Abstract

Maurice Merleau-Ponty has argued that society is created by violence and exists continually through violence. The basis of society is in other words terror. As such, society can only be changed by violence – a revolutionary violence. The task of this dissertation is to make a critical study of Merleau-Ponty's political thought and investigate its praxis within the Nigerian body-politic as it exists today. The tenets of his political philosophy however, will be exposed by making an assessment of his early and late political thought as it affects his conceptualizations of violence and liberalism. His theory on violence and the place of violence in Nigeria will be juxtaposed and examined. The argument of this essay is that: his first and later ideas reveal a certain lack of consistency and dishonesty as his later work on politics contradicts his earlier thought; his socio-political materialist critique though embraces progressive (revolutionary) violence and liberalism, the problem of violence cannot be solved as our society today does not need violence of any kind; his political thought on violence in concert with the on going violence in Nigeria will not only affect the victims but also become an endemic illness of civilization which has the effect of shattering the social network that makes us human; and above all, "humane-democracy" should be practicalized. The kind that will go a long way to avoid any political violence bu willt embrace mutual cooperation, peace and life-fulfillment for individuals.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of Study

Violence is an increasingly real problem in Nigeria and the world at large. Its occurrence ranges from the most daily expressions to those exceptional cases which are specific to the phenomenon of war. As such, its enduring presence within the fabric of our human world needs to be understood and addressed. Historically, one will always attest the fact of its existence, whether it shapes in some more or less drastic manner the world we live in; to have a total acceptance and live by it, or to avoid it and welcome peace. Placing the significance of the above into question prompted some philosophers and some great men alike in making violence a subject of discuss.   Thus, considering if it could in any way be justifiable, the Greek philosophers believe that the proper end of politics is the good and happy life of the citizens of the polis. For both Plato and Aristotle, the aim of politics seems to be the good life for a minority, since freedom, leisure, and property are necessary for the kinds of political and intellectual activity that produce happiness. In this context, violence may be permissible if it benefits the ends of the city-state because some citizens may need to be controlled by those who know the "truth".

While in the sixteenth century Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli may have agreed that violence is innate to human beings, he is politically indifferent to morality and religion except as they affect politics. Living in a

time of political and social disorder, Machiavelli was concerned with establishing the principles at which competent political leadership can preserve the security and well-being of the leader. The most successful princes, emulating the example of ancient republican Rome, recognizes violence as part of political life, accepting it as an integral part of human nature while striving to control it. Machiavelli stresses that princes must not shirk from using violence; indeed, they must become proficient in its use, preparing for war even in terms of peace.

Machiavelli's indifference to religion should not obscure the fact that for two centuries after the publication of his book *The Prince (1513),* the protestant reformation led to a merger of religious and political concerns. Yet while Martin Luther and John Calvin in the sixteenth century uphold the notion that resistance to rulers is sinful, some Protestants, such as John Knox, were formulating the view that resistance, even violent resistance, could be justified in circumstances where monarchs act contrary to God's will.

Reflecting on the turbulence of seventeenth – century English society, Thomas Hobbes argued that self-interest is the driving force of human nature, a self-interest that produces a war of all against all. Hobbes marks the beginning of liberalism in that the existence of society is explained by reference to free and equal individuals who consent to regulate their attempts to find the best expression for their egotistical natures.

John Locke also writing in the seventeenth century, argues that there are no obstacles to the potential violence and oppression of an absolute ruler and seeks to arrange political institutions in such a way that a system of checks and balances will come up against the self-interest of another. For him the end of politics is to create a legal framework within which free, property-owing individuals can pursue their private ends. If individual rights are consistently undermined, he argues, then people have the right, even the obligation, to resist and form a new government. The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, believed that "peace" under despotic rule could not be tolerated and that people are justified in using violence to restore their liberties. Among classical liberals, Thomas Jefferson is often celebrated as the most ardent supporter of rebellion. He argues that even unjustified rebellion can prevent the lethargy that is the "forerunner of death to the public liberty."[1]

While the right to rebellion may be used to defend bourgeois political rights, it does not imply any right to resist the violence produced by social inequalities that are a feature of the emerging capitalist system of production. The radicalism of Thomas Paine, James Mackintosh, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft[2] in the late eighteenth century may see lower-class violence as a response to power inequalities in political structure.

According to Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels, writing in the mid-nineteenth century political violence is only the instrument and reflection of the violence of the class struggle. Revolutionary violence aimed at the capitalist

state is designed to end the violence inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Only the collective ownership of the means of production by the proletariat and the withering away of the state can alleviate this system. In Marxist theory, revolution is justified as a response to the violence of private capital accumulation. Although neo-Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgy Lukacs, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Heidi Hartmann, and Juliet Mitchell[3], have given greater prominence to non-economic components (like the state, gender, race, and ideology), most of them have agreed that the economic issues of capital accumulation and private ownership have priority.

However, from the foregoing, many philosophers and thinkers have dealt with the question of violence from their own world views and perspectives. Merleau-Ponty is not left out. He believes that society is created by violence and exists continually through violence. The basis of society is – in other words – terror. As such society can only be changed by violence – a revolutionary violence. The only type of violence that is justifiable as it can only come up when there is a bad government which according to him, brings about future humanism i.e., co-existence among men. Merleau-Ponty acclaims that even to always restraining from violence either towards a person or a class that is doing so is in itself an act of violence. Indeed, using non-violence in order to stop another violent act is a tacit form of accepting that act. Thus, there remains a class struggle in the society. He identifies the reason behind this class struggle

by following Karl Marx in identifying class struggle with the Hegelian – type relation; that one class thinks of another as object and not precisely as an embodiment. This is the reason why "struggle" and master-slave relations exist. Merleau-Ponty condemns the capitalist institutionalization of violence since even the so called liberal capitalism imposes its abstract values on people dramatically which in effect results in aggressive liberalism. Hence, "an aggressive liberalism is already an ideology of war".[4] He further employs and advocates the communist use of terrorism. For him, communists may not be condemned by capitalists and liberals, because capitalists and liberals do not condemn the violence in capitalism and liberalism. Capitalists and liberals do not even recognize their own violence for what it is. He therefore commends that communists are preferable social company because they are at least honest about their violence. Besides, "violence under communism is like a lamp that produces maximum light before going out"[5]. As such, since we cannot totally be free from violence, Merleau-Ponty advocates revolutionary violence because it has a future of co-existence. He argues in addition that morally correct actions should aim at limiting violence and treating fellow men as men and not objects, rather than following any sort of categorical imperative.

In this work, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's political thought on violence is to be examined to see how pragmatic and justifiable this theory of his will be if it is to be adopted especially from the area of Nigeria's political setting. The argument here, however, is that his socio-political materialist critique though

embraces revolutionary violence and intersubjectivity, it will not solve the problem of violence or rather welcome ever lasting peace as the revolutionists will not be credited for being honest of their act. Hence, the society might end up in a "cold war". Besides, our society today needs less-revolution and/or violence . Secondly, his political thought on violence in concert with the on-going violence in Nigeria will not only affect the victims but also become an endemic illness of civilization which has the effect of shattering the social network that makes us human. In effect, this work proclaims that a wealthy social relationship should be established to enable the citizenry to be free from violence by: detecting and phenomenologically accepting the existence of everyone as a subjective being (an embodiment in the words of Merleau-Ponty) and not as the "other", always listen to the intense groan of violent insurgents, victims, government and the entire citizens and understand them if we dare to look at the oppressive order which destroys the social networking and civilization; and above all, "Humane democracy" should be practicalised. The kind that will go a long way to avoid any political violence but embrace mutual co-operation, peace and life-fulfillment for individuals.

1.2   Statement of Problem

The debates concerning violence and non-violence are some of the most important political concerns of man. The problems that underlie these debates among others are simply whether violence is inevitable. First, to have a

comprehensive knowledge, the nature of man and politics, and more specifically, to determine whether man or politics itself is intrinsically violent. The question of the relation between violence and politics - of whether man enters into political society to avoid a primordial state of violence, or if violence is itself an irreducible aspect of political society is yet to be clarified. But if one may ask, what are the principal causes of these acts of terror and violence that seem to be inseparable part of human societies? Can violence itself be adequate at bringing about a good society?

In an attempt to answer the above questions, Merleau-Ponty proclaimed that one cannot be free from violence and advocated revolutionary violence since for him, it has a future humanism. But what makes this notion of him justifiable ever since philosophy is not seeking a reduction of violence but a total abstinence of it? The kind that must give ultimate freedom to all mankind. How certain is it that the so called revolutionists will be honest in their act and will not in any way affect the life of individuals especially in Nigeria?

1.3   Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to make a critique of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy on violence and see how its praxis is likely to affect the situation of violence in Nigeria and the world at large.

The study also seeks to find out how communists use of violence as acclaimed by Merleau-Ponty remains the best to secure a permanent and satisfied society for the life of individuals.

It will further make a phenomenological inquiry on how violence in itself could be adequate at bringing about a revolution or whether there could be an alternative for solving a problem especially when systems lose their legitimacy and can no longer maintain themselves.

Above all, it will in addition look at the causes of violence as a tool of political struggle and see if true democracy can be created out of violence. If not, the type of democracy that considers the value of humanity and, of course, a society where men treat each other as ends rather than as means should be articulated and as well be put in place in Nigeria.

1.4 Justification of Study

Although, Merleau-Ponty advocates violence irrespective of the type and equating both violent and non-violent persons which might be a potential ground for the rise of violence, he really plays his best given his philosophical ingenuity by encouraging intersubjective relation among people. He maintains that there should be a communist society where the right of every individual shall be respected. He affirms that we must listen to all voices, try to move toward shared values, and support the community institutions that allow us to do so.

Merleau-Ponty notes that the way to establish unity and community is to articulate the relationships that already exist between cultures, groups, and individuals that is, to express points of contact and similarities as a lateral or oblique universal.

He says that we should start the pursuit of shared truths and values with the individual's concrete, lived through bodily perception of the world and its particular objects and events. Thus, the perceiver must then reflect on this experience, compare it to other experiences and to that which is experienced by others in order to move toward shared and stable meanings. Hence, human beings will tend to have similar experiences because they have similar bodies with similar needs, because they are members of the same species, and because their experiences open out unto a common world. Even though human beings are similar, they also reveal a degree of individuality in their thinking, their behaviour, and even in their biology, since no two people are exactly the same. In effect, out of the shared world upon which the individual's experience opens, there is a degree of individuation and separation. But there are basic things that are worthy of note in his political philosophy that called to be concretized in Nigeria's political world. We must listen to the voice of each relatively individuated and engaged, check each voice against that of the others, and try to move toward the shared values that rest upon our similar but not quite identical experiences. Individuals and their rights are formed only in social interaction and only within the context of certain social and political institutions which in

other words, entail that we maintain a degree of individuality and individual rights, and owe allegiance to the community institutions that bring them into existence and support them. Finally, that liberal values remain to be more fully established in actual concrete relationships, and these have to be established only when the society actually takes equal account of all voices, that is, when society provides more equitable access to the economy and to the economic and political policy decisions that will impact upon people's lives.

1.5   Scope of Study

This work focuses on a critique of Merleau-Ponty's political ethos of violence and the Nigerian democratic experiment. The primary sources are the original English versions of the works of Merleau-Ponty namely: Humanism and Terror, Adventures of Dialectic, Phenomenology of Perception, In Praise of Philosophy, The Visible and the Invisible, Sense and Non-sense, signs The Structure of Behaviour and some other secondary sources and relevant materials on the topic of violence are equally consulted.

1.6   Significance of Study

Indeed, the relevance of this study can easily be known in the concrete sense of it. Merleau-Ponty reveals that our society is created by violence and exists continually through violence. Though, he claims that our society can only be changed through violence. What is important is that he has made one to understand the realistic nature of politics and of the world itself, that one cannot

totally be free from violence. Ever since in politics restraining from violence (even towards a person or a class that is doing violence to another person) is already in itself an act of violence. And on a general note, using non-violence in order to stop another violent act is a tacit form of accepting that act. It entails out rightly that morally correct actions should aim at limiting violence and treating fellow men as men and not as objects, rather than following any other sort of means.

This political theory of Merleau-Ponty has offered the solution to what is now called a multicultural approach as he argues that rationality remains to be established and will only be established by listening to all voices, even those with whom we may disagree.[6] For dialoging is a simple means of avoiding the problem of violence.

In addition, the significance of this study is that it sets out to argue for democratic process where there should be an equal participation in the political life of the community by all citizens of that community. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's early work (i.e., Humanism and Terror) hoped that this would be accomplished by a working class revolution that establishes a classless society, while that of his later work (i.e., Adventure of Dialectics) arrived at the belief that parliamentary democracies at least in the circumstances of the mid- 20th Century, are the best means yet to achieve this goal, for they provide at least a minimum of access to the political process by the majority of the population. Explicitly as he agrees and opines that the aim of political action should be the

increased awareness of and equal participation in the political process by all adult members of the society.

It is worthy of note also that the relevance of this work is officiated in such that we must continue to point out where democracy does not live up to its ideals, always in an attempt to move toward increased democratic participation by all. This can be done by pointing out the gap between democracy's theory and practice, between its ideals and what it actually does, between its claim to universal access to economic and political process on the one hand, and the inequitable influence of classes on the other.

This work has as well exposed the knowledge and dangers of economic stratification and its negative influence on the democratic process as our current class and economic stratification in Nigeria undermine its democratic process. In effect, the wealthy clearly influence the political process well beyond their proportional representation in the population; violating the equal distribution of wealth and power; violating the control of economic policy as it favours their own property values at the expense of others.

In sum, the significance of this study lies in the fact that it helps to find a principle for society that does not violate the rights of the individual as it seeks to establish society values by respecting each person's conscience, by respecting and supporting the political and social institutions that support each individual equally and substantially (not just formally), and by attempting to move toward shared values – values that do not violate basic (minimalist or

universalist) rights, values that can hopefully be confirmed by all and that can remain to be confirmed by each.

1.7   Methodology

The method adopted for this study is analytic method. It is to be employed for the purpose of critical examination of concepts and facts therein. The relevant materials on violence and liberalism particularly on texts written by Maurice Merleau-Ponty are principally used. Pieces of information are also gathered from the following sources: libraries, journals, and internet. By means of synthesis and analysis, it will gather the final facts and conclusions of the conceptual and empirical sciences of the case, making them their subject matter. However, chapter one presents a general introduction and summary of this work. Chapter two deals with the literature reviews of the related materials. Chapter three showcases the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy. This chapter reveals his biography and the motivating factors that ushers him into political philosophy. Chapter four is an overview of Merleau-Ponty's political treatise on violence and how his philosophical ingenuity on global politics made him to give up the first theory in order to support a new type of liberalism. Chapter Five centres on the nature of violence and Nigerian democracy. In this, the meaning and various kinds of violence are treated. The effect of violence in Nigerian democracy and the alternative democratic principles are discussed. Chapter Six is an appraisal of Merleau-Ponty's

political philosophy. In it, critical examination of his early and late political thought as it affects his conceptualization of violence and liberalism is exposed. A juxtaposition of Merleau-Ponty's political theory and Nigerian democracy will also be presented. Hence, the work is summarized and conclusion drawn from it is made. With this method, it will assist in evaluating, and knowing the nature, the reality at which violence according to Merleau-Ponty is serving as the actual destination for human existence.

1.8   Definition of Concepts

Our objective here is to give the explanations of key concepts which we shall come across as we proceed on. This will enable us not to be lost along the line when some certain concepts shall be used.   Through this we shall understand better what this project is all about.

1.8.1 Violence

The term *violence* is derived from another word *violate* which is the verb form of it. To violate means among other things: to injure, to break, infringe, hurt, damage etc. Thus, violence can be defined as any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group. Synonymous with chaos and disorder, violence can be suppressed, yet it remains as potentially active as a dormant volcano. The philosophical sense in which the term is used in this work connotes ideas like opposition, contraries, disorder or nonequilibrium.

1.8.2 Politics

The word politics comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning the state or community as a whole. The concept of the *polis* was an ideal state and came from the writings of great political thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato. It is from the etymological meaning of this word that the title of Aristotle's books Politics (*Politika*) derives: "affairs of the cities", a dissertation on governing and governments, which was rendered in English in the mid – 15th century as Latinized *Polettiques*. Thus it becomes *politics* in Middle English. The singular *politic* first attested in English 1430 and comes from Middle French *politique*, in turn from Latin *Politicus*[7], which is the Latinization of the Greek (politicos), meaning amongst others "of, for, or relating to citizens", "civil", "civic", "belonging to the state", in turn from (Polites), "citizen" and that from (polis), "city"[8]. While in his novel "The Republic", Plato describes the ideal state and the means to achieve it. Hence, the word politics originally has connotations in the ways in which to create the ideal society. An ideal society is in practice a rather difficult aim and even an impossible aim to achieve. Politics implies measures which could and should, in the views of their devisor, be implemented in the hope to create a better society, than that which is already present. The very fact that Plato and Aristotle saw imperfections in the societies in which they lived, prompted them to write their political philosophies. These philosophies however, provided the first written recognition of politics.

1.8.3 Revolution

A revolution from the Latin word *revolution* means "a turn around". It is a fundamental change in power or organizational structures that takes place in a relatively short period of time. Aristotle described two types of political revolution as: complete change from one constitution to another, and modification of an existing constitution[9]. Revolutions have occurred through human history and vary widely in terms of methods, duration, and motivating ideology. Their results include major changes in culture, economy, and socio-political institutions.

1.8.4 Marxism

This is the system of economic and political thought developed by Karl Marx, along with Friedrich Engels. It is the doctrine that the state throughout history has been a device for the exploitation of the masses by a dominant class. Class struggle has been the main agency of historical change, and that the capitalist system, containing from the first, the seeds of its own delay, will inevitably, and after the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, be superseded by a socialist order and a classless society.

1.8.5 Communism

Communism is from a Latin word *communis* meaning "common", "universal". It is a socioeconomic system structured upon common ownership of the means of production and characterized by the absence of social classes,

money, and the state; as well as a social, political and economic ideology and movement that aims to establish this social order. Communism is most associated with Marxism, which considers itself the embodiment of scientific socialism. According to Marxism, capitalism is a historically necessary stage of society, which has led to the concentration of social classes into two major groups: proletariat who must work to survive, and who make up a majority of society – and bourgeoisie – a minority who derive profit from employing the proletariat, through private ownership of the means of production. The political, social, and economic conflict between both groups (class struggle), each attempting to push their interests to their logical extreme, will lead into the capture of political power by the proletariat. Public ownership and management of the means of production by society will be established, that is, socialism. As the development of the productive forces end scarcity, goods and services are made available on the basis of free access. This results in t he disappearance of social classes and money[10]. Eventually, as the class struggle ends, the state ceases to be relevant and fades from recognition, as the social institutions for the collective self-management of the human community continue without it. The result is communism: a stateless, classless and moneyless society, structured upon common ownership of the means of production.

1.8.6 Democracy

The word democracy is a compound two Greek words: *demos* meaning "the people", "the poor or common people", "the masses", "the mob", as contrasted with the "elites", and *Kratein*, meaning "to rule". *Demokratia* means, therefore, "rule by the people", "rule by the masses". The *demos* being referred to here (in the Greek sense) does not mean everybody as the common understanding today may seem to suggest. The *demos* was synonymous with polites and *demokratia*, "rule by the people", in reality meant rule by the "citizens", that is, by the adult male members of the 'polis' – community. Nevertheless, the principle of consent of the governed is central to a democratic system. The people may take collective decisions through unanimous agreement. But where this is not possible, recourse is made to majority decision. It is in this letter sense, that democracy is often seen as government of majority. Though decisions may be taken through majority of opinion, the decision arrived at should be for the interest of all, the dissenting minority inclusive. This implies that all opinions are to be respected and considered in making decisions.

Endnotes

1 Adams David, et al, *The Seville Statement on violence*, Peace Review 4, No. 3, 1992. Pp. 20-22.

2 Mann Michael, *States War, and Capitalism*, Oxford, U.K: Basil Blackwell, 1983. P. 67.

3 Ibid, P. 70.

4 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem,* Translated by John O'Neill, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. P. XXIV.

5 Ibid, P. 86.

6 Ibid, P. 187.

7.   Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tuffs.edu./hopper/text.

8. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tuffs.edu/hoper/text

9. Aristotle, *The Politics* http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.5.five.html.

10. Paul R. Gregory and Robert C. Stuart, *Comparing Economic Systems in the Twenty-first*. South-West College Publication, 2003. P.118. "Communism, the highest stage of social and economic development, would be characterized by the absence of markets and money and by abundance, distribution according to need, and the withering away of the state--- Under socialism, each individual would be expected to contribute according to capability, and rewards would be distributed in proportion to that contribution. Subsequently, under communism, the basis of reward would be need".

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The introductory part of this work has shown at a glance what this work is all about and how Merleau-Ponty demonstrated the inevitability of violence in our society and how society should be regulated to make life more comfortable for people. To this end, many philosophers and great men alike have discussed not only his political philosophy, on other areas of his philosophical input but also on the very notion of violence as is therefore undeniable that it is not only Merleau-Ponty that has written on the problem of violence. Although, they have done this in different methods and approaches, it is thus pertinent to review the works of some philosophers that have emphasized on the crux of ongoing issue for better understanding of this work.

Given the fact that Merleau-Ponty looks unflinchingly at the level of violence in the USSR, he declares that one can not reject Marxism and search for an alternative theory. The reason being that there is no providential ordering of history. Instead, there is the Marxist conception of history as fueled by class conflict and finalized toward a classless society. His contention in *Humanism and Terror* is that if one rejects Marxism, then one will reject all meaning in history.

> *The decline of proletarian humanism is not a crucial experience which invalidates the whole of Marxism. It is still valid as a critique of the present world and alternative humanisms. In this respect, at least, it cannot be surpassed. Even if it*

> *is incapable of shaping world history, it remains powerful enough to discredit other solutions. On close consideration, Marxism is not just any hypothesis that might be replaced tomorrow by some other. It is the simple statement of those conditions without which there would be neither any humanism, in the sense of a mutual relation between men, nor any rationality in history. In this sense Marxism is not a philosophy of history; it is the philosophy of history and to denounce it is to dig the grave of Reason in history. After that there remain only dreams or adventures*[1.]

In reaction to the above statement, Garry Potter in his book, *Humanism and Terror: Merleau-Ponty's Marxism* re-examines this position and argues that not only in spite of but because of today's changed situation, the importance and validity of Merleau-Ponty's argument remains. Potter says that even though Merleau-Ponty was influenced by the then immediately post war generation of European political reform like Stalinism, the Cold War, decolonization and the political ambiguities of liberal-democratic regimes, one can never forget the finger that feeds him. He therefore claims that Merleau-Ponty is not mistaking as he will not be charged of having interest on history, but a pre-requisite of not making a mistake of the present time. He writes:

> *--- to suggest that his political interventions "seem now to hold little more than historical interest" is first of all to forget we study history to make sense of the present; and secondly, it is to suffer from a present perspective blinded conceit*[2].

Garry Potter furthers in favour of Merleau-Ponty that even though there have been many of the history of Marxism's failure to establish itself in the facts than he; the disappointments of countless revolutions; the capitulations of the workers, students, women etc; the fact still remains that the selfishness of knowing our present age has made us not to fully understand our own time. This is simply because we do not really understand the history that has brought us to this point. In respect of this, he proclaims that:

> *Merleau-Ponty's argument about the Marxist philosophy of history is not of the form that might be refuted by historical event. That is, it is a transcendental argument. If his argument for Marxism's "reprieve" is not valid, its lack of validity cannot derive from anything we have observed since the time of writing. One must demonstrate the flaw in his reasoning (ironically, of course, it is an argument about reason and history) and it is the argument of this paper that the logic still stands[3].*

However, Potter notes that why Merleau-Ponty made a reference point to Marxism as the philosophy of history is because Marxism is the dominant left wing discourse of his time. He therefore holds that why Merleau-Ponty warranted Marxism a special critical dispensation as it were, is because there is a failure in Marxism as regards the fussion of its scientific pretension to its concrete political and moral praxis. In effect, Potter claims that Merleau-Ponty does not offer a "special pleading" for Marxism in the usual understanding of that term. But that Merleau-Ponty's argument was that "there is within Marxism that which penetrates to the core of human condition, a linkage

between the critical understanding of the past and our future aspirations, a crucial linkage between critical reason and humanist morality"[4.] Potter added in respect that though a meaning is inscribed upon historical events that transcends individual and subjective belief because it is rooted in a human universality with respect to past and present actuality in relation to future possibility. This made Potter to recognize and accept Merleau-Ponty's argument that Marxism is irrefutable as a critique of any other possible humanism. As for Potter, Marxism contains the imperative to practically transcend the historical dialectic of master and slave. Hence, the "masters" may possess a concern for others and dispense their charity in the name of Christianity, the welfare state or whatever you like, but as humanism it is hypocrisy[5].

