of language change can best be thought of as temporary disturbances or instances of disequilibrium for the overall, internal system of a language (*Cours*, 206-207). A language encounters an exterior challenge to its stability, vacillates for a time, regains its balance, and then continues onward having reorganized itself around this passing agitation (*Literary Theory*, 96). Viewing the interior of language from this perspective calls for the necessity of a counterbalancing mechanism (apart from language's self-transformational capacity) that acts like both a buffer for outside disruptions and a subsequent means of assimilation. At this point perhaps a slight adjustment to our rather liberal use of the terms "impregnable" and "inaccessible" for linguistic interiority needs to be made.

Continuing with the theme of a linguistic interior as being impervious to conscious change on the part of language speakers, we see that Saussure assigns a kind of solidarity to this interiority by claiming that "jamais le système n'est modifié directement ; en lui-même il est immuable ; seuls certains éléments sont altérés sans égard à la solidarité qui les lie au tout" (*Cours*, 121). So, there is a unity, indeed another dimension to language's interior, that connects the elements that constitute a particular system of signs and that lends itself to speaking subjects with no reservations as to its

own conservation or its ability to adjust to exterior, transformational challenges. Due to the fact that all of these observations about the interior of language in Saussure's text contain a considerable amount of speculation on our part, we feel it is necessary to address one potentially major critique before returning to the subject of values within linguistic signs in order to conclude this analysis.

An argument against the way in which we have construed the interior of language in Saussure's text presents itself rather obviously at this point: our analysis *personifies* this interior, granting what would traditionally be considered an abstract product of linguistic studies the qualities and abilities of a living entity. We have indicated that the internal system of language lends itself to speakers, as if this interior was consciously making a decision in favor of humanity. Also, some of our explanations have demonstrated that a self-preservational mentality abides in this interiority like similar instincts that emanate from man's cognitive apparatus. Language encounters moments of disequilibrium from outside, disruptive forces and adjusts to them as if dealing strategically with a problem or temporary challenge. In addition, because of its impregnability, the interior of language has been characterized as having to impose itself upon the social masses as "le produit social déposé dans le cerveau de chacun" (*Cours*, 44) like a universally shared, identical copy of a dictionary (*Cours*, 38). The list of examples of such personified attributes within the interior of language could continue. However, for the sake of brevity, let us now answer these criticisms and expand our conceptualization of this interiority at the same time.

To these charges we rely on Saussure himself to provide two separate answers that reveal both the breadth of his knowledge of philology and neogrammarian linguistics

that dominated the language study of his day and the certainty of his own ability to articulate unthought-of ideas about *la langue* that would surpass the contributions of these two fields of linguistic analysis. His first, and brief, response to the critique of the personification of language comes in the form of a footnote that he offers as a type of apologia for comparative philology:

La nouvelle école, serrant de plus près la réalité, fit la guerre à la terminologie des comparatistes, et notamment aux métaphores illogiques dont elle se servait. Dès lors on n'ose plus dire : « la langue fait ceci ou cela », ni parler de la « vie de la langue », etc., puisque la langue n'est pas une entité, et n'existe que dans les sujets parlants. Il ne faudrait pourtant pas aller trop loin, et il suffit de s'entendre. Il y a certaines images dont on ne peut se passer. Exiger qu'on ne se serve que de termes répondant aux réalités du langage, c'est prétendre que ces réalités n'ont plus de mystères pour nous. Or il s'en faut de beaucoup ; aussi n'hésiterions-nous pas à employer à l'occasion telle des expressions qui ont été blâmées à l'époque. (*Cours*, 19)

While this very diplomatic and open-minded compromise responds directly to the drawbacks of personifying the phenomenon of language, we also want to establish a way in which Saussure deals with this difficulty in a more discursive manner. To a more expansive argument for language having a life of its own we now turn.

Simply stated, Saussure grants a consciousness to language. In order to understand how this consciousness comes into being, it is necessary to make a connection between Saussure's thoughts on the sign, the building blocks or subunits (*des sous-unités*) of signifiers, and the analogies that provide important evidence of a

deconstructive-reconstructive mechanism within language.

The concept of the sign is formed by two parts that complement one another in a purely arbitrary manner. One half of the sign involves the signifier that can be defined as the configuration of sound elements or other linguistic symbols representing a word or other meaningful unit. Coupled with this verbal designation, the signified is the thing or concept (as it actually exists in the physical world or the domain of human abstractions) denoted by the signifier. Leaving the signified to the side, we see that in Saussure's approach to isolating the irreducible components of written words, the signifier is composed of "sous-unités," or subunits, for which the author gives the examples of "racines, préfixes, suffixes, (et) désinences" (*Cours*, 258). These subunits link the concept of the sign with the production of new verbal expressions through analogy because they help the signifier to materialize while they themselves are defined and made essential to the process of language expansion. By virtue of their role in analogical word formation language obtains a consciousness according to the author's critique of his own findings: "On sait que les résultats de ces analyses spontanées se manifestent dans les formations analogiques de chaque époque; ce sont elles qui permettent de distinguer les sous-unités... dont la langue a conscience et les valeurs qu'elle y attache" (*Cours*, 258). If in Saussure's linguistic edifice language possesses a consciousness and the ability to make value judgments, then it must be capable of performing the aforesaid functions such as imposing itself on speaking subjects and having a self-preservational awareness of external forces of change.

It is perhaps through Saussure's considerations on analogies that another irrefutable description of the interior of language presents itself in the form of the

deconstructive-reconstructive mechanism mentioned previously. There is no question as to the centrality of analogies in the life of a language⁴: “qu’il s’agisse de la conservation d’une forme composée de plusieurs éléments, ou d’une redistribution de la matière linguistique dans de nouvelles constructions, le rôle de l’analogie est immense ; c’est toujours elle qui est en jeu” (*Cours*, 237). What is key about this insight is that analogy exists as a *constant* condition operating between the basic elements of meaning for a language. If analogy is constantly engaged in either maintaining the status quo of a linguistic form or in reconfiguring the components of another, then it stands to reason that analogical formations indicate that this process is at the core of the essential being of language, or its interiority. Saussure shows that this is the case with: “L’activité continuelle du langage décomposant les unités qui lui sont données contient en soi non seulement toutes les possibilités d’un parler conforme à l’usage, mais aussi toutes celles des formations analogiques” (*Cours*, 227). For Saussure there is a totalizing operation of constant breakdown and reformulation of signifiers that results in a self-containment, or a type of closed system (*Cours*, 139) with regard to “unités,” for language because this all-inclusive operation contains within itself all the possibilities of units of meaning for both the system as a whole and for its analogical innovations. But exactly how does this continual deconstruction and reconstruction promote the idea of an interior of language?

As it has been conceived so far, it is clear that an understanding of the interior within a language involves viewing this interiority from many angles. It is inaccessible to its speakers, self-regulating in terms of growth and expansion, and immutable to the degree that the solidarity of its internal system always remains intact in spite of

⁴ There are, however, other processes that contribute to the production of new linguistic “unités” for Saussure, “l’étymologie populaire” (*Cours*, 238-241) and “l’agglutination” (242-245), that are very closely associated with analogies all the same.

temporary, yet relentless, disruptions. What has also become clear from our analysis is that all of these characteristics are patently interrelated. There are only subtle distinctions to be made between each facet of language's interior. Alongside these descriptions, the perpetual tearing down and rebuilding of new units of meaning through analogy introduces the idea of a finite quantity of subunits that are supplied to language prior to any creative input on the part of its speakers. In furthering his analysis of the generative process that creates analogical formations, Saussure warns that:

C'est donc une erreur de croire que le processus générateur ne se produit qu'au moment où surgit la création ; les éléments en sont déjà donnés. Un mot que j'improvise, comme *in-décor-able*, existe déjà en puissance dans la langue ; on retrouve tous ses éléments dans les syntagmes tels que *décor-er*, *décor-ation* : *pardonn-able*, *mani-able* : *in-connu*, *in-sensé*, etc., et sa réalisation dans la parole est un fait insignifiant en comparaison de la possibilité de le former. (*Cours*, 227)

Two properties of “sous-unités” underscored here bring to light another aspect of linguistic interiority. First, the entire inventory of subunits are to be found within the available syntagmatic constructions⁵ that make up the words of a given language. Secondly, these subunits exist prior to those instances when by analogy a speaker creates a new linguistic form.

Therefore, speakers cannot actually create new “sous-unités,” but they can formulate new “unités,” or words. It is this set of circumstances that constitutes the

⁵ It is worth noting that Saussure uses the term “syntagmatic” (that which concerns the relationship of linguistic elements as they occur sequentially in the chain of speech or writing) here in a way that most other linguists use the term “morphological” (that which concerns the system of word-forming elements and processes).

additional sense of interiority mentioned above. For Saussure, the building blocks of words exist individually as immutable and yet interchangeable and manipulable for their users. Collectively, they form a closed system due to their functional plenitude. An interior for language is arrived at due to there being the possibility of speakers to be as creative as they want in finding new arrangements for subunits, but by their also being excluded from adding to the a priori changeless pool of sub-units. Shut out of this domain, speaking subjects can only participate on one level of linguistic creativity while being aware all the while of their inability to access the primordial stratum of the most elemental units of meaning.

At this point perhaps a closer look at Saussure's considerations on the aforementioned values, or meanings, that obtain in the linguistic domain would help us in furthering our understanding of the concept of the interior of language. Admittedly, there is a structural binary between internal and external linguistics (*Cours*, 43, 261). But instead of only such a relation between interior and exterior, there is also a dynamism within the interior that is assured by the relationship between our thoughts and their accompanying speech sounds or "la matière phonique" that allow the former to materialize. To resume with an earlier thought, Saussure bases his idea of linguistic value on the premise that language is basically amorphous and indistinct thoughts rendered organized by phonetic material, or sounds (*Cours*, 155). Looking at the definition of this "matière phonique," we see that "la substance phonique n'est plus fixe ni plus rigide ; ce n'est pas un moule dont la pensée doit nécessairement épouser les formes, mais une matière plastique qui se divise à son tour en parties distinctes pour fournir les signifiants dont la pensée a besoin" (*Cours*, 155). Thus, something quite fluid and dynamic, if not

squarely enigmatic, is at work here for the nebulousness of thought to be transformed into a single or series of phonemes understood by a collectivity of same-language speakers.

Saussure speaks to this mystifying process with: “La pensée, chaotique de sa nature, est forcée de se préciser en se décomposant... il s’agit de ce fait en quelque sorte mystérieux, que la « pensée-son » implique des divisions et que la langue élabore ses unités en se constituant entre deux masses amorphes” (*Cours*, 156). What the author seems to be asserting here is that two phenomena occur that are central to the process of a particular thought aligning itself to certain sounds. He is allocating space for a mysterious zone of indistinction to act as a conduit between thought and phonetic material and he is attributing to language the ability to rectify the chaotic divisions implied by said zone of ambiguity. From what has been discussed prior to this last deduction, we can say in closing that Saussure’s notion of an interiority for language is multifaceted in that it does not pertain to only one aspect of the overall linguistic edifice, the sign (159, 166) for example, but to other key elements as well: the particular language as a whole (115, 160, 183, 187, 315), the phonetic material (or sounds) available to speakers (70, 71, 78, 100, 108, 263), the psychic (or abstract) nature of linguistic entities (263), and even “l’image intérieure” of the spoken word in discourse (98). However, of these various features that help to constitute Saussure’s vision of linguistics, what is discussed the most and articulated the best in terms of having an interior remains “l’objet concret... le produit social déposé dans le cerveau de chacun, c’est-à-dire la langue” (44). Language, having its own internal system (44), envelops all other notions of interiority in that all of the other elements credited with having an interior are subsumed under the blanket term “language.”

Merleau-Ponty and Literature

We feel it necessary at this point to offer a brief look at how Merleau-Ponty felt about literature in a very general sense before launching into our analysis of two of the more seminal existentialist novels written by his contemporaries Sartre and Camus. This summary will enable us to be more specific with our examination of *The Stranger* and *The Nausea*, while realizing that many other authors held a great influence over the literary criticism that Merleau-Ponty proffered alongside his philosophical treatises. Our intention is to give a broad description of his thoughts on literature so that any particular consideration on our part of what Camus and Sartre communicated with their writing does not come across as offered in a myopic vacuum.

Throughout *Phénoménologie de la perception* Merleau-Ponty makes use of various authors in order to illustrate certain points about his philosophy through analogy. It is clear that he has a great appreciation for the contributions of literary artists. What is important about his use of literary passages is that he relates them back to how the body-subject creates strategies for manipulating the space and the time that he/she has at

his/her disposal. Therefore, most of the time, he is not offering up literary analysis so much as he is making use of the ideas of authors in order to better elucidate his phenomenology and to establish its ties with creative processes in general.

Proust is particularly important for *Phénoménologie* in what concerns creative processes and how corporeality plays a role in the re-presentation of forms of music in *Swann's Way*. With the help of this author, it becomes clear that Merleau-Ponty gives a great deal of thought to the creative endeavors that body-subjects undertake. Most of the time when he refers to Proust it is to discuss the performance and the reproduction of art in order to illustrate how the body and the cogito function in this realm. What we see in these references is a philosopher using literature in order to talk about art. Therefore, there is a depth here that must not go unnoticed. In what concerns Proust, literature becomes a means by which Merleau-Ponty explores the intersection of his notions on the physical nature of the body-subject and the improbable relationship these ideas have with aesthetic production and re-production.

Without offering critical analysis of Proust's oeuvre, Merleau-Ponty uses certain passages of *Swann's Way* in order to illustrate his philosophical conceptualizations more clearly. While this may not speak directly to literary criticism, it does indicate that literature functions either as inspiration for philosophical considerations or as a bridge between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ruminations and his final product as it is written. In *Swann's Way*, Merleau-Ponty finds sufficient inspiration to integrate Proustian insights on musical instrumentation into the *Phénoménologie* when discussing the importance of habit formation for the body-subject. He emphasizes that the example of instrumentalists shows even better how habit has its abode neither in thought nor in the

objective body, but in the body as mediator of the world (1962, 167). He goes on to say that an experienced organist is capable of playing an organ which he does not know, which has more or fewer manuals, and stops differently arranged, compared with those on the instrument he is used to playing. This reiterates Merleau-Ponty's stance on the dynamic capabilities of the body-subject that we described earlier in our discussion of inter-subjectivity. The amount of detail that will be undertaken in the following brief study should be taken as an indication of the impact that Proust had on the development of our philosopher's thought process.

Merleau-Ponty continues in the same passage with the idea that a typical organist needs only an hour's practice to be ready to perform and that such a short amount of preparation rules out the supposition that that new, conditioned reflexes have been substituted for the existing ones (168, 1962). Therefore, there is an inherently retained type of body-memory reflex mechanism involved here that reveals the primacy of corporeality in this operation. He continues by wondering if it is the case that the organist analyses the unfamiliar organ, conjuring up and retaining a representation of the stops, pedals, and manuals and their relation to each other in space before trying to play. However, Merleau-Ponty refuses this possibility by clarifying that during the short rehearsal period preceding the concert the organist does not approach things as a person about to draw up a plan (168, 1962). Here our philosopher becomes quite detailed in his description of what transpires between an instrumentalist and a given instrument before revealing this examination's ties with Proust's great work. Therefore, we must keep in mind that there is a link to be made momentarily.

In what concerns the body-subject's relationship with space and physical objects, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that in the face of the unfamiliar organ the musician sits on the seat, works the pedals, pulls out the stops, gets the measure of the instrument with his body, incorporates within himself the relevant directions and dimensions, and settles into the organ as one settles into a house (168, 1962). There is a reiteration of the body-subject's thrown reality in the physical world in this passage, and a type of natural sophistication when dealing with tools to be manipulated. He adds that there is no objective learning of the spatial relationships that exist between the different components of the instrument on the part of the player, and that the whole of the organ is given over to the individual as nothing more than the possibilities of achieving certain emotional or musical values (168, 1962). The particular positioning of an instrument's parts are for Merleau-Ponty simply places for these musical and affective values to appear in the world.

In terms of the corporeality of the body-subject, our philosopher goes on to stress that:

Entre l'essence musicale du morceau telle qu'elle est indiquée
dans la partition et la musique qui effectivement résonne autour de l'orgue
une relation si directe s'établit que le corps de l'organiste et l'instrument
ne sont plus que le lieu de passage de cette relation. Désormais la musique
existe par soi et c'est par elle que tout le reste existe. (170, 1945)

This union of the musician's body and the instrument played echo the considerations that Merleau-Ponty has detailed for us throughout *Phénoménologie*. While this examination

has been quite detailed, it should be realized that this is the case because of the significant effect that Proust's literary offerings had on the prevailing zeitgeist of Merleau-Ponty's time. Finally, we showcase the passage in *Swann's Way* that has inspired the previous ruminations on the body-subject: "Comme si les instrumentistes beaucoup moins jouaient la petite phrase qu'ils n'exécutaient les rites exigés d'elle pour qu'elle apparût... Ses cris étaient si soudains que le violoniste devait se précipiter sur son archet pour les recueillir" (187, 193). For Merleau-Ponty there is no place here for memorizing the physical dimensions of a particular musical instrument, there is only a symbiosis of player, object, and creation. Proust emphasizes the creative end of this process over the purely physical relationship that exists between individual and instrument, and his ideas border somewhat on the edge of notions such as the interiority of language. While Proust figures even further in the rest of *Phénoménologie* (94, 96, 99, 211-212, 454, 457, and 493, 1962), we feel it important in this limited section to move on to how Valéry also interfaced with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty appreciates the poetic vision of Valéry in such an explicit way in three passages of *Phénoménologie* that it is clear this poet's thought process shared common elements with that of our philosopher. In considering how history and the body-subject interface, Merleau-Ponty makes some very salient points about the day-to-day, lived reality of the individual and the wider scope of historical forces that have not been discussed anywhere in this thesis. These considerations are clearly influenced by one of the more infamous themes that dominated Valéry's existence, namely the dichotomy between the infinite potentialities of the mind versus the inevitable imperfections of action:

Il serait absurde de considérer la poésie de P. Valéry comme un simple épisode de l'aliénation économique : la poésie pure peut avoir un sens éternel... Valéry transforme en poésie pure un malaise et une solitude dont d'autres n'auraient rien fait. La pensée est la vie interhumaine telle qu'elle se comprend et s'interprète elle-même. Dans cette reprise volontaire, dans ce passage de l'objectif au subjectif, il est impossible de dire où finissent les forces de l'histoire et où commencent les nôtres, et la question ne veut rien dire à la rigueur, puisqu'il n'y a d'histoire que pour un sujet qui la vive et de sujet que situé historiquement. Il n'y a pas une signification unique de l'histoire, ce que nous faisons a toujours plusieurs sens... (201-202, 1945)

Refusing to look at poetry as a product of a particular historical force is indicative of the existential orientation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. This gives a lot of insight into his thought process in general as well. Every cultural phenomenon has multiple factors that have lead to its creation and that exert forces on its existence. It is impossible within Merleau-Ponty's framework to reduce the life of human relationships to any one phase of existence: moral, economic, or juridical. While this point opens up many pathways for further discussion, we feel it necessary to briefly investigate two more references to Valéry before continuing on to Balzac.

Starting his chapter on sense experience, Merleau-Ponty chooses to set the tone of his discourse by quoting two lines from Valéry's famous poem, "*The Graveyard by the Sea*." We can easily see the poet's influence on this section by looking not only at the lines of poetry, but also at the vocabulary that Merleau-Ponty elects to use in couching his argument:

Si nous croyons à un passé du monde, au monde physique, aux « stimuli », à l'organisme tel que le représentent nos livres, c'est d'abord parce que nous avons un champ perceptif présent et actuel, une surface de contact avec le monde ou un enracinement perpétuel en lui, c'est parce qu'il vient sans cesse assaillir et investir la subjectivité comme les vagues entourent une épave sur la plage. Tout le savoir s'installe dans les horizons ouverts par la perception. (240, 1945)

The oceanic analogy, reminiscent of Valéry's celebrated poem, informs us here of the relentless nature of perception for the body-subject, taking us away from the erroneous notion that objective thought can be aware of the subject of perception. For Merleau-Ponty, there can be no question of describing perception itself as one of the facts thrown upon the world, since it can never be filled up (241, 1962). It has an a priori ubiquity and limitless capacity for occupying the attention of the body-subject that is akin to consciousness.

However, our philosopher makes use of part of a line from the aforementioned poem that helps us to realize the problematic nature of perceptual capacities for the individual. He relates that "nous ne pouvons jamais effacer dans le tableau du monde cette lacune que nous sommes et par où il vient à exister pour quelqu'un, puisque la perception est le « défaut » de ce « grand diamant » (240, 1945). This "flaw" in the "great diamond" comes from the following excerpt of *Le Cimetière marin*:

Mes repentirs, mes doutes, mes contraires
Sont le défaut de ton grand diamant.

If we conceive of the great diamond as being existence, then perception is this problematic condition that cannot be explained away or investigated with anything other than itself. Thus, we are always at fault at any point within this process since we lack the ability to stand outside of perceptually-based reasoning.

Merleau-Ponty will reference this poem again as he fleshes out his description of sensory experience (248, 1945), but we feel it necessary at this point to discuss what limited commentary that he offers in the area of realist fiction. In his chapter dealing with the body as a form of expression and the production of speech, our philosopher relates the oeuvres of Balzac and Stendhal to how speech implants the idea of truth within us and how written speech forms a world in which all the other writers of it have lived or are living (221, 1945). While this is the only reference to Stendhal in the entirety of *Phénoménologie*, and only the first of two to Balzac, Merleau-Ponty makes of literary production a truly empowering gift from oral expression:

...seule de toutes les opérations expressives, la parole est capable de se sédimenter et de constituer un acquis intersubjectif... dans l'ordre de la parole, chaque écrivain a conscience de viser le même monde dont les autres écrivains s'occupaient déjà, le monde de Balzac et le monde de Stendhal ne sont pas comme des planètes sans communication, la parole installe en nous l'idée de vérité comme limite présomptive de son effort. Elle s'oublie elle-même comme fait contingent, elle se repose sur elle-même, et c'est, nous l'avons vu, ce qui nous donne l'idéal d'une pensée sans parole... (221, 1945)

This description of the world of the realist novelists of the nineteenth century emphasizes the shared experience of all users of speech, and could even lead to a very interesting analysis of how classic works of literature represent a kind of inter-generational dialogue between readerships and authors. Speech makes its way on to the page, the work endures over time, its message always contains a high degree of relevance, and readers interface with the written form of speech that makes them reflect and experience the other's existence vicariously. While a great deal more could be discussed on this subject, we feel it important to briefly examine how Merleau-Ponty used a literary excerpt from Simone de Beauvoir when elucidating his thoughts on the cogito.

Doubting is a crucial activity in the establishment of the cogito as a philosophical certainty for not only Descartes, but for Merleau-Ponty as well. De Beauvoir's philosophical contributions to the existentialist movement are, of course, very well known, but it is obvious during Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the cogito that her literary pursuits have considerable applications to his thoughts on such a crucial subject. He contends that "Il n'est pas vrai que mon existence se possède et pas davantage vrai qu'elle soit étrangère à elle-même, parce qu'elle est un acte ou un faire, et qu'un acte, par définition, est le passage violent de ce que j'ai à ce que je vise, de ce que je suis à ce que j'ai l'intention d'être" (438, 1945). We see a very proactive process involved in the confirmation of the cogito, one that supports Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the thrown corporeality of the body-subject in situation. To specific, lived contexts he now moves:

Je peux effectuer le *Cogito* et avoir l'assurance de vouloir, d'aimer
ou de croire pour de bon, à condition que je veuille, j'aime ou croie d'abord
effectivement et que j'accomplisse ma propre existence. Si je ne le faisais pas,

un doute invincible s'étendrait sur le monde, mais aussi sur mes propres pensées. Je me demanderais sans fin si mes « goûts », mes « volontés », mes « vœux », mes « aventures » sont vraiment miens, ils me sembleraient toujours factices, irréels et manqués. Mais ce doute lui-même, faute d'être doute effectif, ne pourrait plus même aboutir à la certitude de douter. (438, 1945)

Merleau-Ponty talks of taking a “blind plunge into ‘doing’” (445, 1962) in order to exist in “sincerity.” It is here that he provides a footnote (in his text) of the de Beauvoir work, *l'Invitée*, for a vivid example of doubt as it is experienced by a main character:

...mais alors, ça aussi, c'était donc fait exprès, ce dégoût cynique devant son personnage ? Et ce mépris de ce dégoût qu'elle était en train de se fabriquer, n'était-il pas aussi comédie ? Et ce doute même devant ce mépris... ça devenait affolant, si on se mettait à être sincère, on ne pouvait donc plus s'arrêter ? (232, 19)

It is simply evident that Merleau-Ponty has an open dialogue with the literature of his time. De Beauvoir's passage carries with it an important point: understanding the decision-making process behind one's drives is often a bewildering endeavor once one starts to doubt one's motives or the basic reality of why certain attitudes are present in one's consciousness. Our philosopher offers much more analysis of this novel by de Beauvoir in a separate philosophical treatise entitled *Sens et non-sens* (1966) that we will examine in slightly more detail shortly. For now, we would like to summarize what has been offered previously as a means of starting to bring closure to this short section of our thesis.

These previous remarks on the references to literature found in *Phénoménologie* have been briefly examined in order to show that Merleau-Ponty did implement literary elements into his most profound philosophical text, and that an awareness of how philosophy and aesthetic production interfaced was of considerable significance for him. However, most of these references are just that. Up until now we have seen him thematically match literary passages to his delineations, comment on how authors respond to their socio-historic environment, and illuminate instances when authors describe those fleeting moments of aesthetic wonder. In order to finish this examination, we will now look at a text that functions much more as a critique of literary production than as a philosophical treatise that makes occasional mention of artistic creations.

The chapter entitled “*Le Roman et la métaphysique*” of *Sens et non-sens* offers up Merleau-Ponty’s most clear analysis of what the main purpose of the novel entails. Infamous for a call for a return to things themselves, he leaves no doubt that literature should simply serve as a representation of reality according to his phenomenological orientation when he opens up with:

L’oeuvre d’un grand romancier est toujours portée par deux ou trois idées philosophiques. Soit par exemple le Moi et la Liberté chez Stendhal, chez Balzac le mystère de l’histoire comme apparition d’un sens dans le hasard des événements, chez Proust l’enveloppement du passé dans le présent et la présence du temps perdu. La fonction du romancier n’est pas de thématiser ces idées, elle est de les faire exister devant nous à la manière des choses. (34, 1966)

This passage, beyond flatly stating that representing reality should be the novelist's main purpose, offers an interesting juxtaposition of philosophy and aesthetics. Certainly profound ideas and sublime motivations initiate the creative process for most writers of meaningful literature, but these interests by themselves do not suffice for the development of a novel. Literature is a mirror of reality as it is received by our cognitive and perceptual capacities. However, a difficult question poses itself at this point: to what degree does the author have to remain among things before engaging individuals, and ultimately, inter-subjectivity?

As has been pointed out in previous sections, the interpersonal can be quite challenging for phenomenological description. While authors certainly do not have to adhere to any particular philosophical doctrine in order to create a text, if a return to things themselves is kept in mind, then it seems plausible that people as characters would have to undergo some degree of treatment as objectified entities. This is what makes the following examination of the main characters in *The Nausea* and *The Stranger* so compelling. In an attempt to show how this return to the state of things might actually look in a novel, we will endeavor to create a vision of Meursault and Roquentin with a Merleau-Pontean lense. This vision will have the four major concepts that have been previously examined as its orientation. In this way, we can show how his purely philosophical notions have a significant value when it comes to literary criticism.

Emotional Availability and Selective Articulation in Sartre's *The Nausea*

Sartre's breakthrough novel has to remain in the memory of those fortunate enough to read it for quite some time, even after some of the effects discussed in the novel's beginning have taken hold of its readership. Antoine Roquentin is more than just a victim of a frightening phenomenological overhaul, however. He is a main character living two different lives. For almost all of the first two hundred pages we are lead to believe that he is incapable of feelings for others, has an almost non-existent memory, and can barely put his thoughts into words. Whether the Nausea is responsible for these interpersonal shortcomings is a subject for much discussion. Nonetheless, the protagonist is in the throws of perhaps the worst inter-subjective meltdown seen from a leading character. Then a former paramour appears in his life that brings about a sudden transformation in Roquentin. He goes from communicative failure to regaining his emotional interests and powers of articulation. This section of the thesis will do something rather peculiar. It will examine in depth a single portion of the novel's relationship to the rest, and reveal aspects of the main character that might otherwise go unappreciated.

The depth and the breadth of the insights offered during Antoine and Anny's conversation are just astounding given the emotional and interpersonal flatness of the preceding one hundred and ninety pages of the novel. What is Sartre trying to accomplish here? He is negating the inter-subjective emptiness of the novel as it stands prior to this point. Up to this point, sparse hints of affective intelligence up to this meeting, the author is revealing Roquentin as having always been quite capable of strong interpersonal relations. But this revelation comes at a rather ironic time, because the main character has already changed due to the effects of the Nausea. Two things need to be addressed at this point. One is tied into the negation of the interpersonal void mentioned just now. Why is Sartre allowing his readership to know of Antoine's emotional complexity given that it will no longer function in quite the same way as previous? The second issue is bound up in how the *Nausée* has affected the protagonist emotionally. What indications are there in the text that inform us of exactly how this change has impacted Roquentin in what concerns the affective? The search for answers to this question will demand some very close reading of the text, but the results will offer insights into what Sartre is exposing about his existentialism that will challenge a lot of accepted notions about this novel.