In reference to Merleau-Ponty's use of Marxism and science, Garry Potter maintains that the term proletariat (in Merleau-Ponty's ideology) signifies the existence of an inequality of power relations; and as well, the fundamental connection of the economic system to this inequality. He declares that "proletrait" as used by Merleau-Ponty does not assert the causal priority of the economic sphere, nor does it assert that every exercise of power possesses an economic dimension. But, rather, it simply asserts that economic inequality will necessarily entail an inequality of political power relations.

In other words, Potter writes that:

> *Proletrait, as used by Merleau-Ponty--- signifies*
> *that without a fundamental change in the economic*
> *system (if only as a minimal condition) there will*

> *be "the power of the few and the resignation of the rest, some who are masters and others slaves"[6].*

While on the issue of science, Potter has it that the propositions, "an hypothesis which would then have to be proved the way one proves a law of physics", as Merleau-Ponty declared are not true. But instead they are situated on a different and logically prior discursive level, neither are they wholly unrelated to science. He therefore said that those propositions were pieces of reasoning and observations about fundamental aspects of the human condition. He posits that we are physical beings living in a physical reality and as such, on the process of interacting with the natural environment, we are automatically interacting with the other human beings. He asserts that these interactions, the social and the natural areas intertwined with one another for they are simple propositions. He maintains that these propositions cannot in any way bring about refinement and correction of errors as scientific discourse and activity used to be.

Garry Potter however claims that Merleau-Ponty does not directly address the issue of Marxism's scientificity. But if such attempt is made, it means that it is not done as it needs to be understood:

> *As a flexible and developing system of thought and practice, as a discourse infinitely capable of refinement and adjustment, as a discourse one hundred and eighty degrees opposed to doctrines and dogma. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of this aspect of Marxism emphasized its mechanistic nature; simply plug in*

the data and the answers pop out immediately and unambiguously[7].

He affirms that the laws of history in Marxism contain a historical truth in the argument but that is part of "Marxism's history of misguided attempts to be scientific; it was not real Marxist science"[8.]

Notwithstanding, Potter commends Merleau-Ponty's Marxism as he reaffirms his words to serve as a warning and a plea. He notes that Merleau-Ponty's Marxist conception of history has reminded us of what is at stake and has suggested the wisdom of a re-consideration by those who have abandoned Marxism. He concludes that Merleau-Ponty has expressed distinctly and implicitly the alternative to Marxism by exposing the darkest possible versions of postmodernism, intellectual despair and political collaboration.

Giving the overview of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical work, Paul Ricoeur in his *Homage to Merleau-Ponty* comments that everything follows from the phenomenology of perception. He admires and affirms that greatness of the work thus:

> *First, a manner of taking up again the results of the human sciences and enlisting them in a properly philosophical purpose. Merleau-Ponty closely followed work done in physiology, psychophysiology, experimental psychology, and psychopathology; he never stopped reflecting on the relations of philosophy to the human sciences, reflecting not only on the results but also on the methods*[9].

Paul Ricoeur notes that he (Merleau-Ponty) provides such liaison by returning to the magisterial teaching of the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, whose published and unpublished work he knows perfectly. Though Merleau-Ponty did not enclose phenomenology (which claimed to be a descriptive science of what appears) in a Husserlian archaeology or scholasticism. He rather continues the movement of phenomenology for his own account without regard for orthodoxy.

Moreover, Paul Ricoeur has it that in "phenomenology of perception," the findings of human sciences, the method of phenomenology, and the philosophical aim of existentialism are thus found mixed together in a complex ensemble. And that the import of such enterprise is considerable from the beginning, ever since perception appears to be the model of all human operations, with its play of significations that refer one to the other, without ever halting in an object, seen from nowhere and thoroughly known. In effect, Paul Ricoeur proclaims that:

> *It is not exaggerated to say that these formulae themselves contain an entire conception of action, and even an entire politics. For if perception is the model of existence, then this means that there is in action no longer an "all or nothing," and that politics is likewise approximate[10].*

While in reference to Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy, Paul Ricoeur states that his political writings are dominated both by the will to "understand", and by the refusal to grant that some reasons govern history. In the same vein,

he notes that where Merleau-Ponty agrees with Marxist conception of history is less than everything about Marxism as a whole. The reason being that "Merleau-Ponty could not believe that there was a universal class and that the proletariat was this class. This is why history was for him without an absolute point of view, without a true perspective"[11.] He says that Merleau-Ponty finds it difficult to accept the Marxists' dialectic for it was like an obstacle to a comprehensive knowledge of the U.S.S.R, and all modern critique of capitalism. As such, Ricoeur explains how the dialectic rather appears to him. "In his eyes, the dialectical idea is no more than the "point of honor" of an enterprise that it does not animate, the true nature of which is difficult to see under this veil and no doubt escapes the protagonists themselves"[12..]

However, in complaints of the difficulty in understanding his dialectical idea of history, Paul Ricoeur laments:

> *I do not know what Merleau-Ponty thought of The Critique of Dialectical Reason, which obviously entirely escaped the reproach of voluntarism. He no doubt awaited the second volume of the work, on the theme of history. It is, however, doubtful that the idea of totalization, even as a detotalizing idea, would have found favour in his eyes, to the extent that it retained what Merleau-Ponty wanted to lose in order to see clearly: the idea of universal history[13].*

He therefore proclaims that Merleau-Ponty made a diverse in his original political initiatives, his adherences, and his reserves. To this end, Ricoeur believes and concludes that the principal battle of Merleau-Ponty as regards his

idea of universal history is less important since he has put it to the level of reflection, against the ideologies and the mythologies. Besides, at the time of his death, the second landing in Merleau-Ponty's work has not yet emerged from the underlying dynamic of his thought.

Claude Lefort on the other hand has criticized Merleau-Ponty on his approach to intersubjectivity in a lecture that is published as "Flesh and Otherness" (Lefort, 1990). Earlier, Merleau-Ponty has conceptualized intersubjectivity as all embraced rather than oppositional. He posits the self and other as reciprocal. According to Merleau-Ponty :

> *The relation to the self, the relation to the world, the relation to the other; all are constituted through a reversibility of seeing and being seen, perceiving and being perceived, and this entails a reciprocity and contingency for the subjects in the world---- The body/self is simultaneously both subject and object; in the experience of dialogue (or, in our case, the production and reception of works of art) the two subjects involved (art maker, art interpreter) are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity[14].*

He proclaims that when we are acting pre-reflexively and our bodies are automatically responding to the situation before us, there is a reversibility or intertwining subject and object. The person and the worldly situation they find themselves in become indistinct and mutually constituting. This ambiguity between subject and object is also apparent in our reflexive actions. Merleau-Ponty (2002) demonstrates that when we reflect on sensory experience, like

touching, there is an ambiguity as to what is the subject, that doing the touching, and what is the object, the thing touched.

This ambiguity between subject and object has deep implications for Merleau-Ponty's analysis of intersubjectivity and our understanding of others. His opinion, like Husserl's (1982), was that our perception of others is enough to assure ourselves of their existence as other body-subjects. We can know people, according to Merleau-Ponty (2002; 2004), by our perceptions of their behaviour, which they manifest on their bodies through action and speech. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's idea of intersubjectivity held that we are aware of ourselves, and so it is through the other that we obtain self-awareness. Moreover, our bodies respond to the world and in responding to others we constitute our individual selves[15]. In this process of mutual constitution, self and other intertwine. Within this intertwining both parties learn the specific cultural patterns, bodily habits and common language required to continue interaction.

To this end, however, Lefort claims that there are specific elements of difference and alterity that are missing in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intersubjectivity. First, the difference between subjects within the intersubjective coexistence involves not just by knowing ourselves through the existence of the other, but by having a lateral exchange with one another. Lefort illustrates this by making a reference to the relation between a small child and an adult. For him, on the side of the child, the adult is not an alter ego, but a mediator between the child and the words, a mediator who does not stand at the

same level. "What we should bring to light is the original asymmetry between the experience of the infant and that of the adult. For the infant, the other is not originally an alter ego"[16]. The infant, as a human organism, is usually prepared to see, but before he sees distinct, single things, the look of the other opens the world for him, in a hierarchical relation: "the other --- gives something to be seen from above"[17].

With reference to Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein, Lefort tries to show that this asymmetry is related to distinctions in the realms of danger and morality. He therefore says that reversibility is not only a matter of sense and visibility, but also of eating: "Eating supports the impulse to swallow up external being, and this impulse goes along with the feeling of being at risk of being swallowed up. There is a split between the good and the bad object"[18].

In contrary to Merleau-Ponty, Lefort also illustrates the asymmetry between adult and child with the image of the pointing finger of the adult that shows the child its ways in the world. The relation of the infant to his parents and other adults is one that is dominated from the start by the adults, a domination that will leave its traces, even when the child has grown up and become an adult himself. "The infant is immediately, and even before coming into the world, taken into a web of wishes, expectations and fears of which he will never possess the meaning"[19].

Another problem in which Lefort proclaimed a discernment which is missing in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intersubjectivity was in the realm

of speech and language. According to Lefort, language is texture of relations and rules in which the child learns to find its way, with the help of others, even under the direction of others. In his own words:

> *How would it be possible to mask the function of the other in the initiation of the world of named things? The other gives names, and in a certain sense, introduces the child into the sphere of law whenever he says 'this is red, and not yellow' or 'this is house, and not a boat[20].*

Even more important, not only names of things are given to the child, the child itself is named.

> *To be named --- testifies of an original and irreducible transcendence. --- The divergence (ecart) between my name and myself does not coincide with the divergence between me seer and me visible. The name was imprinted on me and at the same time bound to remain outside me, above me[21].*

Meanwhile, what Lefort missed in Merleau-Ponty's view of intersubjectivity was the idea of the other as the third one, the mediator who guided from above the relations of reversibility between subject and world.

Moreover, Lefort continues by saying that his criticism elaborated above is another stepping stone to enlightening the difficulties Merleau-Ponty encountered in his political analysis. His critical analysis of Merleau-Ponty is thus, an extension of drawing out the political implications of the flesh. He brought the digression into infantile experience full circle by discovering a fault with Merleau-Ponty's politics. In reference to Merleau-Ponty's scant adoption

of the language of the flesh in his later political writings, Lefort argues that "he did not succeed in leaving the frame of sociological analysis. What he considers essential is the web of purely social relations, so he did not get rid of relativism by comparing the different types of social structures." Centrally, he suggests that Merleau-Ponty fails to acknowledge the "cleavage" between "political forms of society," centrally modern democracy and totalitarianism"[22]. In these respects – rotted in his reading of Machiavelli, Lefort draws a distinction between "politics" as a sphere of competitive social division and 'the political" in the sense of a political regime politics is characterized by the "originary division of the social," or the "natural" division between the grandee and the people. As Machiavelli states, the people desire neither to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people.[23] Lefort describes this as a natural relation because it is essentially pre-political, existing prior to – and outside of – the political realm[24]. These classes are immediately opposed to one another and, as Lefort summarized, "in (the grandee) the people encounter their *natural* adversary, the other who constitutes them as the immediate object of its desires"[25]. Moreover, Lefort states, "one class only exists by the lack that constitutes it opposite the other"[26]. In this context, the "humours" of the social body are presented as a permanent and irreconcilable opposition. Derived from the opposed dispositions of the respective classes, with their separate "lacks" constituting a wholeness, each class is the negation of the other[27]. But in this context, what is important for

Lefort is not the virtue of the prince, but the "place" of power (that is the political realm) that he occupies. The prince rises above the social division, giving the "image" of a higher unity that masks but never supersedes the division and hence, posits no ultimate solution to the problems of politics[28].

Coming out of this reading, Lefort argues that the difference between political forms of society emerges in the manner through which the social institutes objectiy themselves in the political realm:

> *Giving (political institutions or regimes) a form implies giving them meaning (mise en sens) and staging them (mise en scene). They are given meaning in that the social space unfolds as a space of intelligibility articulated in accordance with a specific mode of distinguishing between the real and the imaginary, the true and the false, the just and the unjust--- They are staged in that this space contains within it a quasi-representation of itself as aristocratic, monarchic, despotic, democratic or totalitarian[29].*

As James Ingram explains, "for Lefort, 'the political' constitutes society's unity by projecting it onto a point of 'power', which he understands as a symbolic location". Through, self-institution in this symbolic location, "collective relations and actor's understandings of them, give (objective) form and (subjective) meaning (*mise-en-sens*) to society"[30]. It is the nature of the self-institution that Lefort sees as the key to differentiating between totalitarianism and democracy. Through the mechanisms of violence and repression, totalitarianism seeks to ultimately abolish the conflictual sphere of politics, and its oppositional elements, and represent society via the political as a whole that

is identical with itself: it seeks to "banish the indetermination that haunts the democratic experience." In totalitarianism, then, "there is no place --- for references to the third one, the representative of justice or truth, no sense of otherness." Democracy, on the other hand, is a political form that "accepts that it does not possess the meaning of its own genesis and its own ends"[31]: it leaves the political space "empty" or "open" as a "symbolic void". As Ingram explains: "Because the political is a realm of representation, it always includes an element of the imaginary: there is always a gap between a society's representation of its unity and its real divisions"[32]. Because democracy does not permanently fill the void of the political but only represents an image of itself through it, the sphere remains open to the continual contestation of its ability to represent society's wholeness[33]. Hence, Lefort concludes that Merleau-Ponty's focus on social relations neglected the analysis of the political sphere and the place of power – which constitutes "the third one", "the representative of justice or truth" and the "sense of otherness" – and he is incapable of differentiating democracy and totalitarianism.[34]

Kheya Bag, however, challenges the role of communication in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ways of looking at radicalized life. In her crafted paper on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of politics, *"The Language of Real Life: Communication in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of politics"*, she declares that Merleau-Ponty saw politics as a sensual practice, perceptually experienced, ambiguously lived, and intersubjectively worked out. Throughout

her paper, Kheya points to the centrality of communication in Merleau-Ponty and claims that the source for Merleau-Ponty's political becoming, and the grounding for his political philosophy, is the French Resistance during World War II, as is the case with many French intellectuals who lived through this period. Just as Martin Jay writes, what he learns from that period of his life is that "men were immersed in the ambiguities of history" and that there was "no pure freedom above the fray"[35].

Kheya implicity alludes to in her paper that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of politics and his descriptions of the emergence of class consciousness is in tune with his greater project of articulating or, better said, describing phenomenologically what bodily life is. She therefore says that the interplay of the body's perceptual, affective, motor-practical, and cognitive capacities and the political are coursed throughout most of his prolific but short-lived career as France's preeminent philosopher of lived experience.

Kheya relies mostly on a close and concise reading of key sections of the phenomenology of perception. She, thus, appeals to Marx at his most phenomenological, primarily the young Marx's "Theses on Feurbach", but some references also to the *The German Ideology* and *The Holy Family*, as well as referencing in key places Merleau-Ponty's posthumously published essay, "The primacy of perception," Judith Butler, and Georg Lukacs. Kheya astutely blended these sources in order to elucidate the phenomenological dynamics that Merleau-Ponty believed to be at play between political life and the sensuousness

of bodily life. Kheya asserts that Merleau-Ponty bequeaths to us his most insightful views on political life and class consciousness in his writings on perception, rather than in his less-phenomenological writings on State communism and Hegelian Marxism.

Earlier, Kheya begins her paper by showcasing how the *body as subject*, the *communicative essence of consciousness,* and the *openness of this subject-body* inhering into the world and having the world inhere into it, begins to map out "the implications of understanding political consciousness as first and foremost a perceptual consciousness"[36]. Kheya states that the body, in tune with Merleau-Ponty, interplays with its worldly atmosphere as an *incarnated existence*, whether the experiences of this fleshly existence are within the personal or social realms of life. The body reverberates with things and situations forms a provisional sketch of our Being. The body-subject synaesthetically communicates with the things of the world while intersubjectively engaging with the co-creating of a social world with other body-subjects. As such, it should be realized that in reading Merleau-Ponty, that cognition and intellectualism are decentred, although not effected, as a privileged site of knowledge and truth.

According to Kheya, lived life blurs the boundaries between inside and outside, subject and object, historical and the concrete present, and pure agency and socio-historical contingency[37]. Kheya evocatively writes that human bodies are already – always involved in action and movement as we gear ourselves into

the world. Indeed, he reminds that, for Merleau-Ponty, "the world is my body's point of support"[38]. She further points that, for Merleau-Ponty, the meaning of things is made manifest, not determined, in consciousness. In other words, we are deeply implicated in the meaning of the world, but do not predetermine this meaning. Kheya writes that subject and object are "formed in and through dialogue"[39]. Meaning and significance are for the embodied subject, already – always ambiguous and in constant formation. As such, the meanings of things are fragmentary and provisional. Objects according to her, thus always infuse themselves into the embodied subject, and, at the same time, objects extend us outwards to meet them.

Temporality, Kheya further reminds, is crucial for how the body-subject come to know the world and herself. Communication is dynamic and the unity of the subject "constituted through its intentionality" with the object is not a congealed unity but, as Kheya writes quoting Merleau-Ponty, "presumptive unity on the horizon of experience"[40]. That is, we are entrenched in the thickness of the world, obscured by a "historical density"[41], and never able to fully grasp our experience of it, perceptually or cognitively. As such, perceptual life is ambiguous and outcomes of actions are never certain.

In sum, Kheya lays out how the body, that is, the subject, communicates with the world and comes to know itself and its relation to things ambiguously and dialogically, she rearticulates how, for Merleau-Ponty, *the political* – or, as Kheya puts it, "expression of oppression or privilege," is most often not

generalizable to us but circumstantially felt[42]. Rather than being predetermined by the "objective conditions"[43] of existence, the political is spontaneously experienced as we live through it and perhaps struggle with the structures that frame our concrete life. She concludes with Merleau-Ponty that there is not only sensuousness to our everyday living, but also to politicize life. She now adds that as our perception is fundamentally communicational, so is our experience of the social.

Bryan Smyth in his work "Hervism and history in Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology" looks at Merleau-Ponty's thought in the early post war period, while in the short essay "Man, the Hero", Merleau-Ponty presents a conception of heroism through which he expresses the attitude toward post-Hegelian philosophy of history and underwrites his efforts to reform Marxism along existential lines. Bryan Smyth argues that Merleau-Ponty's philosophical rationale is to supply experiential evidence attesting to the latent presence of human universality. He has it that it is a mythic device intended to animate the faith necessary for Marxist politics by showing that universal sociality is possible, and that the historically transformative praxis needed to realize it does not imply sacrifice. He says that this is why Merleau-Ponty picks interest in his political thought immediately within the years that follow the war. To justify this acclaimed mythic device of him, Smyth writes:

> *If it is true, however, as Diana Coole has recently*
> *– and, I think correctly – affirmed, that Merleau-*
> *Ponty's phenomenology as such is "profoundly*

and intrinsincally political," then it would turn out that his early postwar philosophical project as a whole rests on a myth. Not necessarily a bad myth, but a myth nonetheless[44].

Notwithstanding, Smyth wonders why *"Le Heros, I Hommeí* ("Man, the Hero") was initially published under the title "*Le Culte du heros"* ("Hero Worship") in the Pro-communist Party of France (PCF) weekly *action* (sic) in February 1946. He complains that apart from a few words quoted in the editorial preface (signed by Francis Ponge) that went with its publication in *action*, documentary evidence was not available to explain why Merleau-Ponty submitted that work to that particular publication. Hence, he considered it reasonable to have said that:

> *This submission was linked to Merleau-Ponty's active efforts to publicly promote the political credentials of existentialism. For action was not a dogmatic organ of PCF policy. In fact, following the end of the European war, action was (along with Les temps modernes) on important forum for debate between Marxism and existentialism. Of particular interest to Merleau-Ponty with regard to his existentialist proselytizing were relatively open minded intellectuals within the PCF[45].*

Smyth, however, comes to the conclusion that the major reason why Merleau-Ponty sent his essay on heroism to *action* was because it formed a moment in his on-going political dialogue with the milieu of Marxist thinkers sympathetic to existentialism.

He further maintains that the over all claim aimed by Merleau-Ponty in the very dialogue is that "as a practical project of proletarian self-emancipation,

Marxism was less a body of truth than a method of interpreting political phenomena and that with respect to subjectivity and consciousness, what its advancement required could be supplied by existential phenomenology"[46]. He therefore proclaims that what the essay on heroism offers is not just an existential research and analysis as such, but this is to proffer that "existential attitude" as an heuristic principle of orientation in the neo-Marxist political hermeneutics called for by the postwar situation.

Bryan Smyth argues that though the early postwar political philosophy of Merleau-Ponty's conception of heroism is unusual as it is similar to anti-heroism, the pivotal importance of it is still evident. For Merleau-Ponty knows quite well that heroism does not offer a viable model for action. But his intervention was intended to effectively dissolve the discourse of heroism by, on the one hand, rendering what is crucial to it a quotidian phenomenon; and on the other hand, by raising its exceptionality to the level of humanist myth. Yet, just as evident as his position above, Smyth maintains that there are some potential shortcomings with the position. He now says that its recourse to myth is philosophically questionable, that "even if we can see that Merleau-Ponty's heroic myth in effect marginalizes heroism by confining it to a transcendental role, it can still seem as if we are being asked to pull one over on ourselves."[47] Nonetheless, Smyth affirms that there is no cause for alarm as it will not matter even if one can interpret heroism as an issue specific to Merleau-Ponty's political thought, he reminds us that if one should construe this, one should not

forget the fact that what makes Merleau-Ponty to glance at "Man, the Hero" is simply to make more clarifications towards the end of the "phenomenology of perception" which was not actually his political philosophy. Thus, Smyth puts it in this way as he begins with a question:

> *But can we do that? Recall that the motivation to look at "Man, the Hero" was to shed light on the ending of phenomenology of perception. It is clearly implied on the final page of that text that "the realization of philosophy" – not of political philosophy, but philosophy per say – occurs extra-philosophically. Enter the hero. The hero doesn't do it, of course. Rather, in direct analogy to the political context, heroism provides experiential evidence of the productivity that the philosopher must take on faith*[48].

Smyth claims that this is an issue for Merleau-Pontian phenomenology. Ever since his phenomenology is related to the recognition of the impossibility of a "complete reduction" – the impossibility of any complete thematization of the operative intentionalities on which phenomenology itself inescapably relies. Smyth notes that why Merleau-Ponty saw the need "to make room for faith" at the heart of his reinterpretation of phenomenology is because that cannot be demonstrated in advance.

In all, Smyth concluded that inasmuch as the phenomenology of perception is concluded with a puzzling turn to "heroism" which resulted to a considerable light on Merleau-Ponty's early postwar political thought, the prospect remained that his entire phenomenological project in the early postwar

period rested on a myth. Besides, "this is not necessarily a bad myth, and myth in general is not necessarily a bad thing[49].

Diana Coole in his book *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics After Anti-Humanism* declares that existential phenomenology is political. Coole focuses on Merleau-Ponty because more than any other existential phenomenologist, she argues, he came to develop an account of being-in-the-world that showed how everyday "coexistence," as uncovered by phenomenological inquiry, is always suffused with practices of power and conflict. Furthermore, because he recognizes that power as well as rationality is woven into the fabric of the intersubjective world, Merleau-Ponty is uniquely capable, Coole claims, of situating embodied agents between an antiquated "philosophy of the subject" and an overzealous anti-humanist "philosophy of power". Her Central task is twofold, then: to show how existential phenomenology is political, and to show how Merleau-Ponty's political existential phenomenology succeeds where others do not. In contrast to those who interpret Merleau-Ponty's later political writings as a substantive departure from his earlier, more traditionally phenomenological studies, Coole argues that Merleau-Ponty's politics represented a radicalization and critical deepening of his earlier work[50]. The relatively early *phenomenology of Perception*, she argues "presents something of a methodological schema for Merleau-Ponty studies, including those of politics"[51]. This argument for continuity is founded by the claim that Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, understood modern philosophy and politics alike to

be held captive by various manifestations of a singular crisis[52]. The crisis was modern rationalism and Merleau-Ponty's abiding goal was to find alternatives to it. Coole defines rationalism: "this kind of reason either claims certainty for its knowledge of nature, history, or society and uses it as a means to control them or, inversely, it sees such phenomena as inert forms immune to knowledge but available for subjection to the will"[53]. In other words, modern rationalism separates an ideal realm of values and thought from material life but fails to recognize the relativity of its own presuppositions[54]. rationalist philosophy and practices have no account of their own geneology or contingency. Of greatest consequence, then, is that rationalism is dangerous because collective practices and political institutions enact the founding ontological presuppositions of a culure; problems with mind-body and subject-object dualisms, for example, manifest in unhealthy social relations. "Ideas become diffused across life worlds as taken-for-granted horizons for thought and action," Coole writes, often with tragic and violent consequences[55].