There is a certain sense of mystery created by Sartre's choice of portraying the main character as dead to the world of emotive experience as it is encountered through inter-subjective relationships, and then suddenly bringing him back to the life of this realm via Anny. The brief instances where Roquentin expresses emotion are most commonly associated with the comings and goings of the Nausea. In what concerns interaction with other people, the protagonist states flatly early in the novel that "Moi je vis seul, entièrement seul. Je ne parle à personne, jamais; je ne reçois rien, je ne donne

rien... je ne pense plus pour personne: je ne me soucie même pas de chercher des mots”

(19). Therefore, in the first one hundred and ninety pages of the novel, the main character projects himself as being at odds with the life interpersonal. What is most intriguing about the previous passage is his dismissive attitude toward even deigning to put the Other into words. This creates a central mystery within the portrayal of Antoine by the author. While the experience of the Nausea is puzzling to the extent of even being alarming, the void created by Roquentin's attitude toward others with regard to language serves as an even further estrangement : “L'Autodidacte ne compte pas. Il y a bien Françoise, la patronne du *Rendez-vous des Cheminots*. Mais est-ce que je lui parle?” (19). Again one sees that language, that is to say the refusal of linguistic production, serves as a kind of coup de grâce for the protagonist's relations with others. While the linguistic aspect of this decision will be examined more closely soon, it is necessary to return the focus of this section to the purely inter-subjective in the novel in order to finish our examination of Anny's centrality to the exposure of the main character as being a complete interpersonal participant.

Coming into this encounter with his former lover, main character is no longer the same person that he was before experiencing the Nausea. Anny's entrance onto the scene can best be described as a window unto the affective life of Antoine before the advent of the Nausea, as illustrated by her words. She does indeed take him to task about his inter-subjective shortcomings, while at the same time revealing things about herself on this topic that force us to rethink her status as a fully grounded in emotive experience.

This subject will soon be addressed. For now let us concentrate on what the author is doing to his leading man with Anny. Sartre is making his hero work a double-shift here.

The protagonist's point of view during this window is that of a post-Nausea recovery seeker that had his emotional acumen hidden away by the author up until this window opened. In a way, the two Antoinettes dialogue with one another in the rendezvous with Anny. Therefore, the way to understand Roquentin as completely as one can is to see him as a split-personality type of character that is so due to the Nausea. This is one of the most profound effects that the Nausea has over the main character. Couple with this development the verbal engagement with his former paramour, and this twenty pages becomes the novel's turning point. Of course, it is not just Anny's presence that forces Antoine to provide an image of his emotional makeup, it is first and foremost her words. To a close examination of her verbal output we now move in order to show her indubitable importance to the unveiling of Roquentin's affective history.

Anny's opening of the hotel room door (191) can of course be interpreted as both a simple act and a symbolic gesture. It is symbolic in that it ushers in the possibility for the protagonist to open up himself inter-subjectively. Without so much as finishing the first, brief paragraph, the author endows his main character with perceptual capacities that up until now have only rarely been hinted at in the text: "Elle [Anny] dit d'un ton boudeur et très vite, pour se débarrasser des formalités: « Entre et assieds-toi où tu voudras, sauf sur le fauteuil près de la fenêtre » (191). From virtually out of nowhere we are informed of a sullen tone used by Anny thanks to the hero. Where has this type of insight been? The fact that Antoine even cares to put forth the effort to read someone else's emotional state reveals that this part of the text is a switching of gears for the author. It is nothing short of astonishing how Roquentin blossoms affectively once he is paired with Anny. Even his memories of her personal tastes and habits strike a new tone:

Autrefois Anny emportait dans tous ses voyages une immense valise pleine de châles, de turbans, de mantilles... A peine était-elle descendue dans un hotel... son premier soin était d'ouvrir cette valise et d'en sortir toutes ses richesses, qu'elle suspendait aux murs, accrochait aux lampes, étendait sur les tables ou sur le sol en suivant un ordre variable et compliqué; en moins d'une demi-heure la chambre la plus banale se revêtait d'une personnalité lourde et sensuelle, presque intolérable. (192)

The effect here is almost disconcerting. Up to now we have been given a main character whose interpersonal skills have been anything but developed and capable: "Moi je vis seul... Je ne parle à personne... Je ne reçois rien, je ne donne rien... je ne pense plus pour personne..." (19). Now it seems that he can not quell his analysis of Anny's gestures and moods. In addition, Sartre now has at his disposal a vocabulary that defies any description he may have offered earlier in the work.

It is as if the novel itself has been transformed into a microscopic, inter-subjective display of observation when compared to its previous narrative. The protagonist offers "Je reconnais très bien ce petit rire très élevé et un peu nasillard... son regard me dévisage avec une curiosité presque hostile... Ah! oui? répond-elle d'un air vague" (192). Language, both that which the author uses to write this passage and the spoken language he gives his characters, becomes very important for a variety of reasons. Obviously this part of the novel can be interpreted as a showcase of dialogue between the main character and his former lover. However, the near absolute lack of physical contact in this section (...elle ne me tend pas la main... J'ai gardé la main droite dans la poche de mon pardessus [191]) between these two characters and the obscurity within which they end

their conversation (Le soir tombe; je distingue à peine la tache pale de son visage... [214]) accentuates the role of their verbal output. Recalling the interiority of language discussed earlier, it is interesting to see the difficulties that Roquentin has in being eloquent with Anny. There is a duality at play here that must not go unexamined. While the protagonist now functions with plenary emotional powers, the former boyfriend still stumbles in enunciating words when he can find them. Antoine is clearly tortured by both speaking and with not speaking (192). The interiority of language, that elusive presence of the verbal that allows for linguistic production and that simultaneously refuses total access to itself, comes to the forefront of his existence, rendering him incapacitated interpersonally at this crucial juncture:

Un nouveau silence. A présent elle est assise sur le lit... Elle me regarde toujours, d'un air calme, en levant un peu les sourcils. Elle n'a donc rien à me dire? Pourquoi m'a-t-elle fait venir ? Ce silence est insupportable.

Je dis soudain, pitoyablement:

— Je suis content de te voir.

Le dernier mot s'étrangle dans ma gorge: si c'était pour trouver ça, j'aurais mieux faire de me taire. Elle va sûrement se fâcher. Je pensais bien que le premier quart d'heure serait pénible. (192-193)

Clearly, the hero acquits himself very poorly in this exchange. More importantly however, this passage indicates that he has taken the time to ponder about this encounter prior to his arrival, and that he even made the effort of predicting its outcome. These are two behaviors that would have been considered impossible for Roquentin before page one hundred ninety-one. Even with these previous ruminations, face to face with Anny

linguistic prowess abandons the main character, leaving only a pathetic, self-strangling shell of himself behind. This excerpt emphasizes as well the anxiety-laden and yet exhilarating state in which the protagonist finds himself. His emotional awareness and his willingness to speak to the Other are subjugated to the overwhelming presence of his former paramour and the interiority of language, respectively.

At this point one clarification has to be made in order to avoid an overgeneralization. We are not intending that Antoine is an otherwise gifted speaker and that his ability to articulate has been on display throughout the course of the novel up until his encounter with Anny. In fact, the main character clearly indicates that he has difficulties with putting his thoughts in verbal form early in the work by offering: "...je ne pense plus pour personne: je ne me soucie même pas de chercher des mots. La plupart du temps, faute de s'attacher à des mots, mes pensées restent des brouillards. Elles dessinent des formes vagues et plaisantes, s'engloutissent: aussitôt je les oublie" (19). While this would indicate that he chooses not to think about others, thereby avoiding word-formation expressly, it does nonetheless provide an indication that speaking about or to others is not a strong suit for the protagonist. In reality, emphasis should be placed on this being a choice for Roquentin, as opposed to a true impediment. His exchanges with various minor characters such as the Self-Taught Man and the waitress Madeleine can not be described as torturous moments of verbal inaptitude. Rather, they are points in time where he simply chooses the path of conversational minimalism.

One way of explaining Antoine's awkward gaffes with Anny would be to put the blame on him for having fallen out of the practice of articulating his thoughts because of conscious choice (19). Is this to deny the role of the interiority of language in causing

speech production difficulties? We think not. Actually, choosing not to formulate one's thoughts into words can be said to maximize the influence that this interiority can have over one's verbal output. Avoiding linguistic production or simply not having the opportunity to practice speaking a language leads to verbal atrophy. This has been proven countless times not only in second language acquisition contexts, but also in situations of ex-patriotism where one's native language is not spoken. Certainly this latter scenario would be more analogous to Roquentin's experience. While all of these considerations seem quite pertinent to the protagonist's lived reality, we prefer to look closely at the text to find causal explanations for his current state. Returning to the subject of his blunders, a close examination of his *thoughts* about Anny in lieu of his spoken words reveals the magnitude of this encounter for him:

Aujourd'hui je n'ai aucune envie [celle de prendre Anny dans ses bras]. Sauf peut-être celle de me taire et de la regarder, de réaliser en silence toute l'importance de cet événement extraordinaire: la présence d'Anny en face de moi... Anny me sourit tout d'un coup avec une tendresse si visible que les larmes me montent aux yeux. (194)

It is essential to make a comparison between the earnestness and the eloquence of Antoine's thoughts and the painful awkwardness of his utterances. It truly is the case that he is having a bad time with speaking in this scene, much like those experiences where not only characters in novels, but people in real situations find themselves wanting to communicate effectively with others. They come to realize that they are not having plenary access to the richness and the suppleness of a particular language for reasons that

are hard to explain. Here we have a description of an aspect of the interior of language that has clearly been well examined.

What is it that then gives Roquentin a respite from his fitful experience with language on this occasion? The main character says it himself: silence. Silence obtains an oasis for Antoine. It is where his thoughts can develop freely, unencumbered by the need to speak. When forced to talk, and indeed Anny does force the issue ("Ose dire... [194], Où est ton chapeau?" [195]), Roquentin finally adjusts to the pressure of the situation by feigning to have a bad memory (194). However, we have already seen that his memory, while perhaps selective, is anything but empty. It is necessary to keep in mind that the protagonist is holding both a dialogue with another character and with the readership as the narrator. His answers to Anny do not always indicate the reality of his mental process. This has a lot to do with the fact that Anny is more than a little antagonistic during her exchanges with Antoine (195, 197, 198, 199, 201, 202, 208, and 213). She sets the tone early in being dismissive and adversarial, but then softens as the evening progresses. Nonetheless, the hero's thoughts, as opposed to what he says, paint a picture of Anny that is best described as an awesome and almost omnipotent counterpart to his rather mundane and bumbling persona. After his former lover rattles on about a particular pair of hats that Roquentin once wore, he concedes that:

Cette connaissance du passé m'accable. Anny n'a même pas
l'air d'évoquer des souvenirs, son ton n'a pas la nuance attendrie et lointaine
qui convient à ce genre d'occupation. Elle semble parler d'aujourd'hui, tout
au plus d'hier, elle a conservé en pleine vie ses opinions, ses entêtements, ses
rancunes d'autrefois. Pour moi, au contraire, tout est noyé dans un vague poétique... (194)

Perhaps Antoine does have a bad memory of places and episodes, but what he does remember well are personal traits, subtle nuances, tones of voice, costume choices, and decorations that have anything to do with Anny. She is invoking these memories because she means that much to him.

The fact that Anny has made and is still making an impact on the main character's life is, of course, obvious. What is more important for the purpose of this thesis is that she is an emotional catalyst for Antoine's interpersonal chemistry. In supernatural terms, she possesses a magic that brings the protagonist's affective capacities to life. He hangs on her every word. He notices intonations and subtleties that belie his supposed lack of interest in others (19). He remembers traits and peculiarities that run counter to his self-professed lack of memory (197). It is almost as if each statement or question put forth by his former lover rekindles hidden memories that are striking in their detail and vividness. After Anny finally inquires as to what is going on in his life ("Maintenant, il faut me parler de toi" [197]), Antoine recalls: "De la je me souviens, malgré ma mauvaise mémoire: elle posait ainsi de ces questions directes qui me gênaient fort, parce que j'y sentais à la fois un intérêt sincère et le désir d'en finir au plus vite" (197). Clearly, Anny is no perfect and angelic partner with which to deal. We know this precisely because of the transformation she has called forth in Roquentin. The main character's understanding of his former paramour is more than just detailed. It is marked by a depth that exists only from a truly emotional and interpersonal dedication that surpasses typical human relationships.

However, just as we are prepared to hear the hero open up about the details of his recent past, he chooses to avoid the opportunity to share what the experience of the

Nausea has meant to him (197). Coming to an understanding of why he chooses not to discuss *la Nausée* with Anny, the one individual that he interacts with and treats completely differently than any other character in the novel, is tantamount to any real comprehension of what the ultimate meaning of the Nausea is for the work as a whole. As enigmatic as the Nausea is presented by Sartre, it must be said that definitive statements of certainty will not play a major role in the following analysis. Apodictic certitudes, other than the notorious “l’existence précède l’essence,” do not feature prominently in the philosophical contributions of Sartre. The phenomenon of the Nausea remains outside the margins of what can be scientifically explained. It is an experience so primordial in nature for the individual existent imbued with it, that it speaks more to the purely phenomenological than the some object or process analyzed after the fact. Perhaps this is why Roquentin knows to dare not speak of it with Anny. Not only was his previous time with her a pre-Nausea one, it seems as if it was also a relationship bound up in emotional experience as traditionally conceived.

At this point we would care to widen the scope of this section of the thesis for a brief analysis of what Sartre allows his protagonist to convey to the other characters as far as the phenomenon of *la Nausée* is concerned. Even with Anny’s request, Roquentin opts to avoid volunteering any details of his recent past, and he is adamant, it would seem, about not disclosing any particulars about the Nausea he has experienced: “Tout à l’heure, elle me parlera d’elle. Du coup, je n’ai plus la moindre envie de rien lui raconter. A quoi bon? La Nausée, la peur, l’existence... Il vaut mieux que je garde tout cela pour moi” (197). Not discussing the experience of the Nausea with the various other characters of the novel does not come across as an incomprehensible decision. The lack of any real

interpersonal connection between said individuals and Antoine, as well as his own attitude about considerations for others, certainly justifies not opening up to them about anything, much less a trauma on the level of the Nausea. However, Anny represents an absolutely different kind of character in the novel. There is without a doubt a true connection between herself and the main character. So, the Nausea is something so overwhelming and primordial that it surpasses even Anny in importance. Anny, therefore, is the litmus test for the Nausea's pre-eminence in the novel.

Sartre truly knows how to showcase a phenomenon such as *la Nausée* by introducing a character such as Anny at this late stage in the work. It becomes almost comical to what extent she clearly dominates her interlocutor in this scene. Of course, the author is using her to show how tight a grasp the Nausea has on the main character. Maintaining the Nausea as a secret in a way is Roquentin's only refuge from her interpersonal tyranny. Once the two start to even barely discuss Antoine's historical research, he is like putty in her hands:

Si elle me pose encore une question, je lui raconterai tout. Mais elle ne demande plus rien. Apparemment, elle juge qu'elle en sait assez sur moi. Anny sait fort bien écouter, mais seulement quand elle veut... Dois-je l'interroger à mon tour? Je ne crois pas qu'elle y tienne. Elle parlera quand elle jugera bon de le faire. Mon cœur bat très fort. (198)

There is no doubt as to who has control over not only the verbal exchanges in this part of the novel, but over the relationship in general between the two former lovers. The reason why this is made so clear is because Sartre will soon offer up one last, potential

While the observations made of Roquentin's thoughts during this portion of the text do open up a side of him that has not been seen up until this point, it is the veritable crescendo of insights about Anny's mannerisms that continue to build a tension that borders on the obsessive. Even with whatever psychological evaluations that can be made of either of the two characters, this is a love story, albeit perhaps not a perfect one. It is through Antoine's remembrance of his analysis of his former girlfriend's behavior that we see him capable of extraordinary insight in what concerns the inter-subjective:

Cet intérêt profond qu'elle porte à mon essence éternelle et son indifférence totale pour tout ce qui peut m'arriver dans la vie — et puis cette drôle de préciosité, pédante et charmante à la fois — et puis cette façon de supprimer dès l'abord toutes les formules mécaniques de politesse, d'amitié, tout ce qui facilite les rapports des hommes entre eux, d'obliger ses interlocuteurs à une invention perpétuelle. (198-199)

It is necessary to divide this citation in half in order to examine the richness that it holds with regard to the protagonist's affective sensibilities. The antipodean description of Anny's concern for him certainly indicates that the main character is capable of recognizing the feelings that others have, and perhaps even of dramatizing their attitudes as well. Acknowledging this profound interest-total indifference dichotomy means he has been both benefactor and victim of it. That he can choose his emotional reactions to it reveals a kind of affective resiliency that comes into play because he understands this duality as well as he does.

What happens next during their dialogue can perhaps be said to be one of the most important moments of the entire novel. We will find that another key moment will

connection between Antoine and Anny in what concerns the Nausea. An analysis of why this happens will be proffered later. For now we must return to balancing our argument of how the inter-subjective dynamic between the protagonist and his paramour coincides with the Nausea's control over the former.

Antoine is very much an individual caught between two modes of being. On the one hand, we see a newly emerging existent that is getting accustomed to the rigors brought on by the Nausea. It could even be said that he is being refined and toughened inter-subjectively by the same. He is learning to deal with everyday phenomena in a perceptual way that is a shock to his system. On the other hand, Anny forces a re-emergence of his former self. The emotional experiences that he has both enjoyed and suffered through because of her bind him to his former being-in-the-world. This is why an understanding of Anny is so paramount to understanding the novel as a whole.

Roquentin vacillates, ever so subtly, between wanting to share his tribulations with the Nausea and the reality of his former self in relation to Anny. He reveals the fact that he can know another human being so well that he seems very much out of character: "Voilà le commencement. Mais elle se tait, maintenant...Elle attend que je parle: il faut que je dise quelque chose. Pas n'importe quoi, juste ce qu'elle attend. Je suis au supplice" (198).

Anny is obviously very self-absorbed and demanding. She wants perfection from her paramour especially in what concerns conversation. This is reiterated time and time again in this part of the novel (199, 200, 203, 204, 207) with Antoine always coming up short with regard to her expectations. This creates a tension during this section of the work that requires closer examination.

While the observations made of Roquentin's thoughts during this portion of the text do open up a side of him that has not been seen up until this point, it is the veritable crescendo of insights about Anny's mannerisms that continue to build a tension that borders on the obsessive. Even with whatever psychological evaluations that can be made of either of the two characters, this is a love story, albeit perhaps not a perfect one. It is through Antoine's remembrance of his analysis of his former girlfriend's behavior that we see him capable of extraordinary insight in what concerns the inter-subjective:

Cet intérêt profond qu'elle porte à mon essence éternelle et son indifférence totale pour tout ce qui peut m'arriver dans la vie — et puis cette drôle de préciosité, pédante et charmante à la fois — et puis cette façon de supprimer dès l'abord toutes les formules mécaniques de politesse, d'amitié, tout ce qui facilite les rapports des hommes entre eux, d'obliger ses interlocuteurs à une invention perpétuelle. (198-199)

It is necessary to divide this citation in half in order to examine the richness that it holds with regard to the protagonist's affective sensibilities. The antipodean description of Anny's concern for him certainly indicates that the main character is capable of recognizing the feelings that others have, and perhaps even of dramatizing their attitudes as well. Acknowledging this profound interest-total indifference dichotomy means he has been both benefactor and victim of it. That he can choose his emotional reactions to it reveals a kind of affective resiliency that comes into play because he understands this duality as well as he does.

What happens next during their dialogue can perhaps be said to be one of the most important moments of the entire novel. We will find that another key moment will

soon arrive as well (210), but without the same gravity as the one in front of us at this juncture. This time it is Anny that takes charge and notices that something significant has happened to her former beau: “Il y a quelque chose qui te mettait au supplice, autrefois... Et maintenant c’est fini, disparu. Tu devrais t’en apercevoir. Est-ce que tu ne te sens pas plus à l’aise?” (199). The answer to this question, somewhat surprisingly, is negative (199). Two important points arise here that are inter-related. Anny notices a fundamental change in Antoine, but is duped at the same time. The readership would rightfully assume that it is the Nausea that has transformed Roquentin into the serene being Anny seems to perceive. In reality, he is still intimidated by her presence, informing us of this fact first by answering her last question with: “Je n’ose lui répondre que non : je suis, tout comme autrefois, assis au bout des fesses sur ma chaise, soucieux d’éviter des embûches, de conjurer d’inexplicables colères” (199). This exchange is perhaps more pivotal for the outcome of this scenario than one would think. Antoine now has the power to deceive Anny but does not realize this fact as it is played out on the level of interpersonal exchanges. He is still too overwhelmed by her presence to understand what the Nausea has done for him. The point here is that Sartre does not let the phenomenon of *la Nausée* reveal itself in its entirety to the person undergoing its effects. It is too unmanageable, even unwieldy, for the individual.

Therefore, there is an element of uncertainty involved in understanding how the Nausea operates in Roquentin’s world. On the surface, the protagonist manages to project himself as a serene, collected former beau to Anny. But this is only a façade that has a rather complex origin and puzzling inter-subjective reality. Unfortunately, just as we are about to continue this line of interest in the dialogue between the two former lovers, their

history together resurfaces to distract us from further examination of how the main character has evolved as a person. This we shall start back with at an appropriate moment. For the moment, the concept of “perfect moments,” sought so fiercely by Anny in her past relationship with the hero, unveils itself and leads to the second key moment in the text alluded to just previously.

Concept building through the use of creative vocabulary constructions plays an important role in this novel. Anny can be described as a vehicle for Sartre to deliver some of these rather interesting, if not perplexing, conceptual constructs, the most prominent of which is the “perfect moments” (200-202, 204, 205, 208). In regard to Antoine and his interpersonal experience with Anny, it is more than sufficient to say that he has always been oblivious to the meaning that this concept has had for his former lover, and that he has been victimized because of this lack of understanding. However, while the Nausea has brought about a considerable change within Roquentin, there has also been a shift within Anny in terms of these verbal constructions. Before getting to any analysis of the “perfect moments,” we need to clarify how things between the two main characters have evolved since their last meeting. We see Sartre framing this encounter in a very complex fashion due to some significant changes in the former paramours. As mentioned earlier, the hero is a changed man dealing with a former self and a new identity while trying to decide whether or not this rendezvous is a continuation of a prior romance or the termination of the same. To add to the complexity of this situation, now there is Anny revealing that a significant transformation has occurred within herself, especially when Antoine is considered.

Notice the reaction of the main character in the following exchange where he questions Anny about the “perfect moments”:

--- Plus de moments parfaits?

--- Non.

Je suis ahuri. J'insiste.

--- Enfin tu ne... C'est fini ces... tragédies instantanées... Je croyais que cela faisait partie de toi-même, que si on t'avait ôté cela, ç'aurait été comme si on t'avait arraché le cœur. (200-201)

Before launching into an analysis of exactly what a “perfect moment” constitutes, we would simply like to make note of how influential the role of these moments has obviously been for the rapport between Antoine and Anny. Clearly, the protagonist is very anxious before and during the initial exchanges of this meeting. As mentioned earlier, there is a complexity to what is going on in this rendezvous that cannot be overlooked. Both characters have changed, yet both share a rich interpersonal past that still influences their new-found self-concepts. The dialogue between the two reflects this complexity because of its waywardness and its moment-to-moment caprice. Just trying to determine where each character stands in the eyes of the other seems to be the major intent of the conversation at this point.

However, Anny has failed enormously to realize the changes that have taken place in the main character. Earlier she made a point of referring to Roquentin as a milestone beside a road (193). While this happens during the opening moments and pleasantries of their present encounter, it seems innocuous enough to warrant no real attention. Later in their conversation, however, this label resurfaces at a critical juncture

(201). At this point the “perfect moments” discussion has turned into an admission of how obsolete these instances have become for Anny, thereby, at least for the moment, ushering in a new and improved understanding between the two former lovers. Just as an auspicious turning point seems to be in the offing, Anny offers this fateful observation:

Oui, je suis contente que tu sois resté le même. Si on t'avait déplacé, repeint, enfoncé sur le bord d'une autre route, je n'aurais plus rien de fixe pour m'orienter. Tu m'es indispensable : moi je change; toi, il est entendu que tu restes immuable et je mesure mes changements par rapport à toi. (201)

This begins the decline of whatever renewal could have happened between these two characters. This is not to say that the descent will be without momentary upswings of passionate interest that further illustrate the complexity of each character's emotional acumen. Nonetheless, even though there is a rich history of passion between the two, Anny and Antoine are saying good-bye to one another here. Sartre is rendering this scene a frustrating yet tantalizing denouement for the relationship. Yet, just as we think Anny has shut the door on their love, Roquentin has a capricious moment, declaring that “...je cesse de chercher une Anny disparue. C'est cette fille-là, cette fille grasse à l'air ruiné qui me touche et que j'aime” (201). This new attitude on the part of the hero requires further analysis if we are to begin to resolve what is happening in this encounter.

Adding even further complexity to the situation, Antoine now seems to dismiss the Anny of old and to accept a newer, more superficial version that would fulfill only libidinal interests. It is, of course, beneficial for him that the old Anny has abandoned her

need for the “perfect moments” (200). But in reality this is a moot point. The break has been made. The last dozen pages of this section are not so much a build-up to a disappointing end, but a realization that the protagonist is through with entertaining any thoughts of having a meaningful relationship with Anny, or anybody for that matter. However, there is one significant portion left in this passage where Anny describes a transformation in her existence that mimics that of the Nausea in Antoine’s:

J’ai une espèce de certitude... physique. Je sens qu’il n’y a pas de moments parfaits. Je le sens jusque dans mes jambes quand je marche. Je le sens tout le temps, même quand je dors. Je ne peux l’oublier. Jamais il n’y a rien eu qui soit comme une révélation ; je ne peux pas dire : à partir de tel jour, de telle heure, ma vie s’est transformée. Mais à présent, je suis toujours un peu comme si cela m’avait été brusquement révélé la veille. Je suis éblouie, mal à l’aise, je ne m’habitue pas. (201-202)

After this Sartre leaves no doubt that he is trying to link Anny to the main character’s experience of the Nausea in order to establish this phenomenon as something that can be shared by people who are in love or who are not. The potential linkage of these two characters together in a Nausea-shared world is, of course, conceivable. Perhaps it is the type of experience that only a privileged few who are intimately bound can undergo and from which they can thrive.

Returning to their discourse, the author sets the scene for Anny to reveal her relationship to the Nausea rather abruptly. After she has declared her life to be without passion and herself to be incapable of entering into an amorous relationship ever again with the protagonist:

Elle ajoute, sans rapport apparent [avec ce qu'elle vient de dire],
 d'un air lointain:
 --- Il n'est pas bon non plus que je fixe trop longtemps les objets. Je les
 regarde pour savoir ce que c'est, puis il faut que je détourne vite les
 yeux.
 --- Mais pourquoi?
 --- Ils me dégoûtent.

This exchange has to strike even the most disinterested observer as a very crucial juncture for not only the relationship between the two characters, but for the text itself as well. Is it possible that every twist and turn over the last twenty pages has finally culminated in the ultimate bond between Anny and Antoine that will reveal the true meaning of *la Nausée*? At this point even the hero is hopeful as he speculates:

Mais est-ce qu'on ne dirait pas?... Il y a sûrement des ressemblances
 en tout cas. Une fois déjà, à Londres, c'est arrivé, nous avons pensé séparément
 les mêmes choses sur les mêmes sujets, à peu près au même moment. J'aimerais
 tant que... Mais la pensée d'Anny fait de nombreux détours; on n'est jamais
 certain de l'avoir tout à fait comprise. Il faut que j'en aie le coeur net. (203-204)

At this very auspicious moment we are again confounded with yet another lapse into the on-going explanation of the “perfect moments” that now seem to be the dominant leitmotif of Anny and Antoine’s former relationship (204). Instead of the connection between the fact that both characters have reached a point in their lives where they are disgusted by physical objects, in other words a potentially common experience of the phenomenon of *la Nausée*, there is a reply of something much more trivial and

misleading. To add to the disappointment, Anny now insists on changing “perfect moments” to “privileged situations” (204, 205) without there being much of a difference in explanation between the two. At this point in this section of the text one feels a true disconnect establishing itself between the two former paramours. Anny launches into an analogy between the said “situations privilégiées” and her so-called experience of physical disgust with objects that is so historically detailed (205-206) that it becomes obvious she is functioning on a completely different plane, all things considered, than the main character.

It is at this point that the interiority of language resurfaces to explain why there is such a lack of understanding between the two characters. Both seem exhausted with their experience of one another. Anny has been explaining for a considerable amount of time what the concept of a privileged situation is (200-206), albeit in an intermittent fashion. Note the exasperation in the following brief exchange where Roquentin intercedes by questioning what a “situation privilégiée” is:

- Oui, mais enfin qu'est-ce que c'était?
- Eh bien, je te l'ai dit, dit-elle avec étonnement, voilà un quart d'heure que je te l'explique.
- Enfin est-ce qu'il fallait surtout que les gens soient très passionnés, transportés de haine ou d'amour, par exemple ; ou bien fallait-il que l'aspect extérieur de l'événement soit grand, je veux dire : ce qu'on en peut voir...
- Les deux... ça dépendait, répond-elle de mauvaise grâce. (207)

No matter how Anny chooses to couch her terms, there is a disconnect in communication in spite of numerous examples (204-208) and what truly seems to be a passionate devotion on her part to communicating an understanding of the “perfect moments” and the “privileged situations.” Language means different things to different individuals in this case. These linguistic creations label the very experiences that have stimulated and have made life worth living for Anny. Yet, they only seem to puzzle and intimidate the main character. Seeing this disconnection is a way of understanding the interiority of language even better. How can it be that two individuals with so much time spent with one another and so much emotional investment reach an impasse when it comes to something so essential and vital for one of them? Again, language provides a means of communicating but not necessarily an automatic understanding to accompany each communication no matter how intimate the interlocutors.