The creativity, erudition, and even risky nature of Coole's account turns up most strikingly where she traces Merleau-Ponty's critique of rationalism through his many disparate interests. She argues that Merleau-Ponty's critique of intellectualism and empiricism in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be analogized to his critique of liberalism and communism. Throughout the book Coole suggests, directly and indirectly, that all of the following dualities are in some sense manifestations of rationalist assumptions:

Intellectualism	-	Empiricism
Idealism	-	Realism
Mental	-	Material
Liberalism	-	Communism
Morality	-	Positivism
Early Marx	-	Late Marx
Rationality	-	Power
The West	-	The Other
Agency	-	Structure

The former of these dualities are all attributes, outgrowths, or entailments of subject-centered philosophy; the latter are various terms of force. In each case, subjectivist and objectivist prejudices represent two sides of the same rationalist coin, the baleful effects of which are as notable in theories of perception as they are in political life. And in contrast to all of them, as Merleau-Ponty writes in the preface to the *phenomenology*, "the question is always how I can be open to phenomena that transcend me, and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that I take them up and live them" (1962,363). Coole argues that Merleau-Ponty's return to ontology and to a "politics of the flesh" represents a "third term" intended to reject rationalism embodied in all these forms. The flesh is a "corporeal and historical materialism"[56], where "meaning and materiality are simply inseparable"[57]. It is derived from Husserl's conception of the "third dimension," which "unfolds between the oppositions traditionally reproduced

by science and philosophy"[58]. The deep advantage of Merleau-Ponty's account of the flesh is that, because it rejects the mind/material distinction, it is capable of articulating a social ontology that both accurately depicts the "choreography of the way collective life unfolds" and provides a source for normative judgments of particular collective practices[59]. For Coole, the anti-humanist critique of Merleau-Ponty is dispelled by the concept of the flesh, for it shows that Merleau-Ponty does not understand intentional relations to be bridges between conscious subjects and a non-discursive world. The flesh is a "formative medium" of both objectivity and subjectivity[60]. One cannot say, then, that he did not sufficiently abandon the anthropocentric assumptions of a subject-centrered philosophy of intentional consciousness. As such, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the productive activity of the pre-personal body enables him to articulate a source of agency which his anti-humanist critics, such as Butler, Derrida and Deleuze lack, because "the body is a powerful if often neglected actor in politics"[61]. Political agency arises somewhere between subjectivity and power: "what I have emphasized here," Coole writes, "is the way Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh helps us to grasp the existential, material aspects of collective life without reducing everything either to discourse (or power) or to the actions of a thinking subject"[62].

Coole's focus on Merleau-Ponty's consistent rejection of these rraditional prejudices uncovers something profound and persistent within his thought. The importance of her project stems not only from the fact that Merleau-Ponty's

phenomenological and political works remain dissatisfyingly disconnected in the existing scholarship, but also in her thesis that existential phenomenology is political.

However, like other philosophers, Mihnea Chiujdea in his article "*Maurice Merleau-Ponty on Violence and Marxism*" offers a reassessment of Merleau-Ponty's early and late political thought and looks at the role and place of the political thinker. He observes the background and the particular context at which Merleau-Ponty's theory relies and decides to focus on the mistakes coming from a socio-political materialist critique which he claims to have failed to put into consideration the situatedness of Merleau-Ponty. In other words, he is in support of Merleau-Ponty's claim on violence as he counters the criticisms tabled against him. Though, Chiujdea later came up with his own arguments by indicating some lapses as Merleau-Ponty is not totally free from criticisms and some statements alike.

Earlier, Barry Cooper has criticized Merleau-Ponty's argument about the undeniable presence of violence in politics, and the need to acknowledge it and act accordingly. Cooper questions why all non-violence should be what he called "Quaker hypocrisy." A situation where genuinely non-violent person must not have to be in a non-violent world, but commits himself to it, even to the extent of being in a perpetual violent world. Hence, he equates a non-violent person to a violent one.

> *Here, then, one must question Merleau-Ponty's charge that all non-violent was 'Quaker hypocrisy.'' [---]. The genuinely non-violent person does not simply wish for a non-violent world, he commits himself to it, even to the point of suffering rather than inflicting violence. [---]. The choice of the political person who may have to rely on violence can be met on equal terms by non-violent person whose refusal of violence is an affirmation of truths beyond history[63].*

Cooper could not adhere to the proactive principle of human perpetuity on violence as affirmed by Merleau-Ponty.

Thus, Chiujdea argues that this objection does not seem to be convincing because it appears to consist of a reformulation of kantian ethics that does little in the way of engaging with Merleau-Ponty's argument. He, therefore, says that Cooper is trying to run away from the notion – that choosing to be non-violent can only result in sufferings for the non-violent person (who sacrifices him/himself). Chiujdea as such comments that "what he appears not to appreciate is that the effects of the human action (even if they are guided by the will to avoid violence at any price) are not only suffered by the acting subject"[64]. That is to say that one cannot for any reason be totally ignorant of violence as man is fully born to be in there. It is either that one is affected directly or indirectly, whether one is a violent or non-violent person. Chiujdea buttresses his claim with reference to Merleau-Ponty's essay *The War Has Taken Place* where he shows how in extreme situations (and not only) men are faced with a strict set of choices which they are forced to make. For Merleau-

Ponty therefore, situations assign roles unto political actors altering the meaning of decisions and behaviours (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:144). He charges Cooper for innate possession of violence in human nature. He states that even if, as Cooper suggests, one pretends that one does not have to choose between a set of given violent actions, what one does can still have a violent and regressive character.

> *Just as much as it was a sham for an Allied solider in World War Two to claim that for the sake of peace he would not commit an act of violence against a Nazi soldier guarding Auschwitz, it similarly is fallacious for Cooper to deny the necessity of violence in the realm of politics[65].*

Another similar objection which Chiujdea counters in favour of Merleau-Ponty is the idea brought in by Sonia Kruks. Kruks (1987:183-192) has argued that Merleau-Ponty's critique of liberalism is not rigorous enough in so far as it merely consists of a critique of Kant, Descartes and Alain. She further notes how Anglo-Saxon liberal thought has developed by acknowledging violence in politics and with the aim of managing it through the social covenant. Chiujdea's position is contrary to the above criticism, he argues that Merleau-Ponty must have considered liberalism, at the time when it arose, a progressive ideology with at least some benefits. He further claims that at the time when Merleau-Ponty was writing, liberalism was for him identical with Alain-ism (the Kantian and Cartesian influences that his thoughts reflected). He affirms in defence of Merleau-Ponty that at that time, the ideas of Alain-ism dominated liberal thought. As a matter of fact, he maintains that Merleau-Ponty has no option than

to criticize the equation of liberalism with Alain-ism in France. For him, Merleau-Ponty's thinking about ideologies can thus be described as:

> *a process approach: as with social structures, these are not defined, for him, by the values they promote (not by the pattern they aim to see society reflect) but by the way they mutate and by what they mean to a certain society at a certain time. In other words, ideologies are to be judged according to the quality they give to political violence – be it progressive or regressive[66].*

As a result of the above declaration, Chiujdea proclaims that it is not lack of rigour as such on the side of Merleau-Ponty that made him to ignore the writings of political thinkers like John Locke and others. Rather, it was his way of showing what liberalism had in his view become: nothing more than a rigid institution bearing the sediment of history and restricting human freedom.

Moreover, Chiujdea notes what should have been a more justified objection (as was emphasized in Collins French Dictionary) to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of violence. That he fails to define the concept and distinguish between different types of violence. Probably, this is the reason why Merleau-Ponty was able to make only a qualitative distinction between types of violence as simply, a regressive and a progressive (i.e. violence that perpetuates itself or that which aims at its own suppression). But for Chiujdea, 'this argument is weak to the extent that it can be manipulated to justify almost any kind of violence as communist regimes in the past and present demonstrate"[67]. He claims that Merleau-Ponty, after all, has never seen the dialectic of history to be

a closed issue. He thus argues that for the fact that violence is something that will never be eradicated completely from politics, it means, therefore, that this qualitative differentiation automatically becomes quantitative. He adds that the only justification for (progressive) violence is a balance sheet between the present and a better future. Besides, for him, this kind of assessment is not just possible because the future is never certain but one cannot justify violence happening in the present, and against people living in it, for the betterment of unborn generations. Hence, there is no common denominator between the present and the future that would make justice to this conceptualization, he says.

Nevertheless, from the foregoing, it seems as if Chiujdea has been busy all alone defending Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy. Not as such. At least, he is aware and was able to recognize some lapses created by the author himself. In the later writing of Merleau-Ponty, he denounces Marxism and has a rethink in the arguments outlined in his earlier political works. Probably as Diana Coole has suggested Merleau-Ponty was influenced by the geopolitics of the 1950s in executing such decision (2007:3-9). And as Merleau-Ponty points out that the USSR's role in the Korean War as well as the discovery of Soviet labour camps convince him to radically reconsider the arguments outlined in his earlier political works[68]. Chiujdea, in effect, argues that Merleau-Ponty fails to meet up with the standards that he set in his earlier work. He states that Merleau-Ponty fails to address the position of the political philosopher in the

dialectics as it refers to the distinction between the objective and the subjective, that is, the issue of self-reflexivity.

Although, Merleau-Ponty has his own reason for making a replacement of Marxism with liberalism – a type that can generate a possible freedom for all. But it has not occurred to him to explain the workings of this liberalism, Chiujdea argues. He rather points out the importance of parliaments:

> *Parliament is the only known institution that guarantees a minimum of opposition and of truth. There are other limitations which are the result of parliamentary usage and manoeuvers: these deserve no respect at all, but they can be denounced by parliament itself[69].*

Thus, Chiujdea questions the glorious upliftment bestowed on the parliaments if such parliaments will not just be "another example of an institution that claims to safeguard negative rights (such as the right to political opposition) but that through its abstractness can only serve to mask violence? By implication, Chiujdea emphasized (though in question) that early criticism of liberal democracy has eventually resulted to this new form of liberalism that he now endorses.

He argues in addition that if Marxism is simply scientism, doomed to end up in this vulgar materialist positivism that serves to justify violence and tyranny, it means, going by his early thought, intersubjectivism is impossible. And if, the proletariat, who share similar living conditions, are not able to attain any self-consciousness and fail to identify on Marxism a 'common project', it

would appear that truth, if we are ever able to attain it, does not happen in the way he described it. It would also mean that man is unable to attach meaning to common projects and that history is a 'sens'-less bundle of events[70].

Having seen the central idea of Merleau-Ponty's conceptualizations of violence and intersubjectivity in his political philosophy – his defensive arguments and the shortcomings therein, Joseph Bottum rightly confesses that Merleau-Ponty has successfully produced one of the most horrifying books ever written. The reason though as he states, remains that everybody is a victim of violence.

> *--- What makes Merleau-Ponty's Humanism and Terror so horrifying is not simply that it exhibits a first-class mind pimping for Stalin and the Moscow show Trials of the 1930s. What makes it so horrifying is that Merleau-Ponty is "right" obscenely right, immorally right: violence can found culture, terror can preserve stability, the unanimity created by the sacrifice of a scapegoat can become so complete that it includes even its victim[71].*

He argues that the insight on the edge of which Merleau-Ponty trembled in 1947 is an insight into the failure of mythology after Christ. The election of a scapegoat he says may in fact have worked to found culture in the days before biblical revelation, but the Gospels reveal how it works, and an understanding of how it works destroys the possibility of it working. Bottom maintains that if we know the victim to be innocent, and still pronounce him guilty, then we will

not succeed in being drawn together, "we will not succeed in founding a culture" with the pronouncement.

Notwithstanding, the arguments whether everybody is a victim of violence or not (as Merleau-Ponty has declared that even, "restraining from violence – even towards a person or a class that is doing violence to another entity, is in itself an act of violence. And not using violence in order to stop another violent act is a tacit form of condoning that act"), has in one way or the other inspired some philosophers to look into the meaning of violence and how it should be used.

James Dodds *Violence and Phenomenology (2009)* begins by considering whether we have become the "dupes of violence." The danger of being duped by violence, he argues, is particularly grave in the violence of war because in the form of war especially we expect both too much and too little. We expect too much when violence is used to shore up state authority or to spread spheres of power, and we expect too little when we think that violence will eventually "whither away due either to the weight of our moral vigilance or the effectiveness of the political, legal, social, or ethical instruments that we employ in the hope of avoiding the destruction of war"[72]. Dodd suggests that becoming the dupes of violence, by either expecting too much or too little from it, is rotted in an unacknowledged tension as uniquely constitutive of its own meaning or sense. In other words, we are easily duped by violence because we do not grasp that violence is always more than simply instrumental, used as a means to

accomplish some end; it is at the same constitutive of the meaning or sense of human existence which he argues, makes violence a philosophical problem of the first order.

He turns to phenomenology to navigate the tension between understanding violence as either instrumental or constitutive of sense because of phenomenology's "conviction that all genuine philosophical problems are problems of sense and meaning"[73]. He states that phenomenology is the philosophical method best suited for grappling with the sense of violence. In what follows, Dodd tackles what he considers to be the first problem by addressing whether violence is necessary for the emergence of possibility. To say "yes" is to agree that violence is constitutive of meaning or sense. Schmitt and Patocka are the two figures who for Dodd are most committed to this view. Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction, he argues, emerges out of an understanding of violence as the inherent possibility of the political, while for Patocka violence as the disruption of the everyday life allows for the appearance of authentic possibilities of existence. Dodd challenges both views, confronting Patocka , he asks why we should begin with violence in order to discover an authentic life. Is life not rather the opposite of the case, namely "that we cannot begin with violence, that there is no possible conception of 'original violence' that would not also risk a fundamental distortion of the meaning of human freedom?"[74]. This goes in line with Merleau-Ponty's argument that everyone is a victim of violence if the case comes to be as Dodd questions.

He goes on to explain the second problem that sense of selfhood seems to emerge only in violence, specifically the violence of self-defense. Following Clausewitz, Dodd claims that all self-defense is rooted in the use of force and, more importantly, that the sense of self emerges in this defense. Violence then is constitutive for the sense of the self. While Dodd does not consider non-violent ways of self-defense, he does seem to distort this sense: "it is impossible to decide whether what violence shows us of ourselves --- is something that can be taken back to a normal state of things, or whether all we have in our hands is merely an illusion[75]. Indeed, Dodd further points out the short-sightedness of such a position:

> *Philosophically, the problem is how human beings grapple with the question of their possibility; if we are to learn anything from violence in this respect, it can only be after we have avoided reducing human questionability to the empty form of violence and the illusions it generates. If we accept "danger" as constitutive of our being together as a polity, if all our discussions about "who we are" begin with the possibility of violence, we will only end up with violence as an idée fixe, a dumb fascination with our capacity to turn things upside down; we will see nothing but violence sitting in the middle of our common life[76].*

Dodd does not, in reaction to the above statement develop his own position, he rather turns back to Schmitt and asking of the "original sources" of violence if these sources do not lie in the self and its possibilities.

Dodd turns next to the problem of the legacy of violence, a problem which first emerged in his reading of Sartre's "practico-inert." Dodd maintains

that the legacy of violence seems to fall into the "stupidity of violence" claim insofar as it reveals nothing in itself but must be taken up aesthetically, politically, socially, or economically. Yet the legacy of violence, and here he refers explicitly to Fanon, seems to provide the motivation for resistance. Here again Dodd's position is ambiguous. He seems to want to claim that violence provides the motivation for resistance, yet he also suggests that this is an illusion as "the inertia of violence amounts to a reticence of meaning, which in turn renders its relation to motivation very complex"[77]. He suggests that to respond to violence by again lifting the "world off its hinges" only reveals the futility of thinking that the outcome will be different this time around. While the legacy of violence might point to an originary violence, he argues that it ought not to motivate us now.

> *Violence in its essence is to strike against something that has already eluded one's grasp; but for us, the latecomers, the beneficiaries of its legacy, this is not an original experience at all, but an experience in which or for which such a strike, or the lifting of the world off its hinges, has always already taken place. When it comes to violence, we are in effect addicts, struggling with the temptation to once again lift things off their hinges to break our already broken world, and like all addicts, we tend to expect that somehow the outcome will this time be different[78].*

Dodd suggests that even if violence is originary, it makes no difference in terms of the violent legacy we now inhabit. For him, all violence is a rejection of the world and to respond to the legacy of violence with more violence is futile, the

only outcome begin to continue to "lit the world off its hinges." And yet Dodd concludes the discussion by again equivocating. Seemingly rejecting the use of violence to respond to violence, Dodd ultimately takes back what he just gave, asking, "But if the world is burdened by the legacies of violence, then how can one not reject it --- and with that open oneself to the madness of an unjustified right to violence?"[79] T o this all-important question, he gives no response.

Dodd then turns to the problem of responsibility and violence, asking whether a developed concept of responsibility might help in facing the legacy of violence. He takes up Patocka's call for the "solidarity of the shaken," a solidarity that for Patocka is soldered in the experience of war. Dodd's analysis is extremely rich and adds much to the current literature on Patocka's thought, especially his treatment of Patocka's notion of responsibility rooted as it is in demonic sacrifice. Dodd is skeptical of Patocka's position, however, turning to Fanon who is:

> *Sharply critical of the dependency that the colonized have on such activities --- the permissiveness of the circle, of the orgiastic itself, represents for him an enactment of violence that is empty and useless for raising the consciousness of the colonized for the struggle against the colonizers[80].*

Here again Dodd does not take a position. Instead of developing a notion of responsibility rooted in Fanon's rejection of demonic sacrifice, he rephrases Patocka's challenge:

> *We expect too little of violence if we do not
> appreciate the deep potential for disturbance it
> brings to our lives, or can bring; more, we expect
> too little, if we fail to appreciate the possibilities of
> what it sets into motion. This is not an argument
> for embracing violence --- But it is a call to take
> seriously the experience of the extreme as an
> originally source of all meaning[81].*

In the same vein, the reader is left wondering just where Dodd stands. On the one hand he is not presenting an argument for embracing violence, on the other hand, he calls for taking it seriously as the "originary source of all meaning." If the latter is true, then why not embrace violence? This, however, brings to the recall of Merleau-Ponty's unreconciliation of his early and late political works, *Humanism and Terror,* and *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Thus, he is being charged of inconsistent – a certain lack of rigour and dishonesty.

Hannah Arendt on the other hand whose work, *On Violence* starts by responding to the events current at the time particularly the existential issues within the universalities the increasing violence both for and against civil rights for black people, and the rising levels of terrorism in Europe and the US. She upholds that violence is instrumental in nature and as such augments natural strength simply to inflict harm on others for the purpose of promoting a political goal or goals. Arendt argues that the use of violence is disadvantageous to political movements and society in general. She maintains that violence is ultimately counterproductive, that governments that use it to gain power end up actually losing power in the long term. For her, the use of violence runs the risk

of incorporating violence into politics generally and is very likely to bring about a more violent world[82]. But before she says this, though as an alternative philosophical and theoretical framework for the government, she has earlier been engaged with reading of the history of political thought which prompts her to divide political theories into two: those that focus on the question "who rules?" and those that do not. "Who rules?" is connected with an idea that government itself is just the rule of man over man. Politics, on this view, is a matter of commandment and obedience. This might be obedience to men, or obedience to laws, or even obedience to bureaucratic procedures, which is to say to "nobody." Whichever, the temptation is to see "power" as that which ensures the obedience which is commanded. Further, it is tempting to see violence as one form of that power[83]. Violence, power and force can be seen as "the same" because they have "the same function"[84]. However, there is, Arendt insists, an alternative tradition of political thought, according to which there is no continuity between obedience to the command of a person and "obedience" to laws[85]. Rather, there is a radical discontinuity, "Obedience" to laws is not so much obedience as support for the laws, the enactment of the citizen's consent to the laws. And this support is never unquestioning – unlike the "automatic" sense in which I might submit to the person with a gun who takes my handbag[86].

Arendt goes on to say that power relies on numbers of persons, whereas violence relies on implements. The extreme form of violence is one or a small

number against all (the terrorists, the violent state apparatus); the extreme form of power is all against one[87]. Often people complain that a small number or a single person have spoiled things, by disrupting a class, or a meeting, or a way of life. They are blamed for their aggression, or violence, or unreasonableness. But such events should be interpreted as the majority refusing to use its power to stop the so-called aggressor. Indeed, they are effectively taking sides with the minority[88]. Power is the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. To say that someone is "in power" is more properly to say that someone is empowered by a certain number of people[89]. Individuals, she says, have strength, which can be deployed instrumentally. But violence with its implements, multiplies natural strength[90]. She, therefore, maintains that power, unlike strength and unlike violence, cannot be thought of instrumentally. It is not a means to an end, but is the condition that enables people to think and act. Against the run of the Weberian view, Arendt argues that it follows from this alternative philosophical and theoretical framework that no government based exclusively on the means of violence has ever existed. And she infers from this that power is the essence of all government, and violence is not[91].

However, in the third section of her book, Arendt argues that although violence can never be legitimate, it may nevertheless sometimes be justified[92]. This is because there is no political solution to every problem, sometimes the only solution to injustice or horror is the violent one. She thus claims that there are two contexts in which violence is presented as justifiable. First, it may be

justified as a response to extreme injustice[93]. Secondly, it may be justified insofar as it opens up the space for politics[94]. Both of these justifications are bound up with a sense of violence as having a certain kind of effectiveness, and also being appropriate in certain contexts. Violence can make things happen in the immediate sense. It is also the right response, for instance, to the victimization of the innocent. Arendt argues that the use of non-violence as a tactic requires, as its pre-requisite, that there already be some space of politics and therefore for power. She suggests further that Ghandi's campaign could not have been effective had he been faced with a more purely anti-political regime, such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia[95]. In the latter context, violence would be necessary in order to make politics possible. Besides, violence itself is "rational to the extent that it is effective in reacting the end that must justify it"[96]. However, Arendt is neither pro-nor anti-violence. She believes that all violence requires justification. Violence is justified when the end or outcome is direct and immediate, not when it is substitutive or distant. Glorified violence for some vague and distant end is different from shooting someone who is about to shoot you. For Arendt, the idea that the "ends justifies the means" is often not a suitable justification. The distant end is totally unknowable – thus, means with, always overwhelm ends. Since the end of human action, in contrast with the products of fabrication, she says, can never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals.

In whatever way, the two philosophers James Doddy and Hannah Arendt are not able to give us the real picture of their stand, whether to welcome violence in toto as Maurice Merleau-Ponty advocates to achieve our social and political goals or to go by non-violence. Mohandas Karamchand Mahatma Gandhi who is one of the chief proponents of non-violence has never abandoned the practice of non-violence as a technique to effect social and political change. Unlike Merleau-Ponty in his introduction to *Humanism and Terror* who discusses the deontological ethics of liberalism and argues that such an ethical system is simply not realistic. It could be to Merleau-Ponty as some think that man's violent behaviour is phylogenetically based. Mahatma Gandhi argues rather that man's unique position in evolution as a creature endowed with "reason, discrimination and free-will" and "moral instincts and moral institutions" make the transfer of laws from animal behaviour to man particularly hazardous[97]. For Gandhi non-violence is "the law of the human race."[98]. This law he expresses thus: that man knows from "his innermost convictions" that he can subdue "desire, anger, ignorance, malice and other passions" that lead to violence. "Conquest of one's passions --- is not super-human, but human"[98]. Gandhi points his finger to one important aspect of violence, viz, that violence is the outgrowth of the passional side of man which can be checked and therefore violence is not instinctive[99].

Secondly, man, for Gandhi is both an individual-reality and a communal-reality and it is love, not pressure or coercion that binds men into a community.

Our newspaper constantly portrays a gum tale of violence; but such violence for Gandhi is an aberration, for millions live in peace and brotherhood. "History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul --- Soul-force, being natural, is noted in history"[100].

Thirdly, Gandhi recognizes that frustration of human needs and aspirations as well as the powerful modern state are causes of violence.

With Gandhi, however, the notion of nonviolence attained a special status. He not only theorized on it, he adopted nonviolence as a philosophical and an ideal way of life. He made us understand that the philosophy of nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak; it is a weapon, which can be tried by all. For nonviolence is far superior to violence and that the votary of nonviolence is more courageous than he who resorts to violence as a means of resolving human conflicts.

Nonviolence was not Gandhi's invention. He is however called the father of nonviolence because according to Mark Shepard, "He raised nonviolent action to a level never before achieved"[101]. Krishna Kripalani again asserts "Gandhi was the first in Human history to extend the principle of nonviolence from the individual to social and political plane[102]. While scholars were talking about an idea without a name or a movement, Gandhi is the person w ho came

up with the name and brought together different related ideas under one concept: Satyagraha.