Interestingly, it is Anny that basically explains this phenomenon shortly after the last citation. After Antoine admits that he has not always made the best effort to understand and to help Anny in some way to explain the phenomena of the “perfect moments” and the subsequent “privileged situations,” she offers such an honest example objective self-analysis that it seems like a real turning point is being made between the former lovers on a level that transcends emotional ties:

D'ailleurs je ne t'en veux pas ; je ne t'ai jamais rien expliqué
clairement, j'étais nouée, je ne pouvais en parler à personne, même pas
à toi — surtout pas à toi. Il y avait toujours quelque chose qui sonnait faux
dans ces moments-là. Alors j'étais comme égarée. J'avais pourtant
l'impression de faire tout ce que je pouvais. (208)

What is transcendent here is her willingness to embrace the interiority of language as an explanation for a relationship's failure. We start to see Anny in a new light after this admission. Yet it is how she reacts to the main character's response to the previous acknowledgement that allows us to see how far she understands the operational reality of the interiority of language in everyday interpersonal relations.

To Antoine's request of what actions would have been necessary for understanding these rarified moments and situations, Anny responds tersely "que tu es sot, on ne peut pas donner d'exemple, ça dépend" (208). The individual cannot rely on language to provide examples of such phenomena, much like Antoine's struggle to define the experience of *la Nausée* to himself. In spite of her thoughts here, Anny has provided and will provide again historical examples of what she considers to be "perfect moments" and "privileged situations." However, she knows that these instances do not capture the essence of these two conceptualizations. This is a very crucial realization to which she comes. Again, language cannot recapture or describe adequately and definitively what the concepts of the "privileged situations" and the "perfect moments" mean to her. In fact, language fails to coincide with existential experience in general because it is used to describe what happens after the fact. However, this reality is not the only problem for Anny. She uses anecdotes because she has trouble offering any real analysis: "...je ne tiens pas à en (des situations privilégiées) parler. Mais, si tu veux, voilà une histoire..." (208). This leads into more anecdote-based explanation that never really clarifies anything for the main character.

One of the yearnings inside the protagonist that is very evident in this encounter is that of being able to establish a bond between how he understands the world and how his

counterpart views things. This is primarily true because of the Nausea. Antoine, perhaps in some effort to re-establish his mental well-being, wants so badly for the phenomenon of *la Nausée* to have visited Anny that at certain points in their discussion one senses him almost willing it to happen (203, 210). Near the end of their meeting, however, his former lover renders this hope a certain impossibility. Roquentin keeps his dream alive for a few moments summing up his aspirations with what surely has to be a mantra for him at this point: "...nous avons changé ensemble et de la même façon" (210). He launches into and finishes a lengthy description of how he has changed to which Anny refuses to give any accord: "...mais tu ne penses pas du tout les mêmes choses que moi" (211). She then accuses the hero of being totally passive and reactionary when it comes to life in general while propping herself up on a pedestal of action and risk-taking.

This accusation seems inappropriate given the protagonist's lifestyle of world travel, independent scholarly pursuit, and self-dependence. It also is such an abrupt change in the flow of the conversation that it seems almost inserted in the text for the specific goal of effectuating closure for this scene. Indeed, it also begins the denouement for the work itself. The protagonist puts the mask of emotional vapidty back on to finish the rest of the novel with Anny having exited. It is difficult to have been brought to this affectively rich place in Antoine's psyche only to have such a quick end to its novelty and striking nature given the first one hundred and ninety pages of the text. During our examination of this emotional snapshot of the main character we have from time to time alluded to notions like the interiority of language and affective intelligence. The interiority of language largely is a phenomenon that we saw affect the main character during the first phase of the novel where his existence was characterized as being isolated

from other individuals and unconcerned with interpersonal issues. Likewise, his emotional capabilities were muted as well during the opening one hundred and ninety pages, and this has to lead to the conclusion that the interiority of language and affective incapacity are associated phenomena.

However, during the extended conversation between Anny and Roquentin, we saw the main character flourish in a world of emotional attunement and verbal articulation. Whether this happens because of a hiatus in the presence of the Nausea or not, Antoine reveals himself as affectively activated in the presence of a former love. He seems to be a completely different individual in fact. While he certainly stands as a unique personage in the literary canon, so does the protagonist of Camus's *l'Etranger*. Meursault provides us with a different opportunity to use our research over Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In lieu of being emotionally available and choosing more or less when to be articulate like Roquentin, this hero is naturally laconic and tied to his physical environment in such a direct fashion that we will be able to elaborate on our discussion of the body-subject and to examine the interiority of language from a different angle. To this pursuit we now turn.

Emotional Awareness and Nascent Inter-Subjectivity in *The Stranger*

What can be done to reveal an unexpected interpersonal quality in Camus's most notorious leading man? We think that if a close look is taken at the other characters when they interact with Meursault, there is a sufficient amount of affective material and inter-subjective communication on his part to create a new image. Our contention is that the choice of a first-person narrative leaves behind excess remarks and partially-complete interpersonal insights from the main character that speak to a level inter-subjective involvement unexpected from someone portrayed as so aloof and indifferent. Moreover, he proves to be surprisingly adept at reading the non-verbal cues that those around him project, and this indicates that he must know what it is to react in such a manner. While not offering a homily or an apologia for his seemingly gratuitous act at the beach, this section will shine a different light on a protagonist who is not the interpersonal void that some critics are only partially correct in claiming.

While the variety of interpretations of existentialist thought present challenges to easily defining what this philosophical movement is, the fact that only a few major literary works from this school of thought dot the landscape of the Western canon offers a chance to compare the qualities of their protagonists with a considerably narrow scope. This section of our examination of existentialist literature will work under two main assumptions. First, it is assumed that Sartre and Camus created main characters in *La Nausée* and *L'Etranger* respectively that serve as examples of how they both conceived the typical existentialist hero as being. With these archetypes in mind, the second assumption is that with the notoriety and the stature of these two novels comes the justification for making an outright comparison of the attitudes and the behaviors of their main characters with regard to inter-subjectivity. This assumption can also be accounted for because of the way in which each protagonist dominates the text from start to finish. Even if each author wanted to create a minimalist hero, one of the effects of each novel is to showcase how he interacts with other characters.

Previously we have discussed Antoine Roquentin of Sartre's *La Nausée* in terms that indicate that he actually has plenary use of a typical emotional repertoire. His relationship with Anny is clearly one that reveals an intimate, affective attachment with her, in spite of the emotional vapidness that the first two-thirds of the novel display. This is

not the case with the main character of Camus' classic *L'Etranger*. In fact, when the two novels are considered from the standpoint of how the protagonists deal communicatively with the other characters, the term "contrast" becomes much more applicable than that of "comparison." This does not hinder any juxtapositional analysis of the two heroes. It simply alerts us to the fact that this section of our thesis has no intention of creating a single paradigmatic model for how an existential main character can be created. If it were not for those critical twenty pages of *The Nausea* where Anny re-stokes a passionate fire of emotional intimacy within Antoine, perhaps we could make the case for pure comparison and a unique model for existential inter-subjectivity.

For the sake of clarity, it must be reiterated that concepts from the first part of our thesis, namely the interiority of language and emotional intelligence, will be the background for the proceeding analysis. While Antoine clearly exhibited the effects of the communicative lacunae that the interiority of language visits upon interlocutors and revealed himself to have an affective acumen hidden away for the opportune moment, we shall see that Meursault is a considerably different protagonist in what concerns these two main ideas. And Camus' style of presenting him certainly is what creates this impression. Infamous for its laconic nature, *The Stranger* is not a text that offers itself up for excessive detail on anything such as psychological or emotional depth. This does not mean that choices are not available for the main character in terms of the affective or the interpersonal. What the main focus of this section will be are those moments when inter-subjective connections and emotional displays would be expected as typical behaviors of a protagonist from a realist novel are answered with Meursault's own way of engaging experience. Therefore, it must be clear from the outset that our interpretation of his

reactions to others and to events is the area of creative analysis that will propel this portion of our discussion.

One obstacle to our examination of how Meursault interacts with those around him and how this relates to Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the body and inter-subjectivity will be the lack of dynamism within the presentation of the main character. While we saw a type of *bildungsroman* evolution with Roquentin in *La Nausée*, we do not have the opportunity to treat an emotionally responsive Meursault for even the most brief portion of the novel. Nor do we have a protagonist that exhibits any sort of personal growth with regard to the emotional or the interpersonal at novel's end. What we do have is a hero so bound up in his corporeality that certain views Merleau-Ponty espoused so eloquently in *La Phénoménologie de la perception* and *L'Être du corps* on the human body take precedence over the affective, but not necessarily the inter-subjective. Meursault's physicality is his vehicle for communication between himself and others.

The preponderance of the physical in *The Stranger* is what draws a link between a central idea of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and this classic work of literature. While Antoine Roquentin is an example of how an analysis of the interiority of language and an emotional intelligence can expand the importance of an existentialist hero, Meursault provides a nice complement in what concerns the corporeal and non-verbal communication. There is more to this notion than what one might first consider. In short, Camus' main character reveals himself through his corporeality. If we are to analyze Meursault's interpersonal capabilities, his linguistic production, or his emotional tendencies, we have to remember to seek these rather elusive targets through his physical reactions to both the other characters and, of course, the environment. The idea of a

character's anchoring in the physical world being a conduit for such an examination must strike somewhat of an odd note. This is what is available, however, for the purposes of this section of the thesis. So, Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as a way of "singing the world" definitely plays the central role in the oncoming analysis. In fact, we will be making reference to many more of the corporeal insights that Merleau-Ponty has put forth in his vision of interpersonal relations than emotional or linguistic ones. But this is only the beginning of our strategy to eventually arrive at an affective examination of Meursault.

Remembering that existentialism is influenced considerably by phenomenology always keeps the physical at the forefront of any interpretation of Camus' or Sartre's literary offerings. The physical environment is always simply a given element of any work of literature just as it is undeniably a part of human experience. However, for *L'Etranger* and *La Nausée*, this environment is paramount for understanding how the main characters themselves are constructed. This is true because their interactions with the physical dominate their thoughts, and oftentimes dictate their actions. This section of our analysis will focus on the similarities and the differences between each protagonist's relationship with his surroundings. This will allow us to construct an argument as to how this connection influences each hero's total image with regard to the entire text. Therefore, before we launch into a purely inter-subjective discussion of Camus' protagonist, we felt it best to firmly establish how his construction of the main character through the corporeal and how Merleau-Ponty construed the "body-subject" coincide.

Examining the protagonist of Camus's *l'Etranger* with an eye on Merleau-Pontean thoughts on intersubjectivity is both an opportunity to underscore personal attributes that are associated with the existentialist subject from a broad perspective and to refine how Merleau-Ponty viewed the role of corporeality and emotional awareness in the life of the body-subject. In general, the previous analysis of the principles of emotional intelligence that intermittently surface in Merleau-Ponty's corpus can be viewed as evidence that his existentialism includes an understanding of the essential nature of emotive experience that surpass Camusian notions of intersubjectivity in this particular novel. At the same time, Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the body-subject is a refinement of the raw physicality that dominates Meursault's existence. There is no doubt that there are similarities in the way that each philosopher emphasized the corporeality of the human subject, by Camus in this text and by Merleau-Ponty in *Phénoménologie* and *Prose du monde*. This will be the subject of a brief analysis. The one topic that provides an even broader scope for discussion is the role of emotions in the intersubjectivity espoused by each theorist. For now, let us examine the ways in which Camus as novelist and Merleau-Ponty as philosopher conceive of the importance of the body in the existence of the subject.

Because we have made ample reference to the concept of the "body-subject" in our analysis of intersubjectivity in previous sections, we feel it more practical to first look at Camus's depiction of the primacy of corporeality in his most influential novel, *l'Etranger*. Then, as similarities and discrepancies between Camus's portrayal of the body and Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body-subject arise, we will construct our analysis from this angle in an attempt to avoid redundancies. The use of first-person

narrative is certainly a hallmark of this *l'Etranger*, and it has obvious implications for the research interest of this section. Meursault's physical interactions with and reactions to the environment are offered as a narrative that both motors the entirety of the novel's plotline and showcases the description of the sensate world while marginalizing the social and the emotional. The first chapter displays the preferential treatment that Meursault's narrative gives to physical perception at the expense of any affective account or social analysis. The protagonist's depiction of his interaction with various members of his community and that of his mother's are so minimal that they lead to the quasi-erroneous assumption that Meursault must be something of a misanthrope. While this last idea will be pursued in more detail shortly, it becomes abundantly clear that the main character pursues every possibility to avoid contact with others and to minimize conversations when he is forced to deal with his mother's burial. At the same time, he thrives on satisfying his own physical needs and desires and is quite occupied with narratively detailing how the environment is impacting him physically.

For both Merleau-Ponty and the hero of *l'Etranger*, the body is that instrument through which the existence of the physical world takes precedence over the rational or ordered structure that mankind wishes to impose upon it. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the individual is a body-subject that exists as an indivisible fusion of cognitive and perceptual capacities found housed within and yet reaching out limitlessly to the world via a physical body. This unlimited reaching out to the world happens in large part when a given body-subject participates in its particular cultural setting through the medium of language. It is not the case, however, that Merleau-Ponty expounds upon culture as it is experienced by the subject in his philosophical texts. Suffice to say that he sees it as of

secondary importance to the more elemental phenomenological experience of the body-subject. In contrast, the Camusian portrayal of the body that reverberates throughout *l'Etranger* views human corporeality as directly at odds with the social order. This constitutes a significant rift between the two philosophers, and it will have considerable implications for how Meursault will be analyzed emotionally through a Merleau-Pontean filter later in this section. For now, let us detail how Camus's protagonist is dominated by his physical needs and how this creates extreme tension throughout the storyline of his most famous novel.

Jumping ahead to the second half of the text provides us with perhaps the most definitive self-analysis that Meursault offers up about his physical nature. In his first meeting with his court-appointed defender, he states flatly: "Je lui ai expliqué que j'avais une nature telle que mes besoins physiques dérangeaient souvent mes sentiments" (67). At this point in the story, this self-evaluation is definitely more of an afterthought than a revelation, but its impact is still significant in that it serves as an overture to the main character's shift from a purely sensate being to a more reflective narrator. While his reflections in prison do make of our hero a somewhat more round character, they always seem to underscore the raw physicality that has dominated the existence of the protagonist up to that time. Indeed, the first half of the text serves as a testament to the protagonist's body as his anchor in the world, be that world a physical or a social one. Viewed in this light, Camus's portrayal of the physical nature of Meursault coincides unequivocally with Merleau-Ponty's notions that the body is the conduit through which one , the irrevocable thrown agency by which one comes to be a movement towards the vast potentiality that is the world (1962, 408), and the instrument from which

intersubjectivity comes into being for the first time as one body-subject recognizes that of another (1962, 406).

However, while it can be argued that the existential uniqueness of this hero is largely based upon his special relationship with nature, it is also clear that at times certain natural phenomena cause him severe problems in what concerns normal cognitive function. Moreover, these problematic situations often come about as he is trying to deal with scenarios involving his interaction with others. On the march to his mother's interment, Meursault is assailed by the light and the heat of the Algerian coastal countryside to the point of mental dysfunction:

Autour de moi c'était toujours la même campagne lumineuse gorgée de soleil. L'éclat du ciel était insoutenable...J'étais un peu perdu entre le ciel bleu et blanc et la monotonie de ces couleurs [les noirs des habits, du goudron, et de la voiture]...Tout cela, le soleil, l'odeur de cuir et de crottin de la voiture, celle du vernis et celle de l'encens, la fatigue d'une nuit d'insomnie, me troublait le regard et les idées. (21)

While this passage is evidently useful for foreshadowing purposes, it also showcases two facets of the main character's engagement with the world that are at the heart of his interpersonal difficulties. One, which will be pursued shortly in full detail, is the overwhelming role that sleep plays in the daily reality of Meursault and which is indicative of a psychological condition prone to depression. The other aspect of his existence that is displayed here is his tendency to become lost in his own experience of

the sensate world even when intersubjective burdens or cultural traditions are demanding his attention.

All of these characterizations of Meursault as being disinclined to pursue contact with others are not to say that he is not attentive to strangers that arrive on scene or to new situations or places. In fact, it is by virtue of his being jarred out of his routine back in Algiers that the protagonist reveals a genuine knack for observation in detail when it comes to novel encounters with the people, places, and things around the retirement home. However, it is important to note that this keen sense of perception does not lend itself over to establishing intersubjective contact with those observed. In reality, the main character tends to objectify others through his descriptions, not really believing that they exist in the same way that he does. At his mother's vigil, Meursault describes the other retirees thusly: "Je les voyais comme je n'ai jamais vu personne et pas un détail de leurs visages ou de leurs habits ne m'échappait. Pourtant je ne les entendais pas et j'avais peine à croire à leur réalité (15)." This description is quite revealing of his disinterest in the affective realm of intersubjectivity. Having difficulty believing in the reality of others, Meursault is equally perplexed, if not annoyed, with the emotional displays of others. Returning to the scene of the vigil, our protagonist is confronted with his mother's female acquaintance crying in soft, steady sobs: "il me semblait qu'elle ne s'arrêterait jamais... J'étais très étonné parce que je ne la connaissais pas. J'aurais voulu ne plus l'entendre" (15-16). This observation is more than it seems because it represents a recurring psycho-linguistic reflex that the main character exhibits throughout the novel. Faced with actual or potential emotional exchanges with others, Meursault is forced into

employing at least a modicum of interior monologue that seems to substitute for affective responses.

In fact, dealing with the omnipresence of others is the major means by which we come to realize that the main character is far from being some impressive role model of existentialist behavior.

He knows what emotion is and tries to repress it.

There is no effort on the part of the protagonist/narrator to interpret his perceptions and physical feelings. No reflection, life lived in a raw state. In seeing the world through the consciousness of Meursault, the reader has the opportunity to live vicariously in novel social contexts and to access perceptual perspectives that are divorced from the meanings that they would normally have for the reader in his/her own life.

When looking at the interpersonal exchanges that Meursault experiences, it is overwhelmingly clear that his expectations and interpretations of other characters' verbal and non-verbal communications are fraught with inaccuracies and astonishments. This is important for understanding how the protagonist fails to adhere to the principles of Merleau-Pontean intersubjectivity. The disconnection that appears from these misinterpretations and amazements is more than just a product of the main character's disinterest in the lives of others. It is indicative of the problematic nature of his engagement with the social and emotional realms of human existence. There is no doubt that Meursault is totally against bonding or identifying on any level with the society that surrounds him, and the same is certainly true for affective connections with individuals. However, given the resounding indifference that dominates the protagonist's modus

operandi, these surprises and misjudgments seem either uncalled-for or simply ancillary. In other words, no commitment on the part of the hero should equate to no post-engagement reaction or evaluation on his part. Indeed, these moments of astonishment or confusion seem like some sort of residue left behind from the missed opportunities to establish interpersonal intimacies.

For the purposes of this thesis, what Meursault ultimately represents is the disregard that the existentialist movement as a whole had for emotional analysis. This really strikes an odd note if one considers affective experience to be as naturally occurring a phenomenon as physical sensation, social engagement, and cognitive activity, which it is. To deny the importance of emotive states in the life of the body-subject and of others is to drain the life-blood out of intersubjectivity and to therefore preclude any understanding of

With his taciturn nature and raw connection to the physical world, we are inclined to believe that Meursault could be the existentialist being par excellence. This is obviously true as far as Camus is concerned. It is only partially true in terms of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenologically-based existentialism. In the first part of our thesis, we firmly established that the body-subject's main characteristic is that it is inexorably bound up in the physical world. On par with this reality and related to the thrown nature of the body-subject was the degree to which language is at the center of any notion of intersubjectivity. This is the point at which Merleau-Ponty's thought and characters such as Meursault exhibit completely divergent tendencies in what concerns interpersonal relations. For Merleau-Ponty, language certainly has its enigmatic interior and can be an

elusive and not completely tamable asset for the speaker, but it is the most powerful tool used in order to reach out over to the Other.

A very obvious difference between Meursault as Camusian hero and Merleau-Ponty's notion of a body-subject with intersubjective skills is the role of dialogue in interpersonal interactions. As we saw in the first part of our thesis, dialogue is the means through which intersubjectivity comes into being for Merleau-Ponty as the affirmation of both the body-subject and the other happens on social and existential levels. In sharp contrast to this viewpoint, Meursault actively seeks to avoid potential encounters with others in the aftermath of his mother's passing in order to circumvent any questions from concerned acquaintances (10, 25). Interestingly, it is in anticipation of these compassionate exchanges that we find the opportunity to "see" the main character actually using reasoning skills instead of his normal *modus operandi* of passive observation of events and people and of reaction to the given moment's physical and social stimuli.

While this theme of his mental processing of future potentialities of interpersonal exchange will receive its own examination soon, for now it hints at another intersubjective difficulty that affects Meursault cognitively. His verbal output, meager as it is, is often a source of insecurity for Camus's hero. He frequently questions the appropriateness of his statements immediately after the fact (9, 12), a practice that many interpreters of this text might very correctly attribute to his uncalculating, spontaneous engagement with each passing moment as an existential hero. However, in keeping with the Merleau-Pontean idea of dialogue as being a bonding between two (or more) interlocutors, it is clear that Meursault denies himself the ability to be more certain as to

the suitability of his remarks because of his penchant for not paying attention to what is said to him (11, 14, 19, 21).

The relationship between Meursault and Marie Cardona serves as the best example of how the protagonist's raw, uninterpreted engagement with the world leads to interpersonal dysfunction. Both aloof and accommodating, the main character seems to live out a life that fluctuates from total ambivalence for the emotional welfare of others to a non-committal but benign neighborliness. Marie is an important character because her presence causes Meursault to show himself as a raw, physical creature having no affective or interpersonal depth. The activities that these two lovers engage in allow the hero to narrate a simple, uninterpreted interaction with the physical world. Alongside this exploration of the environment is the animal magnetism writ large that clearly dominates the behavior of Meursault and the constant and seemingly inexplicable joviality of Marie. Everything about this situation would be nothing but auspicious if it were not for the emotional needs of the young lady. Here, the abridged dialogues between the two innamorati concerning love are painful reminders of what an affective non-entity the main character represents. After one sexual interlude

Meursault's relationship with his boss provides perhaps the best example of how far his misreading of other's verbal and non-verbal messages actually goes. The boss is the best choice here because of what are traditionally held notions of how relationships between employer and employee should be characterized: professionalism and courtesy with relatively little emotional involvement. Given this perspective, one would expect the protagonist to excel at communicating with his supervisor *because* of Meursault's

unemotional demeanor and due to the cut-and-dried nature of workplace expectations. Clearly, even with these factors under consideration, the main character and his boss do not understand one another on either a superficial or profound level. Asking for leave in order to attend his mother's funeral services, Meursault reads perhaps too much in the body language of his supervisor, and this causes him to speak inappropriately: "J'ai demandé deux jours de congé à mon patron et...il n'avait pas l'air content. Je lui ai même dit : « Ce n'est pas de ma faute. » Il n'a pas répondu. J'ai pensé alors que je n'aurais pas dû lui dire cela" (9). This exchange is an excellent example of how the protagonist has difficulties with interpersonal relations. The Camusian existentialist subject archetype, with all of his profound connectedness with nature and moment-by-moment grasp of the immediacy of authentic human experience, does not have the wherewithal to communicate fully and patiently with a superior in a professional setting. Not only is his own communicative output questionable, he also misreads that of other characters.

What is even more intriguing about Meursault is that he is at least aware of his verbal gaffes. The other major exchange between the protagonist and his boss, the infamous rejection of the offer to transfer to Paris by the hero, is probably best remembered because of the shock value created by a young, francophone professional preferring to remain in Algiers in lieu of moving to Paris. Regardless of how one might feel about the comparative qualities of these two cities, Meursault's decision certainly must strike the vast majority of readers as odd even when one only considers that the offer is promoted as an upgrade by the boss. However, with regard to the image that this thesis is proffering of the main character, it is not so much the message that he delivers, but how he conveys it and what reactions this causes:

Il [le patron] m'a demandé alors si je n'étais pas intéressé par un changement de vie. J'ai répondu qu'on ne changeait jamais de vie... Il a eu l'air mécontent, m'a dit que je répondais toujours à côté, que je n'avais pas d'ambition et que cela était désastreux dans les affaires... J'aurais préféré ne pas le mécontenter, mais je ne voyais pas de raison pour changer ma vie. En y réfléchissant bien, je n'étais pas malheureux. (46)

This exchange is a prime example of how emotionally out of phase the hero is with others and how verbally inept he comes across interpersonally. On a more positive note, his candor certainly is a quality to appreciate with some reservations. However, his supervisor's remark that Meursault never gives him a straight answer is a blow to the image of the protagonist as being a blunt and forthright existentialist hero. Unfortunately, the text does not provide specific information about his "réponses toujours à côté," and while they might not be an indication of outright deceit, this is at least a very real clue that a lack of trust exists between the two characters that has its origin in the verbal output of the main character.

There is one activity in the life of the protagonist whose importance has been overlooked probably more than any other, sleep. This is due perhaps in large part to its passive nature and lack of relevance to the action of the plotline. Nonetheless, it is very pertinent to the analysis of Meursault as an existentialist hero and as a psychological case study. It is simply striking how much the main character sleeps and how many references he makes to slumber in the novel.

Meursault is an inter-subjective minimalist without question. He exhibits a general tendency of avoiding most interactions with others, or at least limiting the amount of exchange that takes place once he does engage the Other. He also tends to avoid any form of emotional output so consistently that it would seem ludicrous to even imagine him emoting. Just as a reminder, we reiterate that it is the main character's ties to the physical world that render him such a valuable asset to Merleau-Pontean analysis. Nonetheless, there are moments when Camus does allow his protagonist to reflect upon his experience and to have a type of muted conscience. To make these instances even more relevant for the present analysis, it is almost always when the main character pauses to consider the viewpoint or the situation of another character that he has these moments of reflection. Camus is conceding perhaps a great deal more than he probably would like to in this particular area. Given that he has done everything to construct a protagonist that is dominated by his physical and libidinal properties, these brief pauses for the contemplation of how others around him receive his words or are influenced by his actions seem to belie the aloof nature that his narrative so consistently provides.

It is here that Meursault approaches an inter-subjective understanding but stops just short of affective production. Like the interiority of language, his ability to emote seems only a remote possibility that lingers on the margin of his efforts at inter-subjective communication. Returning to the idea of Meursault's muted conscience arising from interpersonal activity, it is necessary for us to closely examine his interactions with various characters during the first two chapters of the work. These two sections showcase the infamous wake and burial of the protagonist's mother, as well as his all too facile

return to his daily routine. The loss of a mother is considered a traumatic experience for most characters in the majority of novels that populate the literary canon of any society. That is to say, no matter what the relationship that a given individual has had with his or her mother, the death of a matriarch is significant regardless of the particularities that might surround a character's situation. At first blush, most critics of Camus' leading man are prone to emphasizing his callousness, or at the very least, his emotional neutrality when it comes to his mother's passing. These ideas are, of course, reiterated in the legal proceedings of the second part of the text (101, 137-145). Yet, this type of criticism does not allow for a detailed look at how the death of his mother influences Meursault's linguistic production. It has been established that the hero is anything but verbose and forthcoming affectively. However, in the given context, he is forced to reach across the void that he has created inter-subjectively and address how his mother's dying has brought him out of his normal interpersonal stupor. This may not be an affirmation of outright emotional awareness but at least of an inter-subjective consciousness and self-analysis.

The second paragraph of the first page begins this bizarre journey for the hero (9). After having asked for two day's leave from work in order to attend the wake and the interment of his mother, Meursault has a moment of awareness of the emotional disposition of his employer that strikes an unfamiliar tone given the balance of the novel: "...il [le patron] n'avait pas l'air content. Je lui ai même dit: « Ce n'est pas de ma faute.» Il n'a pas répondu. J'ai pensé alors que je n'aurais pas dû lui dire cela" (9). Forced to deal with requesting a favor from another character, some degree of inter-subjective lucidity emerges within the main character that will only rarely be seen again. This interaction

can be examined from more than one angle, of course. From one standpoint, it seems more than a little odd that an individual would become unsure of him- or herself when asking for time off to attend a parent's funeral, no matter what the circumstances might be. Secondly, offering up something such as "It's not my fault" speaks to a generalized sense of uncertainty that exists between Meursault and his superior. However, the protagonist's following realization that perhaps this comment was inappropriate does indicate that an immediate kind of self-awareness does operate within the main character's mentality. What this second paragraph of the novel does so efficiently is provide a microcosm of the hero's relationships to the various people that he is made to deal with throughout the work. He is basically void of any conventional notions of inter-subjective behavior while possessing a raw type of intuition that only seems beneficial or insightful once blunders or misunderstandings have occurred.

Beyond the fact that there simply is not a lot of opportunity to see Meursault behaving emotionally lies the reality that his reactions and reflections are of such an immediate nature that they do not seem to warrant any serious or deep affective analysis. Of course, this observation is of no startling relevance to even a first-time reader of the text. *L'Etranger* is the definitive existentialist novel that brings together a first-person narrative and an instinct-dominated address to physical and interpersonal stimuli in order to create a raw, un-detailed pace to the storyline. Nonetheless, the main character's consistently immediate manner of commenting on the reactions (through internal dialogue) of those around him presents itself as a type of engagement with the Other. Camus could have opted to disallow Meursault even the least internal commentary on the facial expressions, the body-language signals, and the other forms of non-verbal

communication that manifest themselves throughout this work, but he does not. And it must be noted that these types of tacit messages remain just that with regard to the text itself. Yet, they present themselves only through the medium of the hero's muted inter-subjective awareness. This makes of Meursault a much more interesting subject to examine than might be considered at first glance.