Gandhi saw violence pejoratively and also identified two forms of violence; passive and physical. The practice of passive violence is a daily affair, consciously and unconsciously. It is again the fuel that ignites the fire of physical violence. Gandhi understands violence from its Sanskrit root, "*himsa*", meaning injury. In the midst of hyper violence, Gandhi teaches that the one who possess nonviolence is blessed. Blessed is the man who can perceive the law of *ahimsa (nonviolence)* in the midst of the raging fire of himsa all around him. We bow in reverence to such a man by his example. The more adverse the circumstances around him, the intense grow his longing for deliverance from the bondage of flesh which is a vehicle of himsa---[103]. Gandhi objects to violence because it perpetuates hatred. When it appears to do 'good', the good is only temporary and cannot do any good in the long run. A true nonviolence activist accepts violence on himself without inflicting it on another. This is heroism. When Gandhi says that in the course of fighting for human rights, one should accept violence and self-suffering, he does not applaud cowardice. Cowardice for him is "the greatest violence, certainly, far greater than bloodshed and the like that generally go under the name of violence[104]. For Gandhi, perpetrators of violence (whom he refers to as criminals), are products of social disintegration. Gandhi feels that violence is not a natural tendency of humans. It is a learned experience. There is need for a perfect weapon to combat

violence and this is nonviolence. Gandhi understands nonviolence from its Sanskrit root *"Ahimsa". Ahimsa* is just translated to mean nonviolence in English, but it implies more than just avoidance of physical violence. Ahimsa implies total nonviolence, neither physical violence, nor passive violence. Gandhi translates Ahimsa as love. This is explained by Arun Gandhi in an interview thus; {He (Gandhi) said ahimsa means love. Because if you have love towards somebody, and you respect that person, then you are not going to do any harm to that person"[105]. According to Gandhi, nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is a living force of power and no one has been or will ever be able to measure its limits or it's extent.

Gandhi's nonviolence is the search for truth. Truth is the most fundamental aspect in his philosophy of nonviolence. His whole life has been "experiments of truth". It is in this course of his pursuit of truth that Gandhi discovers nonviolence, which he further states in his Autobiography thus, "Ahimsa is the basis of the search for truth. I am realizing that this search is in vain, unless it is founded on ahimsa as the basis"[106]. He comments that truth and nonviolence are as old as the hills. For nonviolence to be strong and effective, he says, it must begin with the mind, without which it will be nonviolence of the weak and cowardly. A coward is a person who lacks courage when facing a dangerous and unpleasant situation and tries to avoid it. A man cannot practice ahimsa and at the same time be a coward. True nonviolence is dissociated from

fear. Gandhi feels that possession of arms is not only cowardice but also lack of fearlessness or courage. Gandhi stresses this when he says:

> *I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice but true nonviolence is impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness[107].*

In the face of violence and injustice, Gandhi considers violent resistance preferable to cowardly submission. There is hope that a violent man may someday be nonviolent, but there is no room for a coward to develop fearlessness.

As the world's pioneer in nonviolent theory and practice, Gandhi unequivocally states that nonviolence contained a universal applicability. In his letter to Daniel Oliver in Hammana Lebanon on the 11th of 1937 Gandhi uses these words: "I have no message to give except this that there is no deliverance for any people on this earth or for all the people of this earth except through truth and nonviolence in every walk of life without any exceptions"[108].

As a result of this, Gandhi promises "deliverance" through nonviolence for oppressed peoples without exception. Speaking primarily with regards to nonviolence as a libratory philosophy in this passage, Gandhi emphasizes the power of nonviolence to emancipate spiritually and physically. It is a science and of its own can lead one to pure democracy.

In a similar way, the concept "*Satyagraha*" is not left out as it is also the center of Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of nonviolence. The Sanskrit noun-"Satyagraha" literally means devotion to truth, remaining firm on the truth and resisting untruth actively but nonviolently. Since the only way for Gandhi getting to the truth is by nonviolence (love), it follows that Satyagraha implies an unwavering search for the truth using nonviolence. Satyagraha according to Michael Nagler literally means "clinging to truth". And that was exactly how Gandhi understood it:

> *Clinging to the truth that we are all one under the skin, that there is no such thing as a "win/lose" confrontation because all our important interests are really the same, that consciously or not every single person wants unity and peace with every other[109].*

Put succinctly, Satyagraha means "truth force", "soul force" or as Martin Luther King Jr. would call it "Love in action" To this end, Gandhi summarizes that Satyagraha is a moral weapon and the stress is on soul force over physical force. He maintains that it aims at winning the enemy through love and patient suffering. It aims at winning over an unjust law, not at crushing, punishing, or taking revenge against the authority, but to convert and heal it. Though it started as a struggle for political rights, Satyagraha became in the long run a struggle for individual salvation, which could be achieved through love and self-sacrifice. Satyagraha is meant to overcome all methods of violence. He explained in a letter to Lord Hunter that Satyagraha is a movement based

entirely upon truth. It replaces every form of violence, direct and indirect, veiled and unveiled and whether in thought, word or deed.

The foregoing, however, has both implicitly and explicitly unfolds the positions and implications of Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy. Different opinions about violence and non-violence have been examined and synthesized. Hence, the fact remains that one cannot deny the existence of violence in any form. But how could one achieve everlasting freedom and/or peace of mind in one's lifespan? Could that be through violence or nonviolence? For Merleau-Ponty, restraining from violence is in itself an act of violence. Or should it be through revolution? What are the conditions of "revolution", if any, under which violence is acceptable or even necessary? What is the nature of freedom? If freedom must be purchased, at what cost? Hence, as these questions are yet to be properly addressed, this work, above all, recognizes the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's political ethos (especially as it affects the Nigerian democracy) which has not been addressed by the above scholars. This work, therefore, tries to fill remarkably his relevant position to turn of the hectic century conditions and events neglected by these scholars.

Endnotes

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*; Translated by John O'Neill, Becon Press, 1969, p. 153.

2. Garry Potter, *Humanism and Terror: Merleau-Ponty's Marxism*, Garry Potter and Cultural Logic, ISSN 1097-3087, 2008, p. 2.

3. Ibid; p. 3

4. Ibid, p. 5

5. Ibid, p. 11

6. Ibid, p. 13

7. Ibid, p. 15

8. Ibid.

9. Paul Ricoeur, *Homage to Merleau-Ponty* in Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy, Transforming the Tradition, edited by: Bernard Flynn, Wayne J. Froman and Robert Villier, State University of New York, 2009, p. 19.

10. Ibid,

11. Ibid, p, 20

12. Ibid, p. 21

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14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.*Translated by colin Smith (The New 2002 edition). London: Routledge, 1962. Pp. 411-12.

15. Ibid, p. 122.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF MERLEAU-PONTY'S POLITICAL

PHILOSOPHY

3.1   Life and Times of Merleau-Ponty

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was born on 14th March, 1908, before the First World War at Rochefort-Sur-Mer, Charent-Maritime in France. As with many of his generation, Merleau-Ponty lost his father along with his brother and sister at the war in 1913 when he was five years old[1]. As such, he was brought up in Paris by his widowed mother. This situation of growing up without a father was one which he shared with Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and was indeed common throughout Europe after the first World War[2]. In Merleau-Ponty's case, despite the absence of a father, this period seems to have been one of exceptional happiness and intimacy, and he carried the memory of it throughout his life:

> *It is at the present time that I realized that the first twenty five years of my life were a prolonged childhood, destined to be followed by a painful break leading eventually to independence. If I take myself back to those years as I actually lived them and as I carry them within me, my happiness at that time cannot be explained in terms of introduction, the sheltered atmosphere of the parental home; the world itself was more beautiful, things were more fascinating[3].*

After attending Lycée, Merleau-Ponty gained admission in 1926 to the Ecole Normale Superieure (where he briefly encountered Sartre, though they were not

then friends). He graduated in 1930 and went to teach at Lycee in Beauvais; in 1935 he returned to Paris to a junior position at the Ecole Normale. During this period he was working on his first doctoral thesis, a critical survey of psychological theory with special emphasis on Gestalt theory. This was published as *The Structure of Behaviour* in 1942, during the German occupation of France[4]. In 1939 – 40 Merleau-Ponty had served briefly in the French army as a second lieutenant, but after the German victory he was demobilized and returned to Paris. There he taught at a Couple of Lycees while writing a second, higher, doctoral thesis, as the French academic system then required of anyone who wanted to pursue an academic career in the University system. In this work Merleau-Ponty continued the emphasis on psychology of his previous book, but he now approached the subject with a perspective informed by 'phenomenology', the philosophical method which had been initiated at the start of the century by the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl, whose unpublished manuscripts Merleau-Ponty had been to study at Louvain shortly before the war. This second thesis was published in 1945, soon after the liberation of France, as *Phenomenology of Perception*. This is Merleau-Ponty's major, and enduring, contribution to philosophy.

During the German occupation of France Merleau-Ponty initially joined Sartre, with whom he now became a close friend, in a quixotic attempt during 1941 to constitute an   intellectual resistance movement ('Socialism and Freedom') distinct from the forces of the communists and the Gaullists[5]. This

movement collapsed at the end of the year, largely because of its ineffectiveness, and Merleau-Ponty and Sartre then withdrew to write their major works of philosophy (Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* dates from this period)[6]. Later in the war Sartre and Merleau-Ponty joined Camus in the group which published the resistance paper *Combat,* though they took little active part in the resistance. Nonetheless, the experience of the German occupation forced Merleau-Ponty to think much harder about politics than he had previously done[7], and at the end of 1944 Merleau-Ponty was one of the group of leading intellectuals, led by Sartre and also including de Beauvoir and Aron, who founded the influential political journal *Les Temps Modernes*. Merleau-Ponty then helped Sartre edit the journal until 1950 when their different political judgments about communism made continued collaboration impossible.

After the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945 Merleau-Ponty's academic career progressed quickly. In 1945 he was appointed a professor at Lyon; in 1950 he became Professor of Psychology at the Sorbonne in Paris; and then in 1952 he was appointed to the most prestigious position for a French philosopher, the chair in philosophy at the College de France, a position which he held until his unexpected early death in 1961. During this period he published three collections of essays: *Sense and Non-Sense* (1948) which brings together his early post- 1945 essays, of which most are about Marxism and Politics[8], *Humanism and Terror* (1947), his first, political work which deals with an examination of justifications for violence within

communism in the wake of the Moscow trials. *The Adventures of the dialectic* (1955) which deals with his break with Sartre and includes his later thoughts about 'Western' Marxism[9]; finally, *Signs* (1960) which contains some new philosophical work, mainly on language, together with further political essays[10]. After his death it became apparent that Merleau-Ponty had been working on a major new monograph. This had originally been intended as a study of language and truth which would develop themes from the earlier writings under the title "The Origin of Truth"; but as the work progressed Merleau-Ponty found himself drawn back to some of the themes concerning perception that he had addressed in his philosophy, and the manuscript that was published posthumously in 1964 bears Merleau-Ponty's later working title, *The Visible and the Invisible*[11].

Above all, Merleau-Ponty died suddenly of a stroke in 1961 at age of 53, apparently while preparing for a class on *Descartes*. He was buried in Pere Lachaise Cementery in Paris. After his death Merleau-Ponty's reputation in France declined quickly as French philosophers turned away from French existential phenomenology to the study of German philosophy, especially to the works of Heidegger and the 'masters of suspicion' – Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. His former pupils especially in the United States preserved his reputation and ensured the translation into English of all his major works.

3.2   Merleau-Ponty and the French Revolution: The Historical Setting

In the wake of World War II and the Occupation, Merleau-Ponty like many intellectuals at that time was extremely attached to Marxism. The aspect of Marxists texts which fascinated him was the conception of the proletariat as a universal class, a notion taken from Hegel and transformed by Marx, especially by the young Marx. The quasi-scholastic readings of Marxists texts that abounded at this time held no fascination for Merleau-Ponty. His Marxism involved a historical commitment. For him, the historical incarnation of Marxism was the October Revolution; his 1947 *Humanism and Terror* (HT) is the work of a philosopher judging a revolution. In some respects, it is reminiscent of Kant's reflection on the French Revolution, arguing that the execution of the king is a crime for which there is no forgiveness either in this world or the next, he notes that the enthusiasms for a republican form of government, along with 'the recognition of man by man' that the revolution elicits, is a sign of human progress. Nonetheless, it is not a proof of progress because teleological judgments are reflective judgments not determinate ones. To the question "why must we choose to view human history as if it were moving in the direction of progress?" Kant responds, in Perpetual Peace and Other Essays (PPOE), that otherwise the sight of human history would become unbearable. In "On the Old Proverb: This may be true in Theory but is of no Practical Use", he writes:

> *--- in the long run it [human history] becomes a farce. If the actors do not become weary of it, since they are fools, then the spectator will when, after one or another act, he has sufficient grounds for assuming that the never-ending pace will be eternally the same"[12].*

This is to say that the spectator will simply conclude that human history is nothing but "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

Given the tenor of the times, Merleau-Ponty looked unflinchingly, at least relatively unflinchingly, at the level of violence in the USSR, for example, the forced labor, the Moscow trials, the mass executions and so forth. His question was the following: "Can we still see signs of proletarian universalism of a violence which is self-liquidating, a humanist assumption of responsibility for violence in the acts of the revolutionarises?" His response was "no" at least not at the moment. To the question: "Should we reject Marxism and search for an alternative theory?", here against the answer was "no". His reason for this responses is strikingly similar to that of Kant, but to Merleau-Ponty, unlike for Kant, there is no "noumenal Course of history", no providential ordering of history. Rather there is the Marxist Conception of history as fuled by class conflict and finalized toward a classless society.

But in 1947 Merleau-Ponty (though a non-communist at the moment) still has in mind that France and Europe would not have to become a satellite either to America or the Soviet Union. The tripartist tangles of the Communists, Socialists, and Christian Democrats have been such that the hopes of the

resistance for immediate revolutionary change after the war had withered away. So many difficult conditions came to be as the introduction of the Marshall plan in June of the same year, condemned by Molotov's walkout on the Paris Conference in July hastened the breakdown of tripartism. Suspicion of the anti-Soviet implications of the Marshall Plan caused many of the Left to look toward a neutralist position for Europe, but made them uncertain whether to build this position around the Socialist Party, which had failed so far to take any independent line, or the Communist Party which could be expected to follow a Soviet line. But the drift was toward a pro-Western, anti-Soviet European integration led by the center and right elements of the French Third Force including the Gaullists.

Moreover, the intellectual French Left was in an impossible situation which no combination of Marxism or existentialism seemed capable of remedying. French capitalism was bad, but American capitalism was even more anathema to the left because it was in the rudest of health internationally. After the same time, French socialism was anything but independent and its chances looked no better with Communist help. In such a situation, it was impossible to be an anti-communist if this meant being pro-American, witnessing the Americanization of Europe, and foreswearing the communists who had fought bravely in the resistance. On the other hand, it was not possible to be a communist if this meant being blind to the hardening of the Soviet regime and becoming a witness to the communist brand of imperialism which broke so

many Marxist minds. Thus, many on the Left as well as the Right were unable to bear such ambiguity and therefore welcome any sign to show clearly which side to support, even if it meant a "conversion" to the most extreme left and right positions.

The Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* came to reveal the account of the Moscow trials of the 1930's which was presented as fiction in 1946. Along with his argumentation in The Yogi and the Commissar, Koestler's novel was taken as the expression, and the justification of disillusion and inwardness, a mood then pervasive among Western intellectuals. *The God That Failed*, a book of essays about leaving the Communist Party, appeared in the same period, numbering among its contributors (Andre Gide, Richard Wright, and Ignazio Silone), as well as Koestler. Certainly in America, as well as in France and England, Koestler seemed to speak for those whose repudiation of Stalinism broadened to include a repudiation of the left-wing opposition to Stalin, and ended by repudiating Marxist politics altogether. Yet the nature of the relation between communism and the French intellectuals has not been exhausted by any of the political, psychological, or sociological studies which have tackled it. "*Darkness at Noon* may have killed communism for many people, but it also produced converts"[13]. But what concerned Merleau-Ponty was not the life of communism as an institution, he was well aware of the changes in communist institutions. He understood that the revolution was learning to live with history. What he wanted to get at was how it had happened that theoretical Marxism had

hardened into the dogma that made the views on history and politics of Koestler's Commissar a plausible account of Marxism. Insofar as Soviet communism was represented in Koestler's portrait and in the relation that came with the Cominform campaign against Tito, the Rajk-Kosov trials, and the Soviet labour camps, Merleau-Ponty was also a witness to the disenchantment of European communists. Yet at the same time in *humanism and Terror* he is engaged in the creative interpretation of theoretical Marxism which was taking hold in France just when communism was beginning to lose its grip on the intellectuals.

However, it is worthy of note that earlier, in the years immediately following the war, he was not just a humanistically inclined Marxist, but a committed, if critical, "fellow traveler" of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Soviet Union. By 1950, things had changed, and for two reasons. First, reports had begun to emerge from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) concerning the scale and brutality of the Soviet concentration camp system. Second, North Korea's invasion of the South in June 1950 showed that the communist regimes of the East could be as aggressive and destabilizing as the United States and other Western colonialist powers. Both developments had a moderating effect on Merleau-Ponty's political thought. As Sartre later wrote, his own (in the end, temporary) conversion to communism was mirrored by Merleau-Ponty's own conversion from it, and indeed from Marxism and revolutionary politics altogether: "Each of us was conditioned, but in opposite

directions. Our slowly accumulated disgust made the one discover, in an instant, the horrors of Stalinism, and the other, that of his own class"[14]. Merleau-Ponty lost faith in communist practice, Marxian theory, and revolutionary rhetoric as ways of genuinely grasping and dealing with the complexities and ambiguities of modern life.

Merleau-Ponty's thought was always holistic. He regarded the world, ourselves, and our thoughts and experiences as somehow unified and coherent, and his argumentative style invariably involved a kind of reconciling strategy of breaking down and looking behind and beneath familiar conceptual dichotomies – sensation and judgment, inner and outer, mental and physical, mind and world, body and environment. Merleau-Ponty took much the same approach to social and historical phenomena, persistently questioning such seemingly easy and obvious distinctions as those between self and the other, individual and society, morality and politics, liberty and equality, principle and practice.

And yet the significance of that approach remained obscure and problematic in his early political writings, emerging more clearly and coherently as he became increasingly disenchanted not just with the direction communism was taking in the East but with Marx's theory of history itself. Marxism seemed to promise a nuanced view of social reality, combining an account of the material constraints on life with an acknowledgement of freedom, hence without lapsing into either objectivism or subjectivism, determinism or voluntarism, realism or idealism.

Only when the tyranny of Stalinism and the sterility of official Marxist doctrine became clear to him in 1950, however, did Merleau-Ponty begin to see that Marxism itself, far from escaping or resolving those crippling dichotomies, was fatally impaled upon them. The dialectic was not unfolding, advancing, and transcending itself in historical progress, but collapsing, exposing communism as a fraud, and forcing its intellectual apologists into ever more absurd extremes of either historical determinism, which remained the official part line, or utopian fantasies of revolution, as in Sartre's defense of the PCF and the Soviet Union as legitimate because – but only because – they were the only effective vehicles of proletarian action.

That hopeless dilemma between freedom and determinism is not an accident of twentieth-century European politics, Merleau-Ponty now argued, but the inevitable consequence of Marxism itself, which in truth never had at its disposal the theoretical resources for reconciling human beings with history. Trying to be a Marxist in the middle of the twentieth century, Merleau-Ponty concludes, is as much an anachronism as trying to be a Platonist or a Cartesian. "Are you or are you not a Cartesian? The question does not make much sense"[15]. Like Plato's dialogues and Descartes's Meditations, Marx's works have become classics in the humanist tradition, they pose essential questions and offer deep insights of enduring philosophical significance, but they are no more keys for understanding contemporary political life than the texts of ancient and medieval metaphysics are tools for the advancement of modern science.

Actual political and social history have "so completely shifted the perspectives of proletarian revolution that there is no longer much more reason to preserve these perspectives and to force the facts into them than there is to place them in the context of Plato's Republic"[16].

Merleau-Ponty is not remembered for developing any innovative social or political theory. He was a Marxist in the 1940s, but he made no original contribution to Marxian accounts of the technological causes of historical change, the economic foundations of social practices and political institutions, or the ethics of capitalism. By the early 1950s he had abandoned Marxism and become a kind of liberal leftist, but again he added nothing new to the philosophical or political theory of liberalism. What is new and interesting in his political writings is not their substantive theoretical content, but their attempt to extend phenomenological insights beyond the individual into the public sphere, beyond the personal realm of perceptual experience into the impersonal structures of collective action and social life. The evolution of Merleau-Ponty's political thought, not only his migration from Marxism to liberalism but also his growing disenchantment with the pro-Soviet sympathies of friends and colleagues like Sartre and Beavoir, are best understood against the background of this troubled effort to generalize and expand phenomenological inquiry into practical and discursive contexts to which it may be fundamentally unsuited.

3.3   The Birth of Merleau-Ponty's Marxism

The interest in Marxism starts very early with Merleau-Ponty. References to philosophical issues in historical materialism occur in the *phenomenology of perception* as well as his first post war writings on politics. Indeed, his phenomenology, with its accent on intersubjectivity and the natural world, is, superficially at least, more compatible with the Marxian theory than other brands of phenomenology, including that of Sartre.

Ironically, Merleau-Ponty develops his Marxism along lines that could not always be reconciled with his phenomenology. In fact, the two principal sources of his interpretation of Marxism – Lukác's neo-Hegelian Marxism (as elaborated in History and Class Consciousness) and Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenology of perception - were implicitly in conflict on a number of points. On the one hand, his phenomenology of perception prompts him to view history as ambiguous and to approach man's insertion in the social order as problematic. From this perspective, he raises doubts about the assumptions Marxism made about the rationality of human action; as a consequence, he was inclined to view the historical programme of Marxism as a gamble rather than a forgone conclusion. He finally leads to reconsider the process of politicization, and to redescribe, in the *Phenomenology of perception,* the acquisition of a critical "class consciousness". On the other hand, though, Merleau-Ponty elaborates a form of Marxism derived from Lukacs, Hegel, the Husserl of the Crisis, and the young Marx – the Marx who, in his "Toward the Critique of

Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," portrays the proletariat as a material force for "the total redemption of humanity." From Lukacs he adds an understanding of the proletariat as the potentially unified subject-object of history, the demiurge of Absolute knowledge appearing within human prehistory and transcending the fractured conditions of capitalism toward the future of communism; from Hegel, he borrows the dialectic of mutual recognition, and places its resolution at the end of history. When wed to Husserl's idea of an historical *telos* immanent to subjectivity, and to Marx's original depiction of the proletariat as the heart of human emancipation, these convergent strands in Merleau-Ponty's thought encouraged him to identify the proletariat with man's alienated essence, and to seek in proletarian politics a virtually apocalyptic class consciousness aiming at a more humane society, where men might treat each other as ends rather than means.

Such an essentialist vision of the proletariat and its historical mission contradict the Chief import of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, with its emphasis on the contingency and open-ended nature of meaning: it also places a burden of true consciousness upon the proletariat that his tentative recasting of the process of politicization in the final section of the *Phenomenology of Perception* should have warned him against. While he eventually abandons the essentialist concept of the proletariat, he does so not so much because he found the notion at odds with his own philosophy, because he feels that the essentialist notion has been empirically discredited by the events

of the postwar period. Such a result entails a critique of Marxian politics as unrealistic; yet he provides few clues as to what form a new political understanding might take. Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Marxism therefore remains suspended between two fundamentally different ways of portraying society, history, and the possibilities for rational action they afforded. On one level, his oven Marxism can be identified with his fluctuating estimation of the proletariat and its ability to fulfill its rational humanistic mission; what, in *Humanism and Terror*, he has provisionally affirmed that is, the possibility of an authentically proletarian politics according to the essentialist model which he claims to have remained is what he eventually come to disavow in *Adventures of the Dialectic*. But on another level, his early Marxism should be seen as promising a radical theory revised on the basis of his phenomenology of perception. This promise found its issue, not in Merleau-Ponty's overt Marxism, but rather in his mature discussions of language and the being of social institutions.

Where the "Hegelian" Merleau-Ponty portrays the proletariat as the potential vessel of an Absolute human meaning, the "phenomenological" Merleau-Ponty describes the proletariat as an inchoate yet coherent conjunction of individuals, each helping, however tacitly, to sustain a shared sense of community and purpose, the significance of which always remains open to new interpretations. The "Hegelian" Merleau-Ponty posits a rational end of history

as a condition of moral coherence. The "phenomenological" Merleau-Ponty by contrast localizes the ultimate rationale of history in individual action.

These agents of history were neither creatures of explicit judgment, nor were rarely unreflective prisoners of fate either. What the Hegelian presumed, albeit with doubts – a conceivably univocal coherence governing all of human history - the phenomenologist undermined by anchoring history and meaning in the ineluctable amphibolies of human existence – equivocations and ambiguities perpetually clarified, but never surmounted.

3.4 Merleau-Ponty's Transition from Perception to History

In his theory of perception, Merleau-Ponty minimized the distance between perception and history. In both areas, similar issues arose, such as the relation of consciousness to the objective world; such similarities enables him to draw analogies between problems of historical understanding and the structure of human perception in general.

History like perception, suggests a logic in contingency, a reason in unreason; historical forces, like perceptual figures, only come actively into focus through a human endeavor that, by actualizing them, define them.