As we progress through the text, the narrator-main character does become more willing to provide us with interpersonally analytical commentary, but this is not to say that there is a drastic evolution on the part of Meursault by novel's end. What has to be kept in mind is that Camus draws his protagonist out of his inter-subjective hiding because of contact with other characters, and not due to some personal decision to become more insightful emotionally. To make of Meursault an even nascent affective communicator is to stretch the boundaries that the author has placed on the delineation of his leading man. However, there is without a doubt an awareness of others within the protagonist that grows as the novel progresses. Returning to the first two chapters, we are confronted with what has to be considered a bleak terrain for the protagonist to navigate inter-subjectively. He is forced to deal with his mother's passing and a community of either isolated retirees or indigent senior citizens and the few caretakers that oversee what in most respects has to be regarded as a closed community of individuals who await death. It is no wonder that Meursault does not readily identify with anyone at the retirement home.

In addition, it must also be said that had he even used traditional forms of decorum for such an event, e. g., being obviously saddened and making at least a perfunctory attempt at getting acquainted with the deceased's closest peers, this would

not automatically ensure that he would show himself to be an interpersonal success. The circumstances that surround a funeral and an interment simply do not lend themselves to bringing complete strangers together. It is more than a little interesting that the term “stranger” seems so fitting for the description of *every* character that is involved with the proceedings at the retirement center. Examining the text closely from the moment Meursault boards the bus (10) to the moment when he quietly reflects back on the days’ events on his balcony (28) reveals that only one character shows any sign of being all that close to anyone else involved: the enigmatic beau Thomas Pérez (18) that was in some limited way amorously linked to the defunct.

Looking at the chain of events that comprise the services for the protagonist’s mother, we see that certain individuals perform certain tasks. Others silently pay last respects. Even the retirement home director’s comments to the main character seem to be intended to stifle any lengthy conversation (10-11). No one presents him- or herself as engaged emotionally to anyone else to such an extent that the whole scene could be described as a gathering of strangers: each retiree coming from his or her own previous life in whose presence the hero can barely believe (15), Meursault himself showing up after having hardly visited in the past year (11), the Parisian concierge who refers to the pensioners as “them” (13), the silent guard with her face hidden from bandages (12), and the one friend of the deceased who at this point declares that she has no more friends (16). There is an isolation at work between individual characters that is punctuated by the one reason they have been drawn together (death) and by the ever-present immediacy of the main character’s cognitive and perceptual capacities as they are displayed in the text.

For what concerns the rest of the novel, Camus really has set up Meursault in a very obvious manner. There is no denying that the main character-narrator is only minimally involved with other characters in regard to the affective. But to introduce an emotionally-challenged protagonist by sending him alone to a remote, arid retirement center to witness his mother's funereal process is not conducive to promoting *any* leading character as interconnected with those around him. The fact that from chapter three to the second part of the novel we do see Meursault interface with others is indelibly marked by these initial nineteen pages. The way that the protagonist does reveal at least an interpersonal strategy in lieu of complete openness to the Other will be discussed at length later in this section. For now it is necessary to return to the retirement home in order to begin to delineate exactly what Meursault's inter-subjective strategy is and how it relates to his subdued sense of emotional awareness.

From the very first page of the novel it is clear that the main character's *modus operandi* when communicating with others is frequently dominated by a kind of post-utterance uneasiness: "J'ai pensé alors que je n'aurais pas dû lui dire cela (le fait que la mort de sa mère n'était pas de sa faute)" (9). This discomfort suggests a guilty conscience and sometimes a very acute awareness of non-verbal communication produced by interlocutors. It is quite evident at the retirement center that Meursault is uncomfortable with certain ideas that he puts forth, especially with notions about himself that he feels others have preconceived. In the initial meeting with the home's director he anticipates a reproach: "J'ai cru qu'il me reprochait quelque chose et j'ai commencé à lui expliquer" (10). The protagonist is not so removed from traditionally-based ideas of familial responsibility regardless of his feelings or lack thereof for his mother. Far from arguing

for a sense of shame or guilt on the part of the hero, we would advocate that there is a very obvious sense of misconduct, or at the very least irresponsibility on his end of things. He is truly aware of the potential of others to judge his actions and statements as inappropriate. This notion is a direct contradiction of the argument that Meursault is more dominated by his immediate intake of sensory perception.

Moreover, this uneasiness troubles the main character quite frequently. In front of his mother's closed casket the protagonist suffers another inter-subjective moment of self-doubt when he elects not to have the concierge open the coffin (12). To add to his dilemma he can only offer a "Je ne sais pas" as to why he wanted the casket to remain status quo ante. The episode of the burial ends rather precipitously after the wake with the main character ignoring or not understanding a great deal of interpersonal communication that is directed his way (19, 21). However, chapter two starts with a discovery on the part of our hero that provides an explanation of why his initial gaffe with his employer happened.

Meursault reveals himself as either an uninterested bystander in the world of inter-subjective communication or as an individual that simply does not possess a timely savvy in what concerns interfacing with others when he offers the following to start the second chapter: "En me réveillant, j'ai compris pourquoi mon patron avait l'air mécontent quand je lui ai demandé mes deux jours de congé: c'est aujourd'hui samedi... Mon patron, tout naturellement, a pensé que j'aurais ainsi quatre jours de vacances... cela ne pouvait pas lui faire plaisir" (23). Here we have a specific explanation for the veiled uneasiness that seems to accompany many of the main character's exchanges with others. We will not benefit from such a clarification on the part of Meursault very often

throughout the course of the novel. Therefore, a brief analysis of this one point seems more than justifiable.

While his commentary on his boss' mentality lacks any sort of an affective element, it does nonetheless reveal the protagonist as both aware of the attitudes of other characters and willing to understand their point of view. Just after the previous citation, Meursault ends the paragraph with a reminder that "...ce n'est pas de ma faute si on a enterré maman hier au lieu d'aujourd'hui et d'autre part, j'aurais eu mon samedi et mon dimanche de toute façon. Bien entendu, cela ne m'empêche pas de comprendre tout de même mon patron" (23). There is an inter-subjective participation here that although emotionally flat informs us that the hero can gratuitously side with the Other even when that involves attitudes that might run counter to his own. This objectivity on the part of Meursault can be seen as a kind of trade-off for his lack of emotional engagement. If he is not capable of discerning affective states within others, then Camus is left with somehow dealing with how his main character is supposed to react to the exchanges that that he has with the other characters in the novel. Simply stated, the author cannot have just a sensory-activated existential automaton-hero as the protagonist-narrator. If Meursault lived alone in some natural setting that could be the case, but then the plot-line of *L'Etranger* changes dramatically. So, with the main character placed squarely in social contexts alongside other human beings, but void of almost any detectable emotional capacity, it is the inter-subjective reality of the novel that spawns a pseudo-affective response from Meursault.

Indeed, as has been seen with the boss, the protagonist does show the ability to imagine and to agree with the mentality of the Other. Given his minimalist reactions to so

many various stimuli, e.g. his mother's passing and the mourners at the retirement center, it is quite remarkable that the hero possesses this ability. Returning to the plot-line of the novel, we have seen Meursault complete his filial responsibilities, although with minimal, if any, emotional response. We now see him free to pursue his own personal interests during a weekend. At this point we have the opportunity to draw some revealing comparisons and contrasts between the main character and the other existentialist hero in our thesis, Antoine Roquentin.

Camus's hero decides to spend some time at the beach and manages auspiciously to stumble upon a certain Marie Cardona whom he knew only briefly in the past (34). Given the laconic style of the novel, the fact that there is hardly any personal history between these two characters seems quite convenient. In this way there need be no lengthy or detailed exposition of their relationship and its vicissitudes. Here marks, of course, a significant difference with the rapport between Roquentin and his former girlfriend. In keeping with the emphasis Camus places on the immediate and the sensorial, any description of the past by Meursault is limited to very brief references brought on by something manifest in the present: the description of his mother's behavior at home (11) as an agreement with the retirement home director's observations and the mention of his mother's lack of religious interest (12) as an ironic response to her Christian burial. Likewise, Marie's role in the main character's past rates the following summary: "...une ancienne dactylo de mon bureau dont j'avais eu envie à l'époque. Elle aussi, je crois. Mais elle est partie peu après et nous n'avons pas eu le temps" (23). These three sentences barely form any comparison with the full-blown relationship between Antoine and Anny, of course. Yet, this lack of an opportunity to compare these two

relationships does not mean that the chance encounter of Meursault and Marie cannot provide an adequate means of exploring the inter-subjective in Camus's writing. It simply means that we have to look closely at what transpires between the two former co-workers while remaining focused on the interpersonal dynamic that comes out of the protagonist's muted approach to human relations.

As seen earlier in our analysis, the physical world unquestionable plays a dominant role in *L'Etranger*. This fact is re-emphasized in every phase of the main character's relationship with Marie. It is without a doubt a purely physical one, so much so that its description leaves very little room for any affective analysis at all. Yet, we have already seen that the way to getting at any sense of emotional potential within Meursault is to look closely at his inter-subjective moments and to showcase the communicative output that leaks out of the hero's muffled conscience, especially when a pattern emerges. Back at the beach, the two characters are making plans to spend the evening together after an afternoon of swimming (24). Marie notices that Meursault is putting on a black tie and asks if he is in mourning. He answers affirmatively and specifies when the services were held, causing Marie to "shrink away a little" (24) with no verbal response in light of the frivolity of the afternoon's activities. To which the protagonist offers: "J'ai eu envie de lui dire que ce n'était pas de ma faute, mais je me suis arrêté parce que j'ai pensé que je l'avais déjà dit à mon patron. Cela ne signifiait rien" (24). Again we see the hero instinctively think of his mother's death as not his fault, but he stops short by remembering the situation with his employer.

In addition, the English translation of "Cela ne signifiait rien" conveys slightly more of a judgmental tone to what the main character says: "I was just going to explain to

her that it wasn't my fault, but I checked myself, as I remembered having said the same thing to my employer, and realizing then it sounded rather foolish" (24). This version strikes a much more self-deprecating tone within the hero's mentality than the original. As a matter of fact, "foolish" is a term so loaded with (self-)analysis that it surpasses any other assessment that Meursault has offered about himself thus far in the novel. An interpretation of what motivates him to use this expression can lead in more than one direction. Is the protagonist saying that his won choice of words is foolish, that the situation renders his expression inappropriate, or that he has placed another character in a position to feel foolish because of his remark?

We feel that he is calling into question his own linguistic style rather than placing the source of the foolishness exterior to his thought process. Thus far in the novel Meursault has shown no inclination to go so far as to assigning particular qualities to situations or to assuming the ability to create a certain feeling or idea in another character's mentality. It is necessary to recall that, for the main character, the funeral services of his mother were not labeled with any specific descriptors. While this event was described as being outside the purview of the responsibility of the protagonist-narrator on more than one occasion (9, 35), no other designation was proffered. Even when the hero sensed intuitively that his boss was unhappy with his request for leave, he never verbally characterized himself as the source of the discontent.

Hence the now infamous "Ce n'est pas de ma faute" mantra that sets a rather aloof tone for the first two chapters. Besides these ideas we can simply refer back to the text in order to bolster our argument that it is Meursault who feels he has been unwise to spout this catchphrase when he follows the previous citation with: "De toute façon, on est

toujours un peu fautif" (35). The generalized nature of this rather global statement points back at its originator for whom to call "guilty." The main character is indeed a peculiar mixture of disinterest and self-absorption when dealing with others, but also of self-incrimination and guilt as well.

After an evening spent with Marie, the hero's life continues its return to normalcy the next workday as we see Meursault take back up with work, and, of course, the presence of his supervisor. This time their rapport has a more positive ring to it, yet the main character, unsurprisingly, is as disconnected as ever interpersonally: "Aujourd'hui... Le patron a été aimable. Il m'a demandé si je n'étais pas trop fatigué (à cause des obsèques)... je ne sais pas pourquoi il a eu l'air d'être soulagé et de considérer que c'était une affaire terminée" (29). The disconnection here does not lie with the protagonist's ability to perceive non-verbal communication, for he clearly "reads" the reactions of others. What Camus is intending is that Meursault not be deficient in what concerns instinctual types of behavior that deal with perception and physical awareness, but disinterested or disengaged from what lies behind the surface of the Other's message. However, there is something else to the previous citation that begs to be addressed. The author sometimes leaves behind, in a manner of speaking, indications that the hero is thinking about things he perceives on a somewhat deeper level than we have up to now been willing to explore.

Meursault has already shown that he is quite adept at perceiving the non-verbal cues of others. Also, he seems to embellish said cues with ideas that are surprisingly creative given his taciturn mannerisms. The boss "...looked relieved..." (30) in talking with the main character about the deceased "...and seemed to think that closed the matter"

(30). This last impression comes as an odd observation on the part of Meursault due to its gratuitous nature. It is a bit puzzling to imagine how one gives a look that conveys closure for a matter that concerns the death of another person's mother. Even though this bodily expression might be challenging to produce, the more important point for the hero is that he picks up on it and values it enough to verbalize it. This shows a sense of sophistication in the protagonist's non-verbal communication awareness. However, as with most matters concerning the inter-subjective abilities of the narrator-protagonist, a balance between prowess and liability seems to always be the case. Earlier at the retirement center Meursault had been lead to the casket by the attentive concierge who prepares to leave the main character alone when the following transpires: "Je ne sais pas quel geste j'ai fait, mais il (le concierge) est resté, debout derrière moi. Cette présence dans mon dos me gênait" (13). It is of no consequence that the protagonist makes erroneous judgments or disadvantageous gestures. What is most important is that there is an awareness innate within the hero that seems to be almost as immediate as his perception. As has been mentioned previously, however, there is a very real give-and-take nature to Meursault's non-verbal acumen, as is evidenced by his candor concerning gaffs.

The pace of the novel varies to the degree to which other characters enter into the main character's world and communicate with him. His laconism acknowledged, the hero does appear to be a rather good listener, or at least someone who is willing to let others talk a great deal about their experience. One of his neighbors, Raymond Sintès, can surely attest to this fact (47-52). Seeing as how Meursault is the hero-narrator this brings up an interesting point concerning his commitment to inter-subjective relations. If it is

through his eyes and ears that the novel is displayed, then the length of the other character's depositions are evidence of his valuing what they share with him. In the case of Raymond Sintès, a neighbor and alleged pimp, the main character shows a considerable amount of interest in what this individual has to share relative to his concern for other character's offerings shown thus far in the novel: "...il me parle souvent et quelquefois il passe un moment chez moi parce que je l'écoute" (32). Raymond is allocated almost four entire pages for recounting a domestic squabble with his girlfriend. In regard to the other characters, this has to be considered very generous.