> *There is history if there is a logic in contingency, a reason in unreason, if there is a historic perception that, like the other, leaves in the background what does not come to the foreground grasps the lines of force at their inception, and through achieving them actively, traces them. This comparison should not be understood as an organicism or timid finalism,*

> *but rather as a reference to the fact that all symbolic systems – perception, language and history only become what they are when they need to become what they are, in order to be taken up in the human endeavor[17].*

Like perception, history could never be construed accurately as a mechanical play of mute factors, whether economic or geographic. History, as surely as perceptual objects, exists only in relation to the individuals that assume it, with a more or less clear consciousness. More than a struggle of powers, history represents a play of meanings: both history and perception are irreducibly significant activities which establish a meaningful world.

Merleau-Ponty depicts history as a field of transindividual meanings, a system – a vast repository of frequently contradictory significations. These generalized meanings, which comprise traditions of discourse, define our situation as human beings; although we confer significance upon a personal history, our historical environment itself embodies a significance of its own, represents in customs, habits, and explicit moral prescriptions. The interplay of particular and general meanings mark the individual's engagement in a social world. Where Sartre has remarked that man is condemned to freedom, Merleau-Ponty argues that man is condemned to meaning[18].

His emphasis on history as a symbolic system naturally aligns him with the antireductionist trend in Marxism. Repudiating a reduction of cultural to economic phenomena, or a reduction of history to a conflict of class interests, he found the essence of Marxism in its treatment of economic and cultural history

as two indivisible moments of a single process. Similarly, labor, the central concept of Marxism, has to be viewed not merely as the production of riches, but also as "the activity by which man projects a human environment around himself and goes beyond the natural data of his life"[19]. The real subject of history is not man considered simply as a factor in production, but the whole man, man engaged in symbolic activities as well as manual labor, "man as creativity--- trying to endow his life with form"[20]. Merleau-Ponty encounters such subjects during World War II in the French Resistance, which "offered the rare phenomenon of an historical action which remained personal"[21]. It was precisely this intersection of history with his personal intentions that Merleau-Ponty fought to preserve within Marxism.

3.5 Merleau-Ponty's conception of Man and the Institution

In what way does the individual participate in common tasks and relations, and how does the particular take shape through shared meanings and behavior? How does social structures inform individual behaviour? What actually is the being of the social world? The above questions are the concern of Merleau-Ponty as he approaches the social world from an ontological standpoint, just like Sartre. He feels that the problem of the specific "existential modality" of the social world is "at one" with all other problems of transcendence: whether discussing the impingement of the natural world on perception, or the influence of the economic world on consciousness, the

question remains: "How can I be open to phenomena which transcend me and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that I take them up and live them?"[22]

Merleau-Ponty finds his original social philosophy on an interpretation of man as a "being in the world". This being is a creature of significant structures; the world man inhabited is meaningfully formed, not only by language and symbols, but also by perception and behaviour. He uses this image of man, in accordance with Heidegger, to criticize rationalist accounts of consciousness as "constituting". More than a perpetually renewed constitutive act, the "me" of personhood has to be viewed as a relatively durable institution, "the field of my becoming" with a history of its own.

Merleau-Ponty's work, though, lards with metaphors, remains characteristically oblique on the point that his thought is often more suggestive than substantial. He vividly hopes that his notion of the institution will surmount the difficulties surrounding the idealist concept of the constituting ego, particularly in its application to the social realm. Where the constituted objectivity of idealism, as a pure reflection of the ego's acts, render the existence of other transcendental egos suspect, "instituted objectivity", claims Merleau-Ponty, arose precisely as a "hinge" between self and others, since its being qua institution resided in a mutuality of recognition. This notion of "institution" has applications beyond the description of consciousness. In Merleau-Ponty's hands, the concept of the institution becomes a pivot for interpreting social reality. His definition of the term is broad, he holds:

> *Each institution is a symbolic system that the subject takes over and incorporates as a style of functioning, as a global configuration, without having any need to conceive it at all --- One understands here by institution those events of an experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a sequence of other experiences will have meaning, forming a comprehensible connection or history-in other words, those events which deposit a meaning in me, not by an appeal to survival and residue, but as an appeal to coherence, the requirement of a future[23].*

Institutions, in effect, provide contexts for coherent action. As meaningful structures, they prompt behaviour not internal determination, by embodying norms and rules, by proffering roles. Neither thing nor ego, the institution represents a mixed milieu. While the norms of an institution afford more or less compelling grounds for behaviour, they in most cases do not necessitate behaviour.

Merleau-Ponty takes this notion of the institution to be central to a phenomenologically clarified social theory. It also points the way to a defensible interpretation of Marxism. Both the Marxism of the young Marx and "Western Marxism" in 1923 lacks the means of expressing the inertia of the infrastructure.--- In order to understand simultaneously the logic of history and its detours, its meaning and what opposes it, they have to understand its specific domain: the institution. The institution develops, not according to causal laws like those governing nature, but always in relation to what it signifies, not according to eternal ideas, but always by subsuming under its laws more or less

fortuitous events and letting itself be changed by what they suggest. Torn by all these contingencies, repaired by the involuntary acts of men who are caught up in its but must live, this web can be called neither spirit nor matter, but only history. This order of "things" indicating "relations among persons", susceptible to all those weighty conditions that link it to the order of nature, yet open to all that personal life can invent, is, in modern language, the domain of symbolism. Marx's thought should have found its way out in it[24].

By implication, Merleau-Ponty here posits a sense of necessity tied to mutable norms rather than nature. While norms apply to an agent conventionally, and thus in a sense contingently, institutional norms nonetheless represented de facto compulsions, and thus embodied a certain necessity, a necessity effectuated by the continued observance of convention. If history always remain open to transformation, if institutions can be modified, it is equally true that history carries the conventional weight of custom and habit – the inertia of institutions., it is this inertia that finds the social domain Marx called "second nature".

Language assumes a paradigmatic position in Merleau-Ponty's account. In contrast to Sartre, who approaches the phenomenon of sociability through the alienating gaze of other people, Merleau-Ponty portrays language as the social institution per excellence; language comprises an open field of communication which accommodates self-expression., equipped with its own rules and structure, language to be sure presents an institutional compulsion that the

speaking subject of necessity submits to; yet language also exists as individual speech, speech which can be spoken as though yet unspoken, speech that can sustain, re-create, and, in the case of poetry, overturn conventions as well as conform to them. He draws a parallel between language and other social institutions. He even hints that such parallels are relevant to Marxism: "The reciprocal relations between the will to express and the means of expression correspond to those between the productive forces and the forms of production"[25]. But usually he contends himself with remarking that "history is no more external to us than language"[26]. Like language, history comprises a more or less confining field of possibilities for expression, a field nevertheless open, within limits, to creative intervention. A picture of society as a network of meaningful, rule-governed institutions emerged from Merleau-Ponty's account. The proper task of sociology and economics lay in disclosing the rules informing social and economic action and in tracing the implications and consequences of these rules.

This portrayal of society and the tasks of a science augment his view on human behavior. As social action, the individual's behaviour proceeds in reference to institutionalized rules, norms, and principles; such rules supply reasons for, and warranted interpretations of behaviour. But the institutional grounds of social action can not be treated mechanistically as natural causes of action: the individual's assumption (whether coerced or voluntary) of an institutional framework alone endows institutional norms with any force in a

person's life. Although such social inquiries as sociology and economics may have as their object rule-governed social action, they do not face an object distinguishable by inherent regularities. The regularities of social action are instead bound to time and place: institutional phenomena are never necessary in the sense of Newtonian physics or analytic logic.

In addition, Merleau-Ponty uses his concept of the institution to argue against the idealist view of consciousness as purifiable or somehow extractable from its contingent relationships. If existence can be described as a "permanent act" by which a person assumes empirical conditions for his own ends, then an individual's thoughts and actions always remain implicated in circumstances, both institutional and natural. Merleau-Ponty calls this perpetual involvement in a world the individual's "situation". A field of contact between agent and objects, a person's situation is articulated via a constant interchange of motives and decisions. "Motives", as Merleau-Ponty defines the term, denotes the "situation as fact", circumstances as they constrain and shape action; "the situation as undertaken", circumstances as mastered and transformed by action. As situated, the individual's free acts arise within the context of a unitary world. Neither a juxtaposed assortment of things, nor the intrusion of materiality on an ineffable spirit, a person's situation has to be interpreted as a coherent whole, encompassing social institutions and a personal history as well as nature. Such a view approximates Marx's 1844 description of man as a sentient, suffering being, "a being", as Merleau-Ponty reinterprets Marx, "with a natural and social

situation, but one who is also open, active and able to establish his autonomy on the very ground of his dependence"[27]. The concepts of situation, motive, and decision thus complement Merleau-Ponty's social philosophy of the institution: through such notions, he attempts to comprehend the individual's open-ended dependency, the hallmark of man's finitude, and the meaning of being in a world.

3.6   Merleau-Ponty and the Necessity of Being a Proletarian

The most provocative application of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of social institution occurs not in any of his avowedly political texts but rather in the final pages of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Here he hints at what shapes a phenomenologically revised neo-Marxian theory might assume. His account centers on a nondeterministic, nonessentialist understanding of social class – an understanding implicitly at variance with the neo-Hegelian notion of class Merleau-Ponty himself would deploy, almost contemporaneously, in *Humanism and Terror*.

In the phenomenology, he argues that "one phenomenon releases another, not by means of some objective efficient cause, like those which link together natural events, but by the meaning which it holds out"[28]. The proper avenue for approaching human behavior is therefore meaningful interpretation rather than causal explanation. But "in order to understand an action, its horizon must be restored - not merely the perspective of the actor, but the 'objective' context"[29].

While he consistently denies any purely economic causality, Merleau-Ponty also denies that economic factors are irrelevant to interpreting historical acts. Economics simply does not comprise some independent realm of activity, apart from a wider historical context of human existence. Indeed, precisely because economic acts open onto a broader social horizon, and the individual, as existing in a social world, is already engaged in this realm economic institutions help articulate the subject's situation as surely as political, cultural, and personal institutions. "An existential conception of history does not deprive economic situations of their power of motivation"[30].

However, the *Phenomenology of Perception* elaborates the implications of "the existential modality of the social" for interpreting social relations.

> *What makes me a proletarian is not the economic system or society considered as systems of impersonal forces, but these institutions as I carry them within me and experience them; nor is it an intellectual operation devoid of motive, but my way of being in the world within this institutional framework [31].*

Where classical Marxism has spoken of objective interests, Merleau-Ponty talks of a shared situation. An individual's social situation is not constituted through a series of more or less explicit choices; nor is it thrust upon the individual as an inexorable fate. Rather, from the outset, subjects coexist within a social setting, a coexistence traces out in cooperative tasks and familiar gestures as well as in shared concerns. The individual's existence "as a proletarian" is in the first instance lives through as a common style and content of existence, not

necessarily an explicit convergence of interests. Although the individual's existence is informed by tacit social projects, for the most part his social environment remains preconscious and unreflected. Yet on the day an individual declares himself "a worker", this decision does not appear fortuitous, a radical upsurge of pure volition; on the contrary" "It is prepared by some molecular process, it matures in co-existence before bursting forth into words and being related to objective ends"[32]. An individual's social situation forms an ineluctable element in his meaningful comportment towards a world long before he explicitly assumes that situation. His free decision can affirm or repudiate his proletarian situation, but it can never annul it: the subject can never instantaneously become other. Similarly, to be a worker or a bourgeois is not only to be aware of being one of the other; more crucially, "it was to identify oneself as worker or bourgeois through an implicit or existential project which merges into our way of patterning the world and coexisting with other people"[33]. The privileged status of revolutionary situations resided in their ability to compel men to articulate decisions that would otherwise remain unspoken. "A revolutionary situation, or one of national danger, transforms those preconscious relationships with class and nation, hitherto merely lived through, into the definite taking of a stand; the tacit commitment becomes explicit"[34]. The proletariat here appears as a social collectivity bonded together through shared aspirations and fears as much as a common relation to the means of producing economic wealth. A commonality of existential characterized

individuals from the same class; as a consequence, a social class appears generally as a quasiconscious, amorphous yet hardly arbitrary conjunction of subjects. Their common hopes, fears, desires, and interests only become fully realized when shared situations are articulated by an explicitly sociopolitical awareness and action.

However, Merleau-Ponty's socio-political thought does not just begin and end with his vision of an absolute end of history. For the human subject depicted in the *Phenomenology of Perception* always maintained an openness toward the world, always elaborated a range of meanings, drawing freely from a fund of available significations. His philosophy of the human subject is explicitly manifested in *Humanism and Terror* which is one of his great merits to have elaborated this vision of subjectivity.

Endnotes

1. Thomas Baldwin in *Introduction to Merleau-Ponty's The World of Perception.* New York: Routledge, 2008, P. 2.

2. Sartre's account of his childhood is set out in his autobiographical sketch *Les Mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964; trans. I. Clephane, Words, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967). Camus tells his very different story in his posthumously phblished incomplete novel *Le Premier Homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994; trans. D. Hapgood, The First Man, London: Penguin, 1996).

3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith, (The new 2002 edition). London: Routledge, 1962, p. 403.

4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, Translated by Alden Fisher. Boston MA: Beacon, 1963.

5. Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life*. London: Heinemann, 1987, pp. 164ff.

6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* Translated by Hazel Barnes. London: Methuen, 1958.

7. See especially the essay 'The War has taken place' (1945) in *Sense and Non-Sense*.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense,* Translated by H. Dreyfus and P. Dreyfus. Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Adventures of the Dialectic, Translated by Joseph Bien. Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, Translated by Richard C. McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Claude Lefort (ed.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

12. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Translated by Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis: Hacket publishing Company 1983, p. 68.

13. Maurice Merleau-Ponth, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on t he Communist Problem*, Translated by John O'Neill. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, P. X.

14. Martin C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty Vivant*. Suny Press 1991, p. 195.

15. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, Op. cit., p. 17/11.

16. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Op. Cit, pp. 133-134/93.

17. See Merleau-Ponty, *Resumes de Cours*, Paris, 1968, p. 46.

18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Op. Cit., P XIX.

19. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense,* Op. Cit., Pp. 107-108

20. Ibid, p. 171

21. Ibid, p. 151

22. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Op. Cit, p. 363.

23. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, Translated by John Wild and James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963, pp. 55-56.

24. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic,* Op. Cit, Pp. 64-65.

25. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, Op. Cit, p. 55

26. James M. Edie *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics,* Northwestern University Press, 1964, P. 9.

27. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Op. Cit, P. 130.

28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* OP. Cit., P. 50.

29. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic,* Op. Cit., P. 11

30. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* Op. Cit., P. 172.

31. Ibid., p. 443

32. Ibid., p. 446

33. Ibid., p. 447.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE QUESTION OF REVOLUTION AND VIOLENCE

4.1   The Basis of Merleau-Ponty's Political Thought: A Recapitulation.

The basis of Merleau-Ponty's political thought emanates from the problem of political violence. By what standards can violence and terrorism be judged? From the outset, he rejects any neo-Kantian moral philosophy that would evaluate acts on the basis of intention rather than consequences. Moreover, he feels strongly that any absolute condemnation of violence is unrealistic; violence has ruled all societies to date, and violence in some circumstances may even form a necessary precondition of justice. The question is therefore not the condemnation or approval of violence, but rather a discrimination between "progressive" and "regressive" violence. According to Merleau-Ponty, progressive violence tends to cancel itself out, by aiming at a more humane social order, while the regressive type sustains an exploitative regime in power. Throughout his work – *Humanism and Terror*, he calls revolutionary and "Marxist" violence progressive, because it putatively has a "future of humanism". The argument of *Humanism and Terror* as we shall see below concerns the Moscow Trials and Arthur Koestler's fictional account of them in Darkness at Noon. But the more general problematic of the book involves the evaluation of historical acts as just or unjust, progressive or regressive. Merleau-Ponty's position on these matters proves paradoxical, and

was fraught with problems. Basically, he argues that although the meaning of history necessarily remains ambiguous to its immediate participants, we must nevertheless judge acts on the presumption of a rational historical end, namely, communism. He derives this position by a kind of backward deduction. He accepts the view that any historical act can be meaningful only if history in the large exhibits a coherent meaning. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the justice or injustice of a political act has to be measured against its world-historical consequences, rather than in terms of a subjectively universal ethic or natural law. He further asserts that Marxism comprised the only valid philosophy of history for the twentieth century. The notion of communism as the coherent end of human prehistory, filters through Husserl's concept of a rationally regulative historical *telos*, it thus erected as the ultimate standard for judging historical acts. This variant of Marxism "deciphers events, discovers in them a common meaning and thereby grasps a leading thread which, without dispensing us from fresh analysis at every stage, allows us to orient ourselves toward events--- it seeks --- to offer men a perception of history which would continuously clarify the lines of force and vectors of the present"[1].

Meanwhile, a Marxism that is clear as to the basic drift of history would hardly imply a philosophy of ambiguity. Here Merleau-Ponty's philosophical arguments in the *Phenomenology of Perception* comes into play. As he succinctly put it in *Humanism and Terror*, "There is no science of the future"[2]. The meaning of history deciphers by Marxism remains provisional and

uncertain. No univocal meaning can be guaranteed in history, because (as the phenomenology has already argued at some length) determinism in any predictive sense was incompatible with the essence of human existence, the eventual object of history. Merleau-Ponty therefore affirms that chaos remains as likely an historical outcome as human relations among men (i.e., communism), and it is doubtful about the eventual outcome of history that renders its contemporary meaning ambiguous. Marxism, taking away of a rationalist theology or deterministic support, becomes Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of ambiguity.

Hence, another problem is that if no historical act can be definitively judged unless history evinces a coherent meaning, then the ambiguity of history may plausibly be taken as a signal that historical acts could not in fact be meaningfully judged, at least in any irrevocable sense. He therefore contends that a modified Marxism supplies a more adequate provisional meaning of history than any other available standpoint. Because Marxism embraces the only "universal and human politics", its truth has to be avowed, even though this truth cannot be proven. In this fashion, Merleau-Ponty provisionally justifies revolutionary violence, since such violence aims at creating a humanistic society where each man will recognize every other as a peer: a progressive end of history provides a rational standpoint for judging existent societies and historical acts.

The application to the Moscow Trials of this rather complicated train of argument results in a convoluted defense of terrorism, and specifically of the trials. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the trials as a paradigm of revolutionary violence relies on several problematic empirical premises: that Bukharin and his cohorts in fact formed a political opposition, intentionally or unintentionally, to the policies of the Soviet Union; that this "opposition" represents a genuine threat to the survival of the Soviet Union; and finally that the Soviet Union sustains the hope of socialism. This chain of contentions allows Merleau-Ponty to argue that Bukharin's continuing political independence can reasonably be construed a threat to socialism, the progressive end of history.

He will eventually change his mind about several of these points, but they remain the backbone of his empirical argument in *Humanism and Terror*. Much confusion surrounds his cavalier attitude toward questions of fact. He at one point defends himself by pleading that "we have not examined whether in fact Bukharin led an organizational opposition nor whether the execution of the old Bolsheviks was really indispensable to the order and the national defense of the U.S.S.R"[3] as if such empirical considerations are too mundane for his philosophical investigation.

Throughout his discussion of the trials, Merleau-Ponty remains committed to his own interpretation of Marxism. He defends progressive violence, not because it is objectively necessary or somehow inescapable, but

rather because the eventual meaning history assumes may in the long run show that violence helps to build a better society. He asserts that his brand of Marxism, devotes to understanding "concrete subjectivity and concrete action" within an historical situation, can comprehend the real significance of the Moscow Trials:

> *Revolutionaries dominate the present the same way historians dominate the past. That is certainly the case with the Moscow Trials: the prosecutor and the accused speak in the name of universal history, as yet unfinished, because they believe they can reach it through the Marxist absolute of action which is indivisibly objective and subjective. The Moscow Trials only make sense between revolutionaries, that is to say between men who are convinced that they are making history and who consequently already see the present as past and see those who hesitate as traitors[4].*

Yet his argument, for all its involution, remains equivocal and inconsistent. Although he depicts a logic of history-in-process, he simultaneously defends, albeit with qualifications, the totalitarian arbitration of the Communist Party, and the desirability of a univocal interpretation of history. His discussion of the Moscow Trials only muddied the argument further. By the end, Merleau-Ponty has posed the question, not of the justice or necessity of the trials, but instead the more dubious question of whether their victims can be construed as dying for a revolution that may potentially realize a new humanity. In a backhanded way, he is in effect asserting that a liquidation of putative opposition elements (which he bizarrely styled a country's "unhappy consciousness") can be

justified by a progressive future outcome of history. It is a position that Merleau-Ponty, as an intellectual "way above the crowd", can afford to take; yet it is a position that can hardly afford much solace for anyone actively trying to institute communism without abandoning elementary standards of justice and proof-stands defensible in the here and now, without any reference to a possible moral utopia[5]. As he becomes disillusioned with Marxism and communist politics, Merleau-Ponty abandons or revises many of the philosophical and empirical propositions he has defended in 1947; (it shall be detailed at the end part of this chapter). Despite his sympathetic interpretation of the Moscow Trials, the French Communist Party does not roll out the welcome mat. Not only does he still offer a heretical version of Marxism in their eyes, he also raises critical reservations about the fate of contemporary communism. His doubts centres on the role of the proletariat – and these doubts will only deepen, not dissolve.

4.2 Communist or Non-Communist: The Disputatious Background between Koestler and Merleau-Ponty

The intellectual French Left was an impossible situation which no combination of Marxism or existentialism seemed capable of remedying. French capitalism was bad, but American capitalism was even more anathema to the left, if only because it was in the rudest of health internationally, though perhaps not at home. At the same time, French socialism was anything but

independent and its chances looked no better with Communist help. In such a situation it was impossible to be an anti-Communist if this meant being pro-American, witnessing the Americanization of Europe, and foreswearing the Communists who had fought bravely in the Resistance. On the other hand, it was not possible to be a Communist if this meant being blind to the hardening of the Soviet regime and becoming a witness to the Communist brand of imperialism which broke so many Marxist minds.

It is not surprising that many on the Left as well as the Right were unable to bear such ambiguity and therefore welcome any sign to show clearly which side to support, even if it meant a "conversion" to the most extreme left and right positions. Indeed, in 1947 Merleau-Ponty was still optimistic that Communist structures might embody a genuine *Marxism* which in his preface (the author's preface) clarifies his preference. He states that communism is attacked for its willingness to embrace "deception, cunning, violence, propaganda" in political practice, and the criticism draws upon the intuitive attraction of liberal ideas such as truth, law, and individual freedom. Yet, such proclaimed ideals do not necessarily reflect the real relations between citizens in these countries whose structures include violence, economic wars, suppression of unions, and colonialism. The distance between the ideals and reality is a form of "mystification in liberalism"[6]. Communism, then, is perhaps more honest, refusing to mask its own violence with high-flying ideals. Thus, he says: "A

regime which acknowledges its violence might have in it more genuine humanity"[7]. But the deeper point is one of Marxist analysis as he emphasizes:

> *To counter Marxism on this with "ethical arguments" is to ignore what Marxism has said with most truth and what has made its fortune in the world; it is to continue a mystification and to bypass the problem. Any serious discussion of communism must therefore pose the problem in communist terms, that is to say, not on the ground of principles but on the ground of human relations. It will not brandish liberal principles in order to topple communism; it will examine whether it is doing anything to resolve the problem rightly raised by communism, namely, to establish among men relations that are human[8].*

In other words, the function of a political system is to establish and regulate "relations among men", and of which each political system ought to be judged according to its ability to establish a cordial relationship among individuals.

With this in hand, Merleau-Ponty examines *Darkness at Noon*, not to critique its historical accuracy, but to demonstrate its failure to reach the level of Marxist analysis, for which Bukharin's behaviour cannot be reduced to the classical categories of individual ethics and objective ethics, liberalism or communism.

> *We have not examined whether in fact Bukharin led an organized opposition nor whether the execution of the old Bolsheviks was really indispensable to the order and the national defense of the U.S.S.R. We did not undertake to re-enact the 1937 trials. Our purpose was to understand Bukharin as Koestler sought to understand Rubashov. For the trial to Bukharin brings to light*

> *the theory and practice of violence under communism since Bukharin exercises violence upon himself and brings about his own condemnation. So we tried to rediscover what he really thought beneath the conventions of language[9].*

For Merleau-Ponty, every political actor is caught in the "inevitable ambiguity" of historical action and becoming aware that the sense or meaning of any "political conduct, however, justified it may once have been", can be altered by the course of history itself and in fact become its opposite. Since even the best of intentions to further the revolution can have counter-revolutionary consequences, Merleau-Ponty suggests a form of historical responsibility that encompasses both intentions and consequences.

> *When one is living in what Peguy called an historical period, in which political man is content to administer a regime or an established law, one can hope for a history without violence. When one has the misfortune or the luck to live in an epoch, or one of those moments where the traditional ground of a nation or society crumbles and where, for better or worse, man himself must reconstruct human relations, then the liberty of each man is a mortal threat to the others and violence reappears[10].*

Though, Merleau-Ponty is optimistic in communism, he does admit the important complementary question to his critique of liberal mystification: "Is communism still equal to its humanist intentions?"[11] For Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* had earlier revealed in its very title the gift of antithesis which generates a bad conversion for the lack of a genuine synthesis, which according to John

O'Neill, "might have been achieved if Koestler had known how to grasp the lived relation between the senses and ideology in man's character"[12]. That is, Koestler could not create characters who have known their history to enable them live their present existing lives with choices. He rather presents characters who operate by means of simplistic moral alternatives, decided upon before their story begins. But then in the question above, one can see Merleau-Ponty's fundamental commitment to a Marxist humanism, a commitment he will not renounce even when the cracks in his optimism break open as "*Darkness at Noon* may have killed communism for many people". But Merleau-Ponty was not really concerned about the life of communism as an institution since he was well aware of the changes in Communist institutions. He understood that the Revolution was learning to live with history. What he wanted to get at was how it had happened that theoretical Marxism had hardened into the dogma that made the views on history and politics of Koestler's Commissar a plausible account of Marxism. Insofar as Soviet Communism was represented in Koestler's Portrait and in the revelations that came with Cominform campaign against Tito, the Rajk-Kosov trials, and the Soviet labor camps, Merleau-Ponty was also a witness to the disenchantment of European communists. Yet at the same time he is engaged in the creative interpretation of theoretical Marxism which was taking holds in France just when communism was beginning to lose its grip on the intellectuals. For Merleau-Ponty in 1947, this was already a real threat, as he sensed: "It is impossible to be an anti-Communist and it is not

possible to be a Communist"[13]. Hence he remarks: "It would be too painful to have to admit that, in a way, the Communist, as well as their opponents are right"[14]. However, the subtlety of his position resulted in either misunderstandings or deliberate misreadings.

4.3   Koestler's Dilemmas

In his critique, Merleau-Ponty examines *Darkness at Noon* in relation to its depiction of materialism. In the first place, *Darkness at Noon* is a 1940 novel by Arthur Koestler. The story is set in the Soviet Union during Joseph Stalin's Great Pure in the 1930s. None of this is identified explicitly; the country is only referred as "the Country of the Revolution", the Communist Party as "The Party" and Stalin as "Number One". Koestler, who used to be a Communist, expressed his disillusionment with the movement through the novel (*Darkness at Noon* which is considered to be one of the most influential anti-Soviet books ever written).

The protagonist is Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov, a veteran of the Revolution. He was one of the delegates to the first congress of the Party, captured in a photograph that used to hang on many walls. Among all the officials numbered in that photograph, only "No. 1" and his belated predecessor still remain in the Party's favour; the rest are being liquidated one by one. Rubashov had been in jail many times before, and even dreamed of being woken up and arrested in the middle of the night, but he did not dream that it

would be the People's Commisariat of the Interior who would be arresting him. In prison, he is offered the choice of an administrative trial or public trial. This means either die in silence, or confess in a show trial to criminal activities which he did not commit. As he ponders which course of action is more honorable, he reflects on his past life, which he had dedicated to the service of the Party and thinks about the immoral things he has done in the name of a better future. According to Koestler, Rubashov's life is a synthesis of the lives of a number of men who were victims of the so-called Moscow Trials.

Thus, Merleau-Ponty, a communist, who believes that society is created by violence and exists continually through violence claims that the anti-Communists are making mistake because one can never be free from violence. He explains how the anti-communist exclaimed after reading *Darkness at Noon* – "THAT IS WHAT they want to set up in France"[15]; meaning that if communism shall come to be in France, it will simply be a practical picture of the *Darkness at Noon*. And the truth remains that the terror of such society as portrayed in the novel is that the law process is reversed. The established law in such society is not strictly followed by the members of the society. For instance, in our society when a person is convicted, this person is considered innocent until proven guilty: the crime must be proved and analyzed to find the culprit. But in *Darkness at Noon*" it is the opposite. We start with an assumption: Rubashov is guilty. Because this assumption is held by the Party, it is then proved that he is guilty: the law is no longer here to investigate on the crime and

give justice, now its only purpose is to back up and justify any desire of the Party or any charges rendered by it. The law is now the ultimate tool to secure the totalitarian power. Thus, in any totalitarian society one sees this common trend of inversion in the law and the moral code is therefore reversed as well. However, the implication of this as regards its existence in France entails the summary of the book, that the regime must be achieved no matter what and anything that goes against this goal or is in its way must be thrown away. This process sets up the biggest dilemma of the book: "whether, or to what extent, a noble end justifies ignorable means", as Merleau-Ponty titles this chapter Koestler's Dilemmas.

Merleau-Ponty starts by explaining the logical position of the novel as what is obtainable in every society. He claims that one should not forget that all regimes are criminal. After all, from an ethical standpoint, the death of a Negro lynched in Louisiana, or of a native in Indonesia, Algeria, or Indochina is no less excusable than Rubashov's death. For him, Rubashov could not remember that:

> *Communism does not invent violence but finds it already institutionalized, that for the moment the question is not to know whether one accepts or rejects violence, but whether the violence with which one is allied is "progressive" and tends toward its own suspension or toward self-perpetuation[16].*

He further states that for one to make a decision concerning the question of any crime, one has to condition oneself in the logic of the situation, in the dynamics of the regime and into the historical totality to which it belongs. Therefore, one should not be judging outside the orbit of the event as though according to that morality mistakenly called "pure" morality.

In the other hand, Merleau-Ponty argues that the communist (or rather the second character or the sympathizer in his own words) has forgotten that violence including anguish, pain and death can only be attractive or interesting in imagination, in art or in written history and not in a real life situation. For him, the most peace loving men are able to speak of Richelieu and Napoleon without a shudder. But none of them will be able to do what they did by his/her own hands. Killing one another is better said than done. Yet the men who had and still have one life to live and were condemned to death are still unforgettable.

He claims that the anti-Communist refuses to realize that violence is universal while the exalted sympathizer refuses to see that no one can look violence in the face. The indubitable facts as he assets remains that anyone who opposes these two facts has not carefully read *Darkness at Noon*. Merleau-Ponty believes that the book – *Darkness at Noon* has raised the problem of our times and as such, it is enough for it to have aroused a lively interest. But one has to read it properly "because the questions which haunt us are precisely those which we refuse to formulate"[17].

In his critique, however, Merleau-Ponty has it that Koestler presented Rubashov as confessing as a traitor because of the arid materialism of his 'objective' ethics. Thus, he concludes that "there is very little Marxism in Darkness at Noon, whether in Rubashov's formulas, those of Gletkin, or those of Koestler once one looks into them"[19]. But the presented caricature of Marxism fails to capture the spirit of Marxist humanism which requires recognizing the paradoxical and existential structures of the lived experience of political action.

> *Rubashov and his comrades are following a sort of sociological scientism rather than anything in Marx. Political man is an engineer who employs means useful to achieving a given end. The logic which Rubashov follows is not the existential logic of history described by Marx and expressed in the inseparability of objective necessity and the spontaneous movement of the masses; it is the summary logic of the technician who deals only with inert objects which he manipulates as he pleases[19].*

Merleau-Ponty as a matter of fact states confidently that in the mind of Rubashov and that of Koestler's version of communism, history is no longer what it was for Marx. Because for the Marxist's history, the manifestation of human values through a process which might involve dialectical detours still at least does not entirely ignore human purposes. But in this case, his is no longer the living element of man; it is no longer the response to his wishes, nor does it become the locus of revolutionary fraternity. According to Merleau-Ponty, it

has become "an external force which has lost the sense of the individual and becomes the sheer force of fact"[20].

Merleau-Ponty accuses Koestler of presenting the intellectual (on trial) with a false dilemma, "oscillating between revolt and passivity"[31], and thus of giving the wrong analysis of Bukharin's (or Koestler's fictional Rubashov's) acceptance of his sentence. At least, for him, Marxism has revealed that every consciousness is itself historically situated. Marxism, he says, rests on the profound idea that human perspectives, though relative, are absolute because there is nothing else and no destiny. Hence, the absolute is said to be grasped through our total praxis, if not through our knowledge but:

> *Rubashov has no conception of the wisdom of Marxism, which comes from basing knowledge on praxis, which is in turn clarified by knowledge, or from the shaping of the proletariat by theoretical discussion that is in turn subject to the consent of the proletariat. He does not understand the art of the great Marxists of 1917 who deciphered history while it was taking place and projected its trends through decisions that avoided equally any subject folly or amor fati. Rubashov has no other policy or any other interpretation of history with which to challenge the Party leadership; he has only the memory of Arlova, the image of Richard or Little Loewy – emotions, anxieties, and pangs of conscience which never disturb his basic faith in the wisdom of the event. But such a trust makes opinions useless and disarms Rubashov before he starts. He does not try to understand history; he simply waits for its judgment in fear and trembling[22].*

He arrives that if Koestler had limited himself to saying that there is a permanent risk of illusion and cowardice in any behaviour which is based on the exigencies of the objective situation instead of on the abstract imperatives of subjective morality, there would have been something in what he says.

Merleau-Ponty testifies and summarizes the Koestler's dilemmas as he unveils that "even in the closing pages of the book, Koestler therefore does not exactly reach a conclusion"[23]. His personal conclusion is not stated in the book unless it is to be found elsewhere. Thus, Merleau-Ponty avers that *Darkness at Noon* limits itself to the description of dialectical situation from which Rubashov does not break free even by force of his deep feeling while the mistakes that Koestler makes in his formulation of the problems leads one to many questions as he ended up with series of philosophical questions.

4.4   Bukharin and the Ambiguity of History

> *There would be no occasion for the question that we are raising if the Moscow Trials had established the charges of sabotage and espionage in the same way a fact is established in a laboratory, or if a series of convergent testimonies, cross-examinations, and documents had made it possible to follow the behaviour of the accused month by month and to reveal the plot in the way a crime is reconstructed at the hearings[24].*

Merleau-Ponty begins with the above statement as a shift from Koestler's novel to the real events around the trial of Bukharin that took place from 2nd to 13th March, 1938. He remarks the preliminary investigation that was conducted at

the Soviet tribunal which he claims to have not got through the job of trying twenty-one accused persons just within eleven days. He explains the implication of unsuccessful attempt of Bukharin's trial as it was only once that the proceedings and cross-examination took place. The effect of this remains as he states in the above quotation that there would be no occasion for questioning if the Moscow trials followed in due process. In a trial of this kind, however, it implies that where in principle all documents are missing, one is left with the things that were said, and at no time does one has any feeling of reaching through the words to the facts themselves. Everything inevitably depends on the level of hearsay. In this case, guilt is no longer a matter of a clear relation between a definite act with specific motives and specific consequences. For him, "some of the anecdotes have an air of truth, but they only acquaint us with the accused's state of mind", and thus he concludes: "There are only a few facts in a fog of shifting meanings[25]". This means, invariably, that the accusation has no option other than to depend on a few facts which could be interpreted (by the men in power) within the jurisdiction of the constitutional laws of the state.

> *The trials remain on a subjective level and never approach what is called "true" justice, objective and timeless, because they bear upon facts still open toward the future, which consequently are not yet univocal and only acquire a definitively criminal character when they are viewed from the perspective on the future held by the men in power[26].*

Despite the pretense to a "classical" trial structure, he refers also the Moscow Trials as the kind that belong to the revolution. The revolutionary, he says, judges what exists in the name of what does not exist, and of which the revolutionary regards as more real. The act of revolution is thus seen as what creates history and of which the truth of history depends on its total meaning. As such, the bourgeois justice adopts the past as its precedent while the revolutionary justice adopts the future. This is why the revolutionary does not care whether accused is honest or not but whether there is progress from its standpoint.

Merleau-Ponty demonstrates further that even though the Moscow Trials apply existing laws to the accused and as such claim not to create a new legality, it is also undeniable that they are revolutionary as far as in the process of evaluating the acts of the opposition, they regard absolutely the objective view of the future even when the future does not yet exist for us. And for the fact that the presupposition of a revolution (i.e. to those who make it) gives the assurance of understanding what they are living through, it applies explicitly that the revolutionaries dominate their present the same way the historians dominate the past. In effect, the Moscow Trials according to Merleau-Ponty are not exempted in the very act as he expatiates it thus:

> *The prosecutor and the accused speak in the name of universal history, as yet unfinished, because they believe they can reach it through the Marxist absolute of action which is indivisibly objective and subjective. The Moscow Trials only make*

> *sense between revolutionaries, that is to say between men who are convinced they are making history and who consequently already see the present as past and see those who hesitate as traitors[27].*

He summarizes the assertion that the Moscow Trials are simply the revolutionary trials presented as if they were ordinary trials.

Although the trial does not have the view from above it pretends, recognizing this fact would undermine its authority and make explicit the tribunal's political action in creating history rather than judging in history's name. The meanings of one's actions are open to historical contingency, and successful political action is as difficult as any form of expression. Such a proposal leads Marxist humanism to a "harsh notion of responsibility, based not on what men intended but what they have achieved in the light of event"[28]. The structure of historical responsibility gives a sense to the political actor who admits having performed a treasonous act while denying the label of "traitor". For Merleau-Ponty, "these things happen due to the absolute exigencies of political choice which the liberals ignore"[29]. Besides, historical responsibility transcends the categories of liberal thought as it affects both intention and act, circumstances and will, objective and subjective. Bukharin's actual claims, moreover, on the stand reveal a subtle humanism becoming aware of the existential contingency of the meaning of the political action.

However, the interpretation that Merleau-Ponty gives of the Bukharin's political trials follows from his phenomenological understanding of political action as he contests the psychological, subjectivistic and solipstic explanation of the given trials speculated by Arthur Koestler. Merleau-Ponty replies that Bukharin's demise, the Moscow Trials, and revolutionary politics are all more complex and ambiguous than Koestler would like to admit. Advancing an idea originating with Machiavelli and later spelt out more explicitly by Hegel. Merleau-Ponty insists that all political action is morally risky, that innocence and guilt are not functions of an individual's intentions, but also depend on accident and circumstance, and that moralistic condemnations of Soviet injustice are therefore too cheap and easy to be taken seriously in actual political debate. He observes furthermore that real-life politicians like Bukharin know all this and that Marxism is the theoretical realization of this insight into both the moral messiness of politics and the political exigencies of morality.

On Merleau-Ponty's alternative reading of the reports and transcripts of the 1938 trial, Bukharin did not simply fall on his sword out of slavish obedience to the party. Instead, he sincerely believed in his own (partial) "objective guilt" and in the counter-revolutionary effect-hence the true historical meaning – of his actions, in spite of his good intentions and subjective loyalty to the state[30]. Evidence of Bukharin's earnestness can be seen, Merleau-Ponty thinks, in the carefulness and precision of his confession. When pressed, Bukharin qualifies, clarifies, distinguishes, tries to identify the degree and

nature of his errors, hence his guilt. He pleads guilty to charges of treason, espionage, sabotage, knowing he will be condemned to death. "And yet he refuses to see himself as a spy, traitor, saboteur, and terrorist"[31]. Indeed, "On five occasions, Bukharin categorically denies the charge of espionage"[32]. Such fastidiousness seems at odds with Koestler's image of a man mindlessly sacrificing himself, and any sense of justice he might have had, to the smooth, machine-like functioning of the state. Merleau-Ponty thinks Bukharin was sincerely confessing what he considered his objective guilt: he confesses this, but denies that Merleau-Ponty asks, "Can one believe in the denials and refuse all credence to the confessions?"[33]

Notwithstanding, Merleau-Ponty attributes Nikolai Bukharin's admitted guilt of treason to the contingent nature of history.

> *[His] collaboration is thereby transformed into voluntary betrayal. There is a sort of maleficence in history: it solicits men, tempts them so that they believe they are moving in its direction, and then suddenly it unmasks, and events change and prove that there was another possibility. [---] And they are unable to look for excuses or to excuse themselves from even a part of the responsibility[34].*

This understanding of Bukharin's drama underscores the possibility of misreading the meaning of the common projects that constitute the basis of human action. It shows that history is not scientifically predictable. Furthermore, this reading gives value to an objective judgment of political acts, attributing responsibility to the individual actors and to them a lone. In politics,

actions are judged according to their consequences rather than according to abstract values. This is why, in Merleau-Ponty's view, Bukharin has confessed his guilt of treason although he has denied other accusations that he deemed false. Even if, from a subjective point of view, his acts were not intended to betray socialism as such, the movement of history gave them this meaning. In addition, Bukharin's actual claims on the stand reveal a subtle humanism becoming aware of the existential contingency of the meaning of the political action. There are no "separate" individuals, and "no one can flatter himself that his hands are clean"[35]. For Merleau-Ponty, the insight of the novel is that objective ethics and individual ethics can exist in the same person at the same time, an ambiguity that cannot be registered in classical ethics.

4.5   Trotky's Rationalism

What is the "rationality" behind History? Discussing Trotsky in relation to Bukharin, Merleau-Ponty considers the lived experience of political action. Action never takes place from a position outside of history. He thus thinks of historical rationality as the confirmation of social, political or economic solutions by succeeding generations, the elimination of conflicts and attempts that did not work, and the move toward greater participation and harmony. This rationality is not the already established rationality of the liberal tradition, but is a rationality in the making. It is a rationality that must prove itself to each of those involved, that must be worked out in actual events, and that must prove

itself to each generation. History does not occur in a straight forward means and no one will ever pose or determine what might come to be as it is not easy to be traced but by behaving in accordance with the changing situation at the particular point in time. In other words:

> *History is Terror because we have to make into it not by any straight line that is always easy to trace, but by taking our bearings at every moment in a general situation which is changing, like a traveler who moves into a changing countryside continuously altered by his own advance, where what looked like an obstacle becomes an opening and where the shortest path turns out the longest[36].*

Man possesses a social reality that is not out of his existence and which attaches his practical way of living for both present and future. There is no particular unique possibility at each movement ever since: "Even the success of a policy does not prove that it was the only successful possibility"[37]. The present and the future are thus not the object of a science but of construction or action.

Merleau-Ponty expresses his view as it affects human experience – the lived experience of political action from within history that Stalin, Trotsky, and Bukharin must respond to the future they sense as probable but never certain. For each of them "had a perspective within the ambiguity of history and each staked his life upon it". Like an artist, the political actor responds to an urgency or question that is only latent in the landscape and only exists after it has been addressed, and the political expression is successful when it has established an audience and a place in common history as the now seemingly natural sequel of

events. Everything in life is quite uncertain. The future, he says, is probable even though it does not exist in empty zone as one cannot simply project the future without reason. While the objects of perception on the other hand are likewise probable ever since one is distanced from having a complete analysis of them and as such, one cannot claim to have a total control of their very nature and existence. Thus, the future and the objects of perception are not absolutely predictable. Man perceives meaningfully the historical situation as he wishes, values, and believes it to be:

> *The way we perceive depends upon our wishes and values, but the reverse is also true; we love or have not just in terms of previous values but from experience, from what we see, from our historical experience; and even if every historical choice is subjective, every subjectivity nevertheless reaches through its phantasms to things themselves and aims at truth[38].*

Therefore, any contradiction to choices in giving a description of history and of which cannot be justified according to Merleau-Ponty omits the fact that every conscience experiences itself along with others in a common history. And a certain postulate of the rationality of history is something that we cannot avoid, for it belongs to the necessities of our life. Everyone has a certain conception of the whole of historical life, and if he does not formulate it in words, he nonetheless expresses it in action. Thus, the very experience of historical contingency is itself sufficient evidence of a historical logic, that is, of a 'common history' – In other words, the consciousness of historical contingency

is for Merleau-Ponty, self cancelling. For this reason, however, Marxism then supplies the "general formular" of this historical contingency. It is Marxism that supplies what becomes necessary:

> *Marxism does not offer us a utopia, a future known ahead of time, nor any philosophy of history. However, it deciphers events, discovers in them a common meaning and thereby grasps a leading thread which, without dispensing us from fresh analysis at every stage, allows us to orient ourselves toward events. Marxism is as foreign to a dogmatic philosophy of history which seeks to impose by fire and sword a visionary future of mankind as it is to a terrorism lacking all perspective. It seeks, rather, to offer men a perception of history which would continuously clarify the lines of force and vectors of the present[39].*

The sense of this extremely audacious claim is that "any philosophy of history will postulate something like what is called historical materialism", inasmuch as it could not fail to see history in a way that maintains the identity of subjective and objective factors, while still remaining oriented to truth in a universal sense. But more importantly, that Marxism is the philosophy of history means that it is the philosophy of the historical emergence of the world – it maintains that the world is not yet, that as a singular universal frame of reference this remains an open and unfinished historical task, and that philosophy is ultimately not a matter of understanding the world, but of realizing it. Hence, Marxism then, is like a philosophy of political expression.

In all, he summarizes by giving the fact that history is an integral whole, "a single drama" in which all events have a human significance; and that the phases of this drama do not follow an arbitrary order, "but move toward a completion and conclusion". Put the same, that history is intelligible and has a direction – that "there is in the present and in the flow of events a totality moving toward a privileged state which gives the whole its meaning"[40]. For Merleau-Ponty, this is the essential content of Marxism, combined with the idea that the "privileged state" in question represents "a genuine and complete reconciliation of man with man" in fully universal terms. For this reason, then, he sees this vision of history as the basis for phenomenological truth. It is the rationality and sense [*sens*] at the level of history as a whole that underwrites the rationality and sense that may be perceived at any subordinate level. For, as he puts it, "where history has no structure and no major trends it is no longer possible to say anything, since there are no periods, no lasting constellations and a thesis is only valid for the moment"[41]. Whereas on the c ontrary, "the simple fact that man perceives an historical situation as invested with a meaning that he believes to be true introduces a phenomenon of truth"[42] – that is, a presumptive rationality emerges in the course of historical development that "testifies to our rootedness in the truth"[43]. And this presumption is inescapable: "The contingency of history is only a shadow at the edge of a view of the future from which we can no more refrain than we can from breathing"[44].

4.6   From the Proletarian to the Commissar

Through Marxist humanism, Merleau-Ponty enquires if the communist regimes of his day deserve the title of "Marxist", to be evaluated according to the actual "system of relations among men" and to nature through production. He summarizes that the point of connection between the two is found on Hegelian notion that every system of production and property implies a system of relations among men as he claims that: "There can be no definitive understanding of the whole import of Marxist politics without going back to Hegel's description of the fundamental relations between men"[45]. He therefore, interprets the Hegelian master-slave (or subject-object) relation as a source of violence. Hence, he argues that:

> *Inasmuch as self-consciousness gives meaning and value to every object that we can grasps it is by nature in a state of vertigo and it is a permanent temptation for it to assert itself at the expense of the other consciousness who dispute its privilege.--- Thus history is essentially a struggle – the struggle of the master and the slave, the struggle between classes – and this is necessary of the human condition[46].*

He follows Marx in identifying class struggle with the Hegelian-type relation: one class thinks of another as object (the other) and this is the reason why 'struggle' and master-slave relations exist. Merleau-Ponty offers an overview of the violence propagated by capitalism, ranging from colonialism to the wage system and unemployment. Besides, his criticism of liberal capitalism stresses

that the capitalist institutionalization of violence imposes its abstract values on people dogmatically, concluding that "[an] aggressive liberalism exists which is a dogma and already an ideology of war"[47]. It then claims the universality of these same values and thereby denies space for reflection. Consequently, capitalism prevents progress towards the disappearance of classes, and therefore intersubjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty again makes the point that violence is a reality of both communist and liberal politics, yet beyond the simple frankness of the communist relation to violence because as a rule, he does not trust the words of others nor treat them as free and rational beings. As such, Merleau-Ponty claims that: "He has to learn to recognize the play of opposing forces, and those writers, even the reactionary ones who have described it are more precious for communism than those, however progressive, who have masked it with liberal illusions. Machiavelli is worth more than Kant"[48]. The Machiavellian nature of communism is a recurrent theme throughout his early writings. Apart from an honest recognition of the real politik nature of government, it is also superior to liberalism in that it can justify its revolutionary violence as being progressive and thus possibly making humanism possible in the future. He puts it thus: "All we know is different kinds of violence and we ought to prefer revolutionary violence because it has a future of humanism"[49].

This conception of praxis resembles Kant's categorical imperative, namely: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own

person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end"[50]. The main difference between the two conceptions is that Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the presence of violence in society at present, thus contradicting the point made by Kant in his essay *Theory and Practice* (in Kant and Reiss 1991:61-92). What for Kant was a principle of guiding all ethical action, for Merleau-Ponty is a desirable state that society can reach in the future. Conversely, certain types of violence are desirable in the present inasmuch as they bring the possibility of the applicability of the Kantian imperative in the future. The reason why violence is indispensable is that even after bourgeois liberalism is replaced by socialism, the governing machineries remain an inheritance of capitalism, and, as a result, still need violence in order to function. This is why, following Trotsky, Merleau-Ponty concludes that violence under communism is like a lamp that produces maximum light before going out. He introduces this as a second reason to prefer the communist alternative knowing fully well, at least, that it has "a future of humanism". But can this future justify present violence? This question, however, is based upon a classical conception of the subject as pure *consciousness,* above the throes of history and violence, and fails to address the existential reality of political experience: "We do not have a choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence. Inasmuch as we are incarnate beings, violence is our lot"[15]. For Merleau-Ponty, the present and the future, the self and others

encroach upon each other, and this intertwining reality is what gives rise to historical responsibility for our actions and our relations.