When considering Raymond it is necessary to pay close attention to how Meursault deals with him. Indifference still plays the central role in the protagonist's interaction with his neighbor, but there are signs that a limited type of friendship is in the offing here. One trait of the main character that has started to become evident before this scene and that is now coming into even more focus is that he almost never puts thoughts in the form of a question, opting rather to have moments of a very subdued puzzlement instead. This point will be discussed in full in a moment. Raymond, on the other hand, poses some very important questions about friendship in this scene (33, 35, 36) that force the hero to deal with interpersonal matters directly and openly. Naturally, these are awkward moments for Meursault, and he uses his usual minimalist mindset to guide himself through them. Sintès wastes no time in asking probably one of the most maladroit questions the protagonist will hear in the novel: "...il m'a demandé... si je voulais être son copain" (33). The main character answers with "I replied that I had no objection" (36), a response that obviously maintains the indifferent stance that he projects so consistently. However, perhaps the hero's nonchalance is not so much generated from a self-absorbed

or purely insensitive outlook, but from a sense of balance that he retains within himself. This equilibrium would then be best described as a middle ground between making extreme judgments about other characters and events. Of course, there is a non-committal aspect to this indifference, e.g., Meursault's lack of communication with the others at the retirement home, and it could be argued that his participation in social life, however limited, is a product of having it forced upon him.

To this line of reasoning our argument of balance within and without Meursault shows that he does have the ability to extend himself toward the other, as we see in the scene with Raymond. While we previously offered a brief explanation of what "balance" means for the protagonist, we feel it especially necessary to go into more detail with what concerns the character Sintès. The term "balance" for the hero is best defined as a passive mode of existing in the world where moments of inter-subjective communication, while not expressly sought out, provide an initial pathway for him to interact with others in a non-committal yet beneficial role that obtains the basic, instinctual drives of all concerned. This view reiterates our stance that interpersonal communication is that special moment when the hero is activated by the presence of the other character (which he can and does explicitly refuse [10, 11, 25]) and when his muted conscience pushes forth to reveal a reflective and responsive quasi-emotional stability.

Returning to the meal with Raymond, for the first time in the novel we see Meursault responding to the request of a favor and being put into a position where he must verbalize his accord or dissent with another character's point of view. Sintès recounts a recent breakup he had had with a girl that he was supporting financially (33-35) and who by all accounts seemed to have betrayed him. The story is an unsurprisingly

torrid affair with typical, yet engaging details, especially when told at the quick pace and with the occasional salacious commentary provided by its narrator. This is then followed by the moment of truth for the main character as Raymond asks to have his opinion of the story “in a general way” (39).

Returning momentarily to our conceptualization of balance in the hero's social life, we see that a passive, other-inspired initiation into interpersonal communication with the benefit of all concerned in mind is Meursault's *modus operandi* in exactly the type of situation he now finds himself. The narrator-protagonist relates: “...il voulait savoir ce que je pensais de cette histoire. J'ai répondu que je n'en pensais rien mais que c'était intéressant” (35). While this answer does not indicate any empathy, shock, or anger on the part of the main character, it does work to establish Meursault as a sort of inter-subjective diplomatist. Earlier in the novel we witnessed this same diplomacy helping to smooth over a potential disagreement between the concierge and his wife at the retirement center after the former expounded a bit much about seasonal traditions for burials:

Il (le concierge) m'avait dit qu'il fallait l'enterrer (la mère de Meursault) très vite, parce que dans la plaine il faisait chaud, surtout dans ce pays... A Paris, on reste avec le mort trois, quatre jours quelquefois. Ici on n'a pas le temps, on ne s'est pas fait à l'idée que déjà il faut courir derrière le corbillard. Sa femme lui avait dit alors : « Tais-toi, ce ne sont pas des choses à raconter à monsieur. » Le vieux avait rougi et s'était excusé. J'étais intervenu pour dire : « Mais non. Mais non. » Je trouvais ce qu'il racontait juste et intéressant. (13)

There is something curious about Meursault finding things that others recount as interesting, and offering this as an explanation for his interpersonal exchanges when he also seems to be rather uninterested in letting said inter-subjective contact happen in the first place.

What does this say about how he uses the term “interesting” in a general sense?

One way of understanding this distinction is to consider it merely a way of addressing the fact that the hero has allowed some form of communication to transpire between himself and another character without him having made a decision to limit or to prevent said contact (in his typical, passive style). Another means of explaining how “interesting” fits into his vocabulary would be to say that he is such a natural blank slate that anything novel to his minimalist experience of life must strike him as oddly fascinating. In whatever way we want to couch this term for Meursault, it is the simple truth that “interesting” means that the Other has made a connection with the taciturn narrator-hero. This brings up an important point for the novel as a whole: the other characters have said something that has registered with the main character in such a way as to bring him to a new level of inter-subjective understanding, even if this understanding is not taken a step further.

It is at this juncture that we have to wonder what the novel would be like if one of the interlocutors inquired as to why Meursault felt that his / her commentary was interesting. Or, better yet, what if the protagonist offered some insight on this matter without any prompting? The answer, of course, is that the pace of this work and the level of analytical engagement for the main character would change so greatly that it would undermine the blunt, immediate style and allure of what is perhaps the most striking first-

person narrative novel of the twentieth century's canon. The main character refutes any possibility of this happening anyway, when he points out early in the second part of the work that "...j'avais un peu perdu l'habitude de m'interroger..." (66-67). So, what does this reasoning say about Meursault's use of the word "interesting"? As laconic as he is, we feel that "interesting" functions as a significant appreciation of what the Other has to say. Indeed, when any insight about interpersonal relationships or natural phenomena are offered to the main character, it is as if a whole new world opens up for him given the fact that his internal dialogue is so minimal. Considering something interesting for Meursault really has to be a special experience. All too often his mode of existence is simply being sensate and in-the-moment.

Returning to the newly established friendship between Raymond and the main character, we find a progression from the story recounted by the former to the drafting of a letter by the latter winding up chapter three. The missive is intended for Raymond's kept woman and is meant to bring an end to their relationship. The execution of this favor is not taken lightly by the protagonist who offers a rare moment of self-analysis: "J'ai fait la lettre. Je l'ai écrite un peu au hasard, mais je me suis appliqué à contenter Raymond parce que je n'avais pas de raison de ne pas le contenter... Cela m'était égal d'être son copain et il avait vraiment l'air d'en avoir envie" (36). There is no doubt that there is a natural inclination within Meursault to remain neutral when it comes to relationships that really is quite mysterious. Yet there is also a sense of camaraderie in him as well, and perhaps this term serves as a better description of his approach to interpersonal affairs than our use of an expression such as "muted conscience." Camus chooses his words deliberately, opting for a subdued "satisfy" or "please" over something more committed

on an emotional level. Being a comrade to Raymond, having no reason not to satisfy a simple request, and having no objection as to being his friend establish the main character as a supporter of what it means to be in the moment of existing alongside his fellow characters. This is a crucial moment in understanding the main character's motivations during the last, infamous scene of the first part of the novel.

If we look ahead for a moment to how Meursault reacts at the notorious beach-murder scene, our present analysis of his relationship to his acquaintances explains his actions quite thoroughly. Beyond the effects of his natural surroundings which have been offered as an excuse for his behavior not only by the narrator-protagonist, but by many critics, he is motivated psychologically by the sense of camaraderie that he has gained with his friend Raymond and the new acquaintance, Masson. To review briefly, his sense of "balance" in interpersonal relationships translates as a passive, non-committal but responsive stance whereby the immediate, situational benefit of all acquaintances in a camaraderie-like relationship prevails. While even Meursault eventually offers the effects of the environment as an excuse for shooting the Arab, in light of his experience inter-subjectively with Marie and Raymond this explanation seems more irrelevant than absurd. Raymond has been wounded at the hands of the knife-wielding Arab in front of the protagonist. Meursault even ventures to describe one of his friend's wounds as "dégoûtant" (57) although none of them turn out to be serious. It is necessary to keep in mind that writing a letter for Raymond was an important part of the narrative earlier in the text, and a moment when Camus chose to expand an interpersonal encounter to the maximum for what concerns the balance of the novel.

For now we must return to Meursault's relationship with Marie in order to be more precise with our analysis of his interpersonal commitment. If the first three chapters of the novel have not already placed the main character in a negative light in terms of his relationships with others, chapter four begins an unflattering portrayal of the protagonist that simply cannot be argued against. Camus makes use of two female characters, both quite different in their depiction as potential partners separately for Raymond and Meursault, in order to show a type of disconnect that exists in their relations to the aforementioned male counterparts. It must be remembered that this section of the thesis has never sought to show the main character as a model interpersonal communicator and affective source of strength for any character concerned. Rather, we have tried to display every fleeting moment of inter-subjective connection that might place the hero in a different light in regard to emotional awareness than what has consistently been offered in critical studies of this text. In chapter four we find very little to bolster this argument. However, it is in association with one of the more infamous moments of the text that we see yet another crack in the main character's unemotional veneer that reminds us that his interactions with others are a catalyst for his muted sense of affective participation.

What is refreshing about Meursault is that he understands interpersonal shortcomings. Moreover, he is open about those vague moments when in the presence of the Other some unexpected gesture or remark brings on a spontaneous and somewhat instinctive reaction on his part. The infamous moment alluded to previously provides the context for such a reaction. Most readers see his denial of love in the face of the affectionate Marie (40) as a cruel and emotionally irresponsible moment of self-absorption. It is necessary to keep in mind the time frame in which this nascent

relationship has developed. It has been a week since the protagonist had the good fortune to meet up with the former stenographer (23). His blunt candor in response to an undeniably sensitive question does not seem as callous as the pace of the narration might make it sound. However, this is hardly the point of the present examination. We contend that main character simply does not put much stock in linguistic labels for the relationships in which he is involved. He is too engrossed with the spontaneity of his interactions with others to seek out some monolithic or traditional expression such as “love” or “loyalty” to convey his level of involvement.

Looking once again at this critical moment in the text, we see a collision of expectations that simply cannot lead to any sort of harmony:

Quand elle a ri, j’ai eu encore envie d’elle. Un moment après, elle m’a demandé si je l’aimais. Je lui ai répondu que cela ne voulait rien dire, mais qu’il me semblait que non. Elle a eu l’air triste. Mais en préparant le déjeuner, et à propos de rien, elle a encore ri de telle façon que je l’ai embrassée. (40)

It is obvious that Meursault follows his libidinal inclinations when dealing with Marie without giving much thought to how she feels emotionally about their relationship. Yet, Camus has left behind some of the aforementioned residue of depth for the hero to showcase. Clearly, he reads the non-verbal cue of sadness from the facial expression of his counterpart: “Elle a eu l’air triste” (40). Also, Marie’s laughter, apart from her physical presence, draws the main character out of an unpleasant moment and back into

his limited, but nonetheless infatuated mode of inter-subjectivity with her. Her emotional highpoints are momentum shifts for their relationship.

Conclusion

We have been able to view the protagonists of *The Nausea* and *The Stranger* in different ways due to our analysis of Merleau-Pontean notions on language, inter-subjectivity, emotional intellect, and non-verbal communication. Now we wish to conclude our examination by bringing together some of the major themes that have been elemental in the construction of the way in which we see these two main characters.

Our partial analysis of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provided us with a specific orientation in terms of evaluating communicative behaviors between individual subjects. It was our intention to develop a vision of an existential subject that includes a heightened awareness of the dynamics of inter-subjective exchange, the constancy of non-verbal communication, the potential of emotional intelligence, and the problematic nature of language itself. It was also an aim of this examination to show Merleau-Ponty in a slightly more magnified form in what concerns interpersonal relations between individuals. We found that our research into his more seminal philosophical texts always leads us to feel inspired by his notions of psychic, collective unities binding members of

societies together. He might well deserve his label as the “philosopher of ambiguity,” but he also has to be considered a proponent of active and fraternal relationships between people, far from ideas such as violent competition and self-oriented wish fulfillment. If anything, our study of his phenomenology has a general feel of flexibility and openness to it in regard to inter-subjectivity, and this translates into a particular manner of treating existentialist protagonists in the latter portion of our thesis.

Therefore, our first four chapters were meant to elucidate, from a philosophical perspective, the aforementioned aspects of interpersonal experience in order that we might find a new light to shine upon two already brilliant main characters in the Western canon. Our brief look at only a few references to literature that Merleau-Ponty made in some of his philosophical contributions was intended simply to expose the admiration he held for literary inspiration. Meursault and Roquentin were no doubt two heroes that Merleau-Ponty encountered during his ventures into the world of existentialist literature. Our study of these two protagonists should be seen as a respectfully-submitted substitute for what might have been offered by our philosopher himself.

So, it is with a Merleau-Pontean lens that we view *The Nausea* and *The Stranger*. Our orientation is one of being a sympathetic listener to even the most minute offering of inter-subjective communication that Meursault or Roquentin might proffer. Therefore, the last two chapters are products of a very close reading of each novel and a detective-like approach at trying to discover a new side of each main character that resides somewhere in the text. Using a Merleau-Pontean framework that emphasizes emotional intelligence and non-verbal forms of communication provides us with a tool for locating moments within each text that reveal a new way of looking at how each hero interfaces

with those around him. Our intent is to show each leading character as more than what might traditionally be considered possible.

Meursault is a protagonist that probably evokes judgmental reactions on the part of readers as much as any other main character in the Western canon. However, there is somewhat of a mercurial nature to his indifference with the world that, while subtle, leaves definitive judgments as to his character almost without point. To declare with apodictic certainty that he is evil is to ignore the veiled interest that he has for his fellow man. Nor is it true that he can be considered a purely beneficent figure, largely of course due to his *acte gratuit* with the Arab. Somewhere in between, and we would argue more toward the side of understanding and openness, Meursault operates in a world of intersubjectivity that intrigues and titillates in ways that even long-time scholars of this text still find baffling. Our intention is to stop the vacillating between a benevolent and a malevolent image of the main character that seems to have maddened so many readers, and to fixate our hero in a position of interpersonal strength and awareness.

Roquentin is not so much a target of judgment for our analysis. Rather, he is an individual whose basic mode of existence in the world seems to have been altered permanently by a mysterious, phenomenological force. What we discover, however, is that a much different person is lurking behind this new, tortured persona. With the presence of a former love, Antoine suddenly regains emotional capacities and interpersonal skills that render him a fully functioning companion in lieu of the lifeless automaton the majority of the novel portrays him as. Our analysis even questions the permanent affects of the Nausea because of this section of the novel. Nonetheless, the experience of this phenomenon does strike such a harsh note that it simply is never in

question while it has the leading character in its grasp. Our intention in this section is to give credit to Roquentin for having an affective acumen. In so doing, however, we have actually strengthened the power of the Nausea over him because it comes across as even more inter-subjectively transformational than it would without the Anny-Antoine rendezvous.

Finally, our look at these two main characters provides incentive for us to continue our Merleau-Pontean analysis of protagonists in genres other than existentialist literature. One area of study that would seem quite auspicious is the contributions of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and writers like him that served as inspiration for authors like Camus and Sartre. The combination of self-awareness and self-doubt found in the characters of Dostoyevsky's literary contributions lends itself to our vision of the interpersonal in that a protagonist capable of reflection has the potential for shifting his/her focus to the other, thereby opening up endless possibilities for inter-subjective analysis.

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