Acknowledging the presence of violence in society enables him to come up with a second and more sophisticated justification for revolutionary violence, "the proletarians 'who are not gods' are the only ones in a position to realize humanity"[52], he claims. The reason for assigning this role to the proletariat lies in t he dialectic between the objective and the subjective nature of the proletariat as the universal class. Being a materialist in this case, he holds that the workers are themselves the "result" of exploitation and of universal dependency as alienation. This makes for the objective aspect of the revolution. Their praxis aims at doing away with the conditions that created them as the exploited class and precludes intersubjectivity. However, as opposed to the Hegelian "class" of bureaucrats, the workers are not "guarding" or trying to implement a pattern made up of a set of purely intellectual, arbitrary, supreme or objective values. Revolutionary praxis is a result of the subjective and individual experiences of capitalism that makes each worker wants to engage in a common project. This consciousness of their condition results in the spontaneity of the Revolution. These two characteristics cannot be separated: the workers develop a consciousness of their condition because they experience the effects of capitalism most strongly. Marxist praxis results from the perfect dialectic between the two extremes. For this, therefore, he argues: "For the proletarian

individuality or self-consciousness and class-consciousness are absolutely identical"[53].

However, since the proletariat does not always attain self consciousness by itself, there is sometimes the need for party intervention, "there is need for a party which clarifies the proletariat to itself"[54]. Merleau-Ponty does not take on board the early Marxist idea according to which the party's role is to be in continual contact with the proletariat, drawing from it directly the meaning of its decisions and actions. He rather made a reference to Lenin as he claims that the party should not be behind the proletariat, nor besides it, but rather ahead of it with just one step ahead. As a matter of fact, and in line with Lenin too, he states that "under pain of losing its meaning compromise can only be practiced 'in order to raise – not lower – the general level of proletarian class-consciousness"[55]. He thus pays attention to the role of elites and personnel in the state bureaucracy as the properly balanced theory of the proletariat would offer a natural source of humanism in its reconfiguration of the relations among humans and between humans and nature, and this would be a humanism won in history, not thought from above. This is what justifies a *wait and see – Marxism:* history has a sense if not a direction; that is, it is moving toward the power of the proletariat and the reconciliation of the existential thought and Marxist humanism by seeking "harmony with ourselves and others --- not only in a priori reflection and solitary thought but through the experience of concrete situations and in a living dialogue with others"[56].

4.7   The Yogi and the Proletarian

The extension of the diversions, the confusions, and the compromises of everyday history has brought to the awareness that the true history cannot be maintained. The decline of ideology and proletarian action suffice the fact that the world in which we live is ambiguous. In his critique, therefore, Merleau-Ponty accuses Koestler for not been able to formulate questions that will fulfill the mission conferred upon the proletariat by the course of historical development (i.e. the historical mission of Marxism). The questions expected should have been and he asks: "Can the Revolution emerge from Terror? Does the proletariat have an historical mission which is simultaneously the dynamic force of the new society and the vehicle of human values? Or, on the contrary, is the Revolution inevitably an altogether arbitrary enterprise directed by leaders and a controlling group to which the rest submit?"[57] He thus remarks the need to decide whether history has actually met with the proletarian philosophy of history. Ever since the demand for a philosophy of history is intimately tied to the anti-foundational realism of Merleau-Ponty's contemporary phenomenological concerns – especially the claim that vis-à-vis nature, there is no vantage point from which one has superior access to truth. Merleau-Ponty specifically situates the problems of history and violence in the interrelation of man and world – in the fact that humans are situated beings and not embodied pure consciousness. Hence, a philosophy of history is thus necessary not for only for an understanding of the course and "cruelty" of history (that is, of the

fact that the violence is a corollary of intersubjectivity). Insofar as the ever-presence of violence turns the fact that humanity is an "open or unfinished system" into precisely an imperative, an understanding of commitment promised on the impossibility of knowing the future and the need to persevere toward it. A "philosophy of history" is necessary to justify the critique of communism from a standpoint of Marxism. In his own words:

> *Thus any philosophy of history will postulate something like what is called historical materialism – namely, the idea that morals, concepts of law and reality, modes of production and work, are internally related and clarify each other. In a genuine philosophy of history all human activities form a system in which at any moment no problem is separable from the rest, in which economic and other problems are part of a larger problem, where, finally, the productive forces of the economy are of cultural significance just as, inversely, ideologies are of economic significance*[58].

For Merleau-Ponty, then, history acquires direction through the way events acquire meaning; these are not isolated events created out of nothingness as they are for Sartre. Instead, man is rather in a dialectical relationship with social structures and that, on the other, truth has a public character. Through a shared perception of the world, collective political action becomes possible and history gains meaning in a manner that makes it, to a degree, predictable. In other words, the direction of history stems from the will to freedom, to transcend sedimented institutions through collective projects. In effect, Merleau-Ponty

argues that it is likely for capitalism to be overthrown; it is likely that the masses will eventually understand their own condition and unite in a common project. Yet another event could always re-shape the constellation of meanings and history could take a more unpredictable turn. Conversely, the fact that the meaning of praxis and the sense of history can only be fully understood *a posteriori* raises questions about the role of the party in making this pre-conceived meaning clear to the proletariat.

However, Merleau-Ponty's critical support for Marxism results from this perceived conflict between the claim that history has meaning, which we can grasp, and the view that history is contingent. This seems controversial but the point as he argues is in such that there is within Marxism that which penetrates to the core of the human condition, a linkage between critical reason and humanist morality. To this end, Merleau-Ponty agues that Marxism cannot be rejected as there is no providential ordering of history or else all meaning in history will be rejected. He writes:

> *On close consideration, Marxism is not just any hypothesis that might be replaced tomorrow by some other. It is the simple statement of those conditions without which there would be neither any humanism, in the sense of a mutual relation between men, nor any rationality in history. In this sense Marxism is not a philosophy of history; it is the philosophy of history and to denounce it is to dig the grave of reason in history. After that there can be no more dreams or adventures[59].*

Put the same, to deny Marxism's meaning even as a critique of the current situation under bourgeois rule would not only mean, for Merleau-Ponty, the impossibility of limiting violence and class exploitation; it would also mean that intersubjectivity and common projects are impossible and that man has no powers over social structures (i.e. his freedom is never anything more than the freedom to will freedom but never to experience it fully). It would mean that men are reduced to Cartesian rational consciousnesses and that society is nothing but a second nature. Finally, it would have consequences not only for his political arguments but for his entire phenomenology.

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty remains critical of Marxism, referring to the possibility that the USSR may become just another regressive regime:

> *One cannot postpone indefinitely the need to decide whether or not history has received the proletarian philosophy of history [---] But although two, three or four grains of sand do not make a heap, after a while the heap is there and that nobody can doubt[60].*

In accordance with his phenomenological understanding of politics, only experience will be able to prove (or disprove) the validity of Marxism. Besides, he notes that it is doubtful whether the Soviet experience can be taken as testimony on the value of the Marxist ideology considering that Russia never attained the necessary industrial development required by the conversion to Communism, as prescribed by this ideology. However, Merleau-Ponty claims that Marxism is an all-inclusive method of social critique. He believes that it

contextualizes apparently isolated events and relates them to the social whole by giving them meaning. He goes so far as to state that Marxism is a philosophy of mind that only illustrates its tenets with reference to economics.

Merleau-Ponty, moreover, sets the 'standards' for political thought. For him, what defines a political ideology is not merely what it stands for (its values), but the way it deals with violence and whether this is acknowledged, justified and progressive. After all:

> *We do not have a choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence. Inasmuch as we are incarnate beings, violence is our lot. There is no persuasion even without seduction, or in the last analysis, contempt. Violence is the common origin of all regimes. Life, discussion, and political choice occur only against a background of violence. What matters and what we have to discuss is not violence but its sense or its future[61].*

This is why he denounces liberalism as institutionalizing regressive violence. What is more, intersubjectivity is what would enable men to join in common projects and make humanism possible. For Merleau-Ponty, making intersubjectivity possible is not so much a desideratum of his political philosophy as it is a logical conclusion that derives from his phenomenological thought. But a properly balanced theory of the proletariat that would provide a pure human relations. The relations among humans and between humans and nature; the co-existence of existentialism and Marxism which according to Merleau-Ponty reveals that "[t] he human world is an open or unfinished system

and the same radical contingency which threatens it with discord also rescues it from the inevitability of disorder and prevents us from despairing of it"[62]. A relation that would understand the presence of violence in this open system or the necessity to seek an over-coming of institutions that facilitate his ever-presence, and finally that would recognize as crucial the goal of reducing violence by attacking it "at its source".

4.8   Disenchantment of Marxism and the Revolutionary Politics

Merleau-Ponty's declining estimation of Marxism as a philosophy parallels his declining estimation of Marxism as a movement. He lost faith in Marxism and revolutionary politics, partly in light of revolutions about the wide-scale atrocities in the soviet labor camps, partly in the wake of Russian aggression in the Korean Wars[63]. He thus claims that "Marxism could not resolve the problem that is presented and from which we started. It could not maintain itself at that *sublime point* which it hoped it could find in the life of the party, that point where matter and spirit would no longer be discernible as subject and object, individual and history, past and future, discipline and judgment; and therefore the opposites which it was to unite fall away from one another"[64]. Marx's ideas are no longer simply true or false, he suggests, but are instead "failed truths", deep and important insights articulated in works that endure not as part of a living political creed, but as classics in humanistic

tradition. There is nothing whatsoever in Marxism that is new outside the material world and of which no future description is revealed through it:

> *Nothing is further from Marxism than positivistic prose: dialectical though is always in the process of extracting from each phenomenon a truth which goes beyond it, waking at each moment our astonishment at the world and at history. This "philosophy of history" does not so much give us the keys of history as it restores history to us as permanent interrogation. It is not so much a certain truth hidden behind empirical history that it gives us; rather it presents empirical history as the genealogy of truth. It is quite superficial to say that Marxism unveils the meaning of history to us: it binds us to our time and its partialities; it does not describe the future for us; it does not stop our questioning – on the contrary, it intensifies it. It shows us the present worked on by a self-criticism, a power of negation and of sublation, a power which has historically been delegated to the proletariat[65].*

His main reason behind this sort of view is that the view of the communist orthodoxy assumes a mechanistic tendency toward social, political, and economic revolution. Moreso, the more appropriate reasons remain that there is no automatic movement of history, the seeds of which are in socio-economic events or the human essence and its drive toward freedom. There may well be certain tendencies in certain socio-economic structures but there is no fixed logic of future development. Moreover, human nature is malleable enough to accept a variety of social, political, and economic conditions and, subsequently, is not predestined for any one of them. We have learned from history what does not work, he concludes, but we have not definitively learned what does or will

work. Hence, Marxist doctrine has become increasingly dogmatic and intolerant – rigidly mechanistic in its account of historical change, blindly optimistic and intolerant of dissent in the face of evidently diminishing prospects of revolutionary social transformation.

Although, he has always denied Marxism the crutch of empirical determinism or rationalist necessity, yet in the immediate postwar period he has still believed that the proletariat may possibly fill the lofty role assigned it by the theory. But (by 1955), this hope has been replaced by distrust. It is not only the absence of militance among contemporary workers that bothers him; it is also the seemingly unavoidable degeneration of revolutionary favor into bureaucratic torpor.

However, Merleau-Ponty feels that classical Marxism has rested on the "ferment of negation" being "materially" incarnated in actual historical force. According to him, Marxism can only maintain its ultimate verity on this real historical basis, the proletariat conceives as a self-transcending being and the agent of universal history through meaningful negation. But he now argues that the party and proletariat necessarily navigate within the plenitude of a positive world; the proletariat can therefore never exist as pure philosophical negativity, but only as one positive institution among others. This circumstance in turn encourages a set of fateful identifications: "The proletariat is the revolution, the party is the proletariat, the heads are the party --- as being is being"[66]. Even if a militant proletariat does exist, the chances for success at the task of negative

transcendence toward a better society seem dim: its negativity will surely be corrupted by bureaucratic institutionalization. Merleau-Ponty thus comes to hold that negativity only descends into history at privileged moments: for the most part, even revolutionary policies are represented by mere functionaries, who cannot help but corrupt the aims of the movement. What appears to him as a process that may create humane relations among men now seems more a vicious cycle of unsuccessful attempts to seize institutional power.

Merleau-Ponty in other words asserts that Marxism cannot be considered true – "certainly no longer true in the sense it was believed to be true"[67]. The options according to Merleau-Ponty are simple. One either remains a dogmatic Marxist, owing allegiance to Communism as a movement, or one opted for a powerless, skeptical radicalism, without immediate political efficacy, but also without intellectual compromises.

> *It is clear that a revolutionary politics cannot be maintained without its pivot, that is, proletarian power. If there is no 'universal class' and exercise of power by that class, the revolutionary spirit becomes pure morality or moral radicalism again. Revolutionary politics was a doing, a realism, the birth of a force. The non-communist left often retains only its negations. This phenomenon is a chapter in the great decline of the revolutionary idea----. Its principal hypothesis, that of a revolutionary class, is not confirmed by the actual course of events[68].*

At its inception, Merleau-Ponty's adherence to Marxism has depended on an essentialist view of history and the proletariat: the latter provisionally incarnates the teleological meaning of history. He criticizes Marxism harshly because he

feels that history could no longer sustain such a conception. It is also reasonable to summarize that Merleau-Ponty abandons the hope of revolutionary politics because he was fully aware of the growth of a large middle class in western societies by the mid 1950's and that social allegiances may be formed along a variety of lines other than that of class, as he argues that revolutionary movement loses its revolutionary momentum once it becomes institutionalized and transformed into a regime.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER FIVE

VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN SOCIO-POLITICAL SURVEY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

5.1   Phenomenological Analysis of Violence

The constitutive ambiguities and paradoxical consequences that violent experiences impose on our attempt to understand violence and cope with violence proclaim that it has not been a bed of roses for man. His rare moments of peace and tranquility have often been shattered by deadly strokes of violence. In order to approach an integrative phenomenological analysis of violence, one has to concentrate on recovering the subjective motives for violent actions and on understanding the perpetrator's deviant point of view. Thus, there should be some phenomenological insights to investigate the meaning and conceptions of violence as a point of departure. This can be proceeded by first of all reading the meaning of the two concepts – *phenomenology and violence.*

However, the term "phenomenology" has two constitutive etymological elements. The word "phenomenon" has a Greek root *phainomenon*, derived from the Greek verb *phainesthai* which means "that which shows itself or that which reveals itself". The original Greek meaning of "Logos" is discourse, which "opens to sight" or "lets something be seen" thus, phenomenology, properly understood as the logo of the phenomenon is the disciplined attempt to open to sight that which shows itself and let it be seen as it is[1]. However,

phenomenology does not simply mean the study of phenomenon as the etymological signification above could lead one to infer. It is only a procedure, but a crucial and significant one, of inquiry and of discovery of reality. It is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness; descriptive of the givens of immediate experience. By extension, it is an attempt to capture the individual's understanding, experience and conception of violence in process as lived, through descriptive analysis. Ever since phenomenology studies how things appear to consciousness or are given in experience, and not how they are in themselves, even if it is known that the given contains more than or is different from what is presented. In effect, the method henceforth should be of learning about another person by listening to their descriptions of what their subjective world about violence is like for them, together with an attempt to understand this in their own terms as fully as possible free of our preconceptions and interference.

Violence on the other hand is derived from another term "violate" which is its verb form. To violate means among other things: to injure, break, disobey, infringe, hurt, damage, etc. Each of these synonyms of "to violate" brings out the meaning of violence. It is therefore, the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation"[2]. Violence is used as a tool of manipulation and also is an area of concern for law and

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culture which take attempts to appress and stop it. The term violence encompasses a broad spectrum covering a wide variety of illegal or unusual actions against human beings, even animals and living species or their natural environment. This can be as a result of interpersonal conflicts, international wars, aggression, genocide or deliberate alteration and demolition of the environment. For more emphasis, Robert McAFee Brown, an American human right activist put violence to mean:

> *Whatever violates another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be understood as an act of violence to the broadest sense then, an act that depersonalizes would be an act of violence, since it transforms a person into a thing[3].*

Thus, violence is a frequently recurring element in many types of horror, and may be a common aspect of our everyday lives, depending on what one believes constitutes violence. For Girard, "There is a common denominator that determines the efficacy of all sacrifices ---. This common denominator is internal violence – all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress"[4]. Girard casts a broad net in defining violence to "dissentions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels," and he is not alone in the world of French critical thinkers. Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, in other words, famously argue about the omnipresence of violence within the meaning – making process itself. Derrida in many ways agrees with Levinas's beliefs about the inherent violence of

attempting to know or understand something. For Derrida, violence is "the necessity from which no discourse can escape, from its earliest origin – these necessities are violence itself, or rather the transcendental origin of an irreducible violence"[5]. For Levinas, and to some extent for Derrida, there is no meaning without violence.

Meanwhile, violence could be physical or non-physical but it involves damage of what the victim holds dear and thus reduces him or her to a level of what Helder Camara describes as sub-human being. In his own explanation of violence, Helder Camara, the archbishop of Recife, Brazil writes:

> *No one is born to be a slave. No one seeks to suffer injustice, humiliations and restrictions. A human being condemned to a sub-human situation is like an animal – an ox or a donkey – wallowing in the mud. Now the egoism of some privileged groups drives countless human beings into this sub-human condition, where they suffer restrictions, injustices, without prospects, without hope, their condition is that of slaves[6].*

He classifies violence into three: first, the violence of injustice – this he describes as the mother of violence in human society; second, violence of revolt which he says to be a direct consequence of the former and third, the violence of repression – which he says to be a direct result of the latter and the deadliest form of violence because it is seized by those in power to suppress upheaval of the repressed people. The powerful do not hesitate to use any means considered effective no matter how outrageous it is to achieve their aim. So, violence in human society progresses from injustice to revolt and from revolt to repression.

Furthermore, violence can as well be viewed and defined from various angles like law, politics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc. According to Max Weber, States and governments have the "monopoly of violence" because they possess all the means and instruments of inflicting injuries to people and depriving them of their freedom and ordinary lives. Use of violence through legal system by police forces and military is solely within the competence of legal authority of governments for establishing the peace and order. This is a legitimate notion of violence. The legitimist would define violence as the illegitimate use of force. This, of course, is why John Locke would say, a murderer,

> *--- by unjust violence and slaughter he hath committed upon one, declared war against all mankind, and therefore may be destroyed as a Lyon or a Tiger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom man can have no society no security*[7].

This school of thought conceives violence as essentially evil (considering the above quotation). Though, they agreed that violence can be used legitimately when it is authorized – just violence. Thus, law enforcement agents can use violence. The legitimate use of force is as well justifiable when it is at the event of a war between two states. Each state would naturally legitimize its use of violence against its opponent. Such use of force by warring states would not be termed violence at all, since it has been legitimized by them for their purposes.

Another is the structural notion of violence which refers to a form of violence based on the systematic ways in which a given social structure or social institution harms people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Structural violence inevitably produces conflict and often direct violence, including family violence, racial violence etc. This tries to bring violence in a very wide range of things, like social injustice by institutions or individuals, whether by deliberate act or by physical or psychological force. This goes beyond mere personal and physical infliction of violence. It would indeed seem too wide, in such a way that all evil imaginable would come under the umbrella of violence. And it would seem that all evil has one single solution. This structural view, just as the legitimist, also assumes that all violence is essentially wrong, and that social reform would eliminate all forms of violence. Yet some would argue that violence can sometimes be something good, and so it can be legitimized, as we have already mentioned in the case of law enforcement agencies and in that event of a war.

In the history of philosophical conceptions of violence, Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave makes explicit the interpersonal violence which he explains that cause and effect occur in an anthropological context in which individuals struggle for recognition and to dominate others. Thus, Hegel conceives violence in terms of a human conflict rather than epistemological in commensurability. Hegel's description of violence is however, a latent idealism as it lies in its relation to beings. According to Hegel, human beings are

communal beings, first and foremost, but they discover their essence only by achieving freedom from their distinctive nature as communal beings. He argues that individuals rise to the level of being-for-self only by denying their communal nature in act of violence against other human beings. By defining violence as the destruction of the social realm by social beings, Hegel shows both his romantic heritage and the fundamental insight of romanticism, namely that violence is only and always a form of human conflict. Nevertheless, his desire to trace the purely logical development of Being-for-itself transforms violence into a logical device, an idealism, serving his definition of being. Indeed, violence is the primary educator of being-for-itself: in the life and death struggle of violence, the self discovers a violence (the violence of the other) that escapes its violence and that threatens its entire existence, thus recognizing the reality of other individuals. Through violence, the self attains a universal point of view in which the dynamic of self and other may be conceptualized.

However, the problem is that Hegel's definition of violence is not compatible with his theory of desire. If desire is the desire for recognition, the self endangers its desire by acting to destroy other by whom it needs to be recognized, one cannot be recognized by a corpse. This contradiction points to the irrational nature of violence, despite Hegel's efforts to give it a logical role in the emergence of being. It also seems to dispute that violence might serve education. Hegel never reconciles the desire for recognition and the violent impulse to destroy other people. He simply refers to this violence as evil but as

an evil needed to ensure the freedom of Beings-for-self. In short, Hegel puts violence, despite its irrationality, in a service of the idea of Being, and it becomes impossible in his philosophy to understand it outside this orbit.

Rowland Stout takes the original step of looking at violence through the lenses of Aristotelian virtue ethics. In a move that may seem counter-intuitive, stout makes a strong argument why (in certain cases) we should consider violence to be a virtue rather than a vice. Stout's issue is not whether violence may be rational to the extent it leads to a good end, instead, it is whether violence may be rational to the extent that what has happened demands it. Stout's claim in that if one is in a fight one may be justified in fighting back and that this way of behaving is an aspect of virtue in the sense explored by Aristotle in the *Nicomachaen Ethics*. The practice of fighting has various features characteristic of a virtuous practice. It is rooted in our nature, developed by culture and habit and further developed and moderated by rational self-reflection. There might be conditions in which, due to the failure of the State to protect you, it is a good thing to be disposed to commit to this practice. For this reason such a disposition is a virtue in the same way that the disposition to be angry to, frightened of, or proud of the right people in the right circumstances and to be right extent are virtues. The virtuous person has the capacity for being violent when something has happened that merits it, and at least one thing that might merit it is someone attacking them. But whether by merits or demands that violence should be executed, what is the possibility that

every violence of such will bring solution to the problem generated? How sure it is that violence of any kind may not worsen the situation? Beside what is the appropriate degree of defensive violence? Is violence morally justified?

Jason Whyckoff defends the thesis that violence is neither wrong nor bad by definition. Whyckoff makes a strong case for a non-normative definition of the concept of violence, based on the view that notions like "violation" are not part of the concept of violence. He offers three sets of arguments for the rejection of legitimist conceptions of violence, according to which the concept of violence is normative. According to the first argument, legitimism should be rejected because it reduces the doctrine of nonviolence to a trivial truth, when in fact the doctrine is best interpreted as a substantive thesis. The second argument is comprised of a series of intuition pumps to motivate the conclusion that violence need not be (though it usually is) harmful or wrong/bad, though legitimism entails that this is always the case. The third argument is an open question/argument against the view that violence is by definition wrong; the question" Is violence wrong?" Is an open question, but legitimism entails that the question is closed. Whyckoff's non-normative account of the concept of violence has implications for both the doctrine of non-violence and legitimist definitions of violence.

However, the analytical account of the concept of violence has been given by different individuals and schools of thought. This process of capturing individuals understanding and conceptions of violence has been

phenomenologically articulated – knowing how this concept appears to individual\s consciousness. In effect, the above overview of the concept has revealed obviously that *violence* is philosophically ambiguous ever since how one experiences violence is (or might be) different from the other. But how can we understand the experiential lives of those involved in violence? How could phenomenology contribute to this understanding? These questions about the understanding of "the other" as an experiencing individual may impose a longstanding debate. Nevertheless, by stressing everyday experiences, these questions contend that peoples' lived realities contain more than what the statistical or textual data used in most violent researches convey. Although statistics and texts are important means individuals employ to represent and guide some actions, many violent acts remain beyond linguistic and numerical transcription. Of all the philosophical perspectives, phenomenology most explicitly claims to tap this broader experiential realm. Thus, a certain phenomenological conclusions with central themes in Merleau-Ponty's ideals will help to sketch a research program and ethical practice that can aid in understanding others' experience as both similar and different.

5.1.2 Violence and Phenomenological Accountability of 'Others' Experiences

How phenomenology accounts or does not account, for the experiences of oneself and others may seem (or, is admittedly) abstract. But to clarify and to demonstrate the seeming difficulties of applying phenomenology to

intersubjective violent problems, a summary of some of the literature that claims to approach violence from a phenomenological perspective is to be offered. This will help to reflect on what these applications of phenomenology demonstrate about phenomenology's ability to explain other's experiences. This reflection is centered on three general themes: violence as interaction, violence as an emotional existential project, and violence as an embodiment.

Looking at the interactive meaning of violence, that is, constitution of violent experience as a rationally calculated performance, Norman Denzin (1984) and Curtis Jackson-Jacobs (2004) view violence as "situated, interpersonal, emotional, and cognitive activity"[8]. Although both are looking at violence in radically different settings. Norman Denzin on his work, *Toward a Phenomenology of Domestic, Family violence* marks an early attempt to apply phenomenology to interpersonal violence while Jackson-Jacobs provides a more recent effort at a "dramaturgical phenomenology of street brawling as collective action"[9].

Denzin describes his method as "phenomenological, dialectical, interpretive, and interactionist"[10]. He primarily uses previous literature "to examine the phenomenon of domestic violence from within as lived experience"[11]. His main argument is that domestic violence unfolds according to a process of self-destructing "negative symbolic interaction". He argues that domestic violence erupts when a family member disappoints the cultural expectation that men are the dominant household figures. He comments though

that economic, legal, and cultural processes structure violence, what is important is that violence's meaning is "filtered and woven through the lives of interacting individuals"[12].

Meanwhile, the meaning of violence, in this case, unfolds as an intentional project between parties. Denzin argues that for the perpetrator of domestic violence, violence is an attempt to use physical or emotional force to regain hegemonic status and the respect of other family members. The perpetrator interprets the actions of the victim as an attack to his identity and thus as a cause of his violence. In turn the violent actor is overcome with emotional rage and suspends the moral value of the victim. This justifies the intent to harm and narrows any alternative views of the situation[13]. Violence therefore imposes one interpretive framework and destroys the victim's interpretive framework. In so doing it can temporarily achieve its desired end of control over the other. Denzin however, suggests that this rupture leads victims to view the act and the perpetrator negatively, the violent act cannot permanently impart the interpretation of control and respect that the perpetrator aims at. As a result of this, therefore, violence destroys the very respect and control it seeks to attain and leads to a self-perpetuating violent spiral. According to Denzin:

> *He has the flesh of the other in his grip, while the*
> *other's will and freedom slips from his grasp. The*
> *goal of the violent act eludes the man of violence.*
> *He is drawn over and over again into the cycle of*

violence. He can never succeed in establishing his dominance and will over the will of the other[14].

He argues further that household members experience the cycle of violence along the following pathway:

> *1) denial of the violence; (2) pleasure derived from violence; (3) the building of mutual hostility between spouses and other family members; (4) the development of misunderstandings; (5) jealousy, especially sexual; (6) increased violence; and either (7) eventual collapse of the system or (8) resolution of violence into an unsteady, yet somewhat stable state of recurring violence[15].*

Denzin concludes from his phenomenology of violence, that violent interaction necessarily sets this cyclical pattern in motion and that the only means of breaking free from domestic violence is to remove oneself from he situation and begin a process of self-restructuring.

In the same vein, Jackson-Jacobs presents his own account of violence as an intentional pragmatic act. Jackson-Jacob describes his approach as inspired by symbolic interactionism and phenomenological sociologies which aim to give situated and descriptive explanations of why people do things. He describes his overall project as relying on observations and interviews to "trace the experience of participation in brawl as it progresses"[16]. As a matter of fact, Jackson-Jacobs took one of the participants back to the site of the brawl four years latter to tape-record the fighter's recollection of the event. In analyzing the experiences of three individuals who fought and lost in the encounter, his

central argument is that brawlers fight in order to illicit dramatic and entertaining narrative accounts that allow them to build reputations as charismatic, exciting, and tough fighters. In his words, "fighters intend their brawls to make good stories that reveal themselves as charismatic. And so they enact storylines that they expect will both test their character and be applauded by audiences"[17].

Like Denzin, Jackson-Jacobs uses his participants' stories to document the typical stages a fight passes through: entering a public space, staging a character context, fighting, and telling the story of the fight. Among these stages, the most important for fighters' intentional projects are the character contest and the narrative reconstruction. Jackson-Jacobs; "dramaturgical phenomenology" focuses on these two stages and the importance of the presentation of self in the character contest. The character contest is, according to him, an effort to construct a favourable narrative of the fight irrespective of what may be the result in future.

Jackson-Jacobs asserts also that "shit talking" is an important element of the interactive character contest. To this end, actors verbally attempt to provoke another person to fight while simultaneously attempting to present themselves as charismatic and tough men to the audience watching the interaction. The interaction is the process whereby participants constitute the experience as violent by: signaling the potentiality of violence; enticing the object of verbal aggression to strike, removing the body into the emotions needed to erupt

violently; and providing a memorable narrative that participants can reconstruct more easily than the physical altercation itself. Once this character contest becomes physical, Jackson-Jacobs argues that the men involved escalate the level of violence in an attempt to save face and appear as the more hegemonic figure. Others' experience of street fighting is, for Jackson-Jacobs, thus phenomenologically understood as an intentional action aimed at building a masculine reputation.

In contrast to Denzin and Jackson-Jacobs, Staudigl deals explicitly with the theme of violence in his attempt to build a phenomenological theory. He sees "the methodological center of phenomenology as the attempt to purely describe our experiences of objective givens in terms of the ways we make sense of them"[18]. He does not refer any data from persons who have experienced violence; rather this argument involves self-reflections even though he is not clear on the extent to which he has experienced violence.

Staudigl's theorization adopts elements of both Merleau-Ponty and Schutz. Staudigl draws on Merleau-Ponty to argue that our embodiment structures our understanding of the world and leads us to form pre-reflexive habits. He conceives of our relation to the world as one of "I can" which according to Merleau-Ponty simply means that we relate to the world through what our bodies can do with objects in the world and through the sensory data those objects impart on our bodies[19]. Thus, our relation to the world as "I can" entails that we intend certain physical actions and decide among particular

pragmatic projects. Staudigl, however, argues that our embodied selves have an inherent vulnerability that we must negotiate in determining our intentional projects. According to Staudigl, violence destroys our "bodily 'I can', its collective forms, and the sense structures founded upon them"[20]. It is a restriction of the "I can" because, using the terminology of Schutz, it limits the "relevancies" that persons can consider in creating intentional pragmatic projects[21]. Further reflecting Schutz, Staudigl utilizes conceptions of cognitive intentional and motive to argue that violent actors consciously aim to destroy intersubjectivity by inflicting pain on the body of the other. Violence closes victims' intentional openness to the world and forces them to consider a body typically taken for granted in immersed activity. Violence demands that the victim intentionally orient him or herself toward only one course of action: that which ends the violence and guarantees their continued bodily existence[22].

The loss of the body's "I can" is not simply a reduction in one's physical function, but also a loss of one's ability to make sense of the world since the body is central to sense-making. That is, like Denzin, Staudigl concludes that violence ruptures our existing interpretive frameworks. With this conception of violence as a restriction of intentional projects, Staudigl argues that all victims experience violence as a social "contraction of the basic reciprocity of perspectives which reduces interaction to an asymmetrically determined relation"[23].

From the foregoing, these scholars take other's experience as their primary data and do not operate within the strict confines of a *phenomenological epoche* (as Husserl envisaged) that focuses on self-reflection. At this point in time, these are to be taken as a clue to the tension between the philosophical phenomenological project and social science's aim to describe and analyze the lived world of others. None of these studies attempts to bracket consideration of all other factors and consider what, if anything, violence is in and of itself. Scholars like Denzin are correct to assume that violence occurs in cultural contexts that influence how, where, and between whom these actions unfold. It is not like the Husserlian Phenomenological epoche that cannot consider these external factors of experience. For them not to fully employ the phenomenological epoche confirms the general phenomenological conclusion that self-conscious reflection cannot directly access other's experience.

It is obvious that intersubjectivity remains a central theme in these analyses of violence. Merleau-Ponty's idea of intersubjectivity holds that we are aware of ourselves only through our awareness of others' behaviour and speech. We do not fully perceive ourselves, and so it is through the other that we obtain self-awareness. Moreover, our bodies respond to the world and in responding to others we constitute our individual selves[24]. In this process of mutual constitution, self and other intertwine. Within this intertwining both parties learn the specific cultural patterns, bodily habits and common language required to continue for interaction. Just as each scholar above holds the

phenomenological conclusion that the shared or subjective-existential meaning of violence is co-created interactionally. Theoretically and by implication Staudigl upholds that individuals complete their violent projects by using the other as the foil for their attempts to engage in pre-reflexive embodied action. Denzin on the other hand affirms that individuals complete their violent projects by responding to victims' apparent challenges to their desired identities. While Jackson-Jacobs asserts that individuals complete their violent projects by imagining audiences' interpretation of their actions. Uniquely, we find that although violence is intersubjectively constituted and enacted, its meaning is frequently conceptualized as an activity that restricts intersubjective meaning and imposes the violent actors' unilateral interpretation.

It should be noted as well, in the same basic phenomenological conclusion that the world is experienced and made meaningful from a particular perspective that is shaped by its relations with others. Of course, this is not to say that seeing the other and sharing a world with them equals being exactly as they are as well and understanding them fully. Our embodiment and perceptual ambiguity preclude such certainty. Merleau-Pounty has pointed out that the other is not inaccessible, but is part of the self and the world the body-subject moves within. As Merleau-Ponty succinctly summarizes, "the Alter and the Ego are one and the same in the true world which is the unifier of minds"[25]. He further says that:

> *In reality, the other is not shut up inside my perspective of the world, because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it slips spontaneously into the other's, and because both are brought together in the one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception[26].*

Hence, in an effort to posit a stable understanding of how others experience violence, one would simply summarize that these phenomenological applications do not sufficiently account for differences in the experience of violence. In many cases it appears as though it is the researcher's interpretation that prevails over that of the other. Perhaps the greatest irony in this is that since these studies restrict the possible experiences of others by reducing them to a particular coherent account develop mainly by the author, they are, according to Staudigl's and Denzin's vision of violence as restricting an intending person, themselves violent. No wonder, Emmanuel Levinas proclaims that the process of attempting to understand the meaning of another is itself subject to a degree of violence. Understanding entails approximating an "other's" meaning to ourselves, and for Levinas, this is an act of violence. Thus, he explains: "knowledge is always an adequation between thought and what it thinks. There is in knowledge, in the final account, an impossibility of escaping the self"[27]. He further explains that "knowledge is a re-presentation, a return to presence and nothing may remain other to it"[28]. By implication, there is disrespect and violence in the ego's attempt to know something about the other because knowing makes what was the other's mine. Yet, it is impossible to understand

spoken or written discourse without an act of violent egotism that takes away the other's distinctiveness.

Nevertheless, this summation should not lead us to reject all phenomenological insights. Nor should it cause us, like Levinas, to assert that the only proper task is to venerate other's complete alterity. Problems definitely arise when phenomenologists claim to capture others' experiences based on solitary reflection without demonstrating the intersubjective nature of this reflection. Beside, for Jack Reynolds, to assert that the other cannot be known "verges on becoming "agnosticism" in regard to the other"[29]. Such agnosticism does not assist us in our quest to determine how we can understand other's experiences. In fact, it asserts that this quest is impossible. The problem remains as Reynolds points out that if we cannot know the other in any fashion, then the solipsism that critics (inaccurately) attribute to phenomenology actually "seems to have returned through the back door"[30].

Above all, the fact remains, phenomenologically, that insofar as one experiences and shares a world with others, it does not necessarily mean that one must, or can know those others in their entirety without any remaining difference. The core features of a phenomenology are not just the demonstration of eidetic analysis and reliance on ideal-types and typologies which might post an essentialized coherent understanding of other. Its analytical tools is arguably reflecting on Husserl's efforts to find secure foundations for science more than they reflect necessary elements of phenomenological analysis[31].

Phenomenology often demonstrates the partiality of knowledge and so leaves space for difference without assuming an unbridgeable gap between self and other. In particular, Merleau-Ponty's ideas of ambiguity and intertwining rail account for the other as completely the same or as wholly-other. Merleau-Ponty argues that one cannot know the other, amounts to a negative positivism that ignores the complexity of human experience.

> *A negative thought is identical to a positivist thought, and in this reversal remains the same in that, whether considering the void of nothingness or the absolute fullness of being, in every case, it ignores density, depth, the plurality of planes, the background worlds*[32].

Understanding other's experiences, then, requires that we should rather use some phenomenological insights, particularly Merleau-Ponty's, to sketch a research program of how to understand others without reducing the other's experience to our own, as some of the above phenomenologies of violence seem to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy allows us to escape any "agnosticism to the other" (Reynolds, 2004) that stems from assuming that the other's experiences are completely different, as Levinas's (1969, 1985) position seem to do.

The phenomenological conclusion above all is that conscious reflection demonstrates we share a world with other beings. This is because, when we share a world with others we can, on the basis of this sharing, make efforts to understand them. It is therefore, worthy of note, that we summarize this position on sharing, and of course, with Merleau-Ponty's conclusions about intertwining

and ambiguity. These concepts demonstrate that we are never fully aware of our selves or others. Expecting to have absolute clarity in our experience of "the other" is absurd; there are degrees of understanding such that some components of the other are accessible to us and others are not. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy demonstrates that our bodily experience rejects understanding objects or others according to a dichotomy of presence or absence, similarity or difference, self or other. But from the position that when we share a world and experience others as both similar and different, it will make us work towards transformation and understanding with others. It is only in participating in the worlds of others that we might ourselves experience the feelings and positions of others (people) and things that are far less pleasant like violence. Hence, more experiential facts from the historical origins about violence and practice of democracy in Nigeria shall help in determining whether "violence" should be justified or not.

5.2 Historical Settings: Violence and Practice of Democracy since the Colonial Administration in Nigeria

The country Nigeria is currently divided into six geopolitical zones namely: the North-West comprising Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, and Zamfara; the North-East comprising Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa and Yobe; the North Central comprising Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCT), Plateau, Nassarawa, Niger, Kwara, Kogi and Benue; the south-

West comprising Lagos, Osun, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti and Ondo; the South-East comprising Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi and the South-South comprising Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo and Bayelsa. None of these zones is spared from possibility of ethnic, electoral and religious violence nonetheless; the trigger, machinery and strategy employed might differ and the remote cause may as well vary across zones and states. Also Nigeria is a pluralistic society with different and overlapping regional, religious, and ethnic divisions. Nigerian culture is as diverse as its population, which is estimated to be over 150 million.

However, the remote cause of violence in Nigeria may be enunciated, given the circumstances of Nigerian's sudden attack by the British colonialists. The onset of Nigeria as a nation is thus being flooded with political violence, crude use of power and deepening, socio-economic crises. The principal factors that shaped this tradition are couched in hegemony, capitalism and politics of exclusion[33], which underpin the logic of imperialism fundamentally, this pattern has left an aftertaste of lingering State violence, which is an epiphenomenon of this culture clash. Simply put, imperial violence and its concomitants are replicated in Nigeria's postcolonial state and political culture. The tyrannical state violence replicated is a function of colonial administrative subterfuge, which was modeled upon administrative convenience – even when the colonialists have left the Nigerian political space. Accordingly, "--- the processes of the establishment of western hegemony were designed in such a

way as to make their stranglehold survive well beyond the period of their stay"[34]. Since colonial Nigeria was grounded on the anvil of violence, its corollary, the postcolonial Nigerian state is not lacking in crude use of power and violence in the execution of its grisly political objectives.

As a consequence, the Nigerian political class has appropriated the mechanics of political operation left by the colonialist; this has given rise to postcolonial political elite, whose business is to advance the underdevelopment project initiated by the imperialists for the furtherance of its interests. In this vein, Richard Joseph sees this political opportunism as "clientelism"[35], or prebendalism, which is a penumbra of "alliance of the purse and the gun"[36] and postcolonial tragedies. In this context, however, Claude Ake further illuminates the nature of the postcolonial Nigerian state thus:

> *Since the colonial state was for its subject, at any rate, an arbitrary power, it could not engender any legitimacy--- At independence, the form and function of the state in Africa did not change much. State power remained essentially the same: immense, arbitrary, often violent, always threatening[37].*

The violent activities that have been perpetrated and inspired by the colonialists ensuing administrations have virtually launched the path of violence.

Moreover, in order to contain people's dissatisfaction as well as to muscle opposition arising from the masses, the past leaders since Nigeria's political independence in 1960 have enormously contributed to the rapid growth of violence in Nigeria. After over three decades of (tyrant) military rule, Nigeria

looked set for a return to stability and the regaining of its position as a democratic state. But since 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, the Nigeria electoral and political landscape has fallen from par to below par and has moved from violence to greater violence. The level and magnitude of electoral, political, regional and religious violence have risen and the political elites have often converted poverty ridden unemployed Nigerians into mercenaries for the perpetration of electoral, regional and religious violence. Moreso, the situation of insecurity in Nigeria right from the onset of this democratic dispensation has become an unending debate among academia and policy cycle in the country. The act of armed-robbery that happened to be a breakfast at the beginning of civilian rule in 1999, followed by the Niger Delta militancy that gave birth to kidnapping/pipeline oil vandalisation in the Niger Delta region that assumed its ugly face during late President Musa Yar' Adua administration and currently the Islamic sect act of terrorism popularly known as Boko Haram, all these and among others have described Nigeria as a violent state. Consequently and above all, the breakdown of the history of violence in Nigeria since 1960 is dated as follows:

1966   January 14-15.First military coup. Balewa and other prominent leaders are killed. Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi becomes Head of state on January.

1966   July 29. Second military coup. Ironsi is killed. Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon becomes Head of State many Easterners in the North are massacred. Exodus begins to the Eastern Region.

1967   May 30. Ojukwu, military governor of the Eastern Region, declares the Eastern Region to be the Independent Republic of Biafra.

1967   July 6. Civil War begins

1970   January 15. Biafra surrenders and rejoins Nigeria. 1.5 million lives lost, mainly to starvation.

1976   February 13. Fouth military coup, led by col. Dimka. Murtala Muhammed is killed. Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo becomes Head of State on the following day.

1980   May, Religious violene in Zaria. Much property is destroyed.

1980   December 18-20. Riots in Kano. The Maitatsine sect, 4,177 are killed.

1982   September 29? October 3, Disturbances in Kaduna, Kaduna state. 53 killed and many churches are burned.

1982   October 29-30. Further trouble in Maiduguri, Borno State, Maitatsine sects. 118 die.

1984   February 27? March 5. disturbance in Yola, gongola State. Maitatsine sect, 568 die.

1985   April 26-28. Riot in gombe, Bauchi State. Maitatsine sect. 105 die

1986   7th coup, coup attempt by General Mamman Vatsa fails. Coup plotters are executed in March

1986   March, Palm Sunday. Christians and Muslims clash during processions in Ilorin, Kwara state.

1986   May. At the University of Ibadan, Muslims burn the figure of the risen Christ at the Catholic Chapel of the Resurrection.

1987   March 5th and following days. In Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Christians and Muslims clash at the College of education. 100 Churches and Mosques burned.

1987   March. Katsina, funtua, Zaria, gussau and Kaduna (Kaduna State). A wave of religious riots, many churches are burned and property destroyed, and many lives are lost.

1990   April 22. Coup attempt by Major Gideon Orkah. 42 coup plotters will be executed on July 27

1991   April In Katsina, several lives are lost. Shite sect in Katsina led by Malam Yahaya Yakubu stirs up trouble. At the end of April, in Tafawa Balewa. (Bauchi State) over 200 lives are lost, and property and 20 churches are destroyed.

1991   October 14-15. In Kano, the attempt of the Izala sect to stop Rev. Bonnke from preaching becomes violent thousands of lives are lost and property destroyed.

1992   February 6th and then May 15-16. Zango Kataf, Zaria, Kaduna State communal clash becomes a religious clash, with lives and property

destroyed Funtua (Katsina State). Kalakato religious sect assaults a village head. 50 lives are lost and property destroyed.

1993   June 12 election. Abiola would win over Tofa.

1993   June 23. President Babangida nullifies the elections of June 12.

1994   May 21. A mob kills four men in Ogoniland. Eventually Ken Saro-wiwa is hanged for allegedly being behind this.

1994   June 12. M.K.O. Abiola declares himself President but he is arrested one week later.

1995   Alleged abortive couop attempt. Forty persons are convicted. Among them, Obasanjo and Yar' Adua are imprisoned. (10th coup).

1995   November 10 Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others are executed. He was a writer and leader of the Ogoni people.

1996   June 4. Kudirat abiola, age 44, wife of Chief Abiola who is in prison, is assassinated in Lagos.

1997   December 21. Alleged 11th attempted coup. Second in command, Chief of Staff Lt. General Oladipo Diya is arrested.

1998   July 7, Abiola dies in prison, while being visited by a delegation from the U.S.A. government

1999   May 20, Muslim-Christian riots in Kaduna, for three days, several hundred are feared dead.

1999   May 29, Obasanjo becomes President. Ijaw and itsekiri fight in Delta Region, over 200 are killed

1999	July 18. Hausa and Yoruba riot in Shagamu, over 60 are killed. This leads to trouble in Kano where over 70 are killed. August 11. About 200 are killed as the army intervenes in Taraba state October. Sharia Law in is introduced in Zamfara State. November 25. Yoruba and Hausa clash in Lagos, about 100 are killed.
2000	February. Riots in Kaduna over the introduction of Sharia. Over 400 are killed.
2001	September 7. Christian-Muslim conflicts in Jos. Over 500 are killed.
2001	October 12-14. In Kano, there are anti-American riots, because of USA intervention in Afghanistan. At least 350 are killed. October 12, 19 soldiers are killed after feuds near Benue and Taraba States. October 21-22. The massacre of 200 civilians in Benue State by soldiers, in retaliation for 19 soldiers who were killed. No one is held accountable for the massacre. President Obasanjo defends it.
2001	December 23. Attorney General of Nigeria, Bola Ige is assassinated[38].
2002	November 20-23 – Miss World riots, around 250 are killed during rioting by Muslims across northern Nigeria as a response to an article deemed blasphemous.
2004	February 4 – Yelwa massacre, 78 Christians are massacred in Yelwa. May 2 – Yelwa massacre, roughly 630 Muslims are massacred in Yelwa as a reprisal attack from February.

2008   November 28-29 – 2008 Jos riots, 381 people are killed in sectarian rioting between Christians and Muslims in Jos.

2010   January 17 – March 7 – 2010 Jos riots, around 992 people are killed in sectarian rioting between Christians and Muslims in the city of Jos. Main article: Boko Harma insurgency

2009   July 26-29 – 2009 Boko Haram uprising, nearly 1,000 people are killed in clashes between Boko Harma militants and Nigerian soldiers throughout northern Nigeria. Beginning the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency in Nigeria.

July 30 = Mohammed Yusuf, spiritual leader of Boko Haram, is summarily executed by Nigerian soldiers following the recent uprising. Abubakar shekau takes control of the group.

2010   September 7 – Bauchi prison break, 5 people are killed and 721 inmates are freed from prison in Bauchi by suspected Boko Haram gunmen.

December 31 – December 2010 Abuja attack, a bomb attack outside a barracks in Abuja kills four civilians.

2011   May 29 – May 2011 northern Nigeria bombings, 15 people are killed in Abuja and Bauchi after bombs explode in several towns in northern Nigeria during Goodluck Jonathan's swearing in as the new president.

June 16-2011 Abuja police headquarters bombing, at least two people, the perpetrator and a traffic policeman, are killed in a failed bombing of Abuja's police headquarters. It is Nigeria's first instance of a suicide bombing.

August 26-2011 Abuja United Nations bombing, 21 people are killed in a bombing attack on a United Nations compound in Abuja.

November 4 – 2011 Damaturu attacks, between 100 to 150 people are killed in a series of coordinated assaults in northern Nigeria.

December 22-23 – December 2001 Nigeria clashes, 68 people, of whom are 50 militants, at least 7 soldiers, and 11 civilians, are killed in clashes between Boko Haram militants and Nigerian soldiers in Maiduguri and Damaturu.

December 25 – December 2011 Nigeria bombings, 41 people are killed by Boko Haram bomb attacks and shootings on Christian churches.

| 2012 | During 2012, 792 people were killed as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency. |

January 5-6 – January 2012 Nigeria attacks, around 37 Christians are targeted and killed by Boko Haram militants.

January 20 – January 2012 Nigeria attacks, 193 people, of whom at least 150 are civilians and 32 are police officers, are killed in Kano State by Boko Haram gunmen.

April 8 – April 2012 Kaduna bombings, 38 people are killed following a bombing at a church in Kaduna.

June 17 – June 2012 Kaduna church bombings, 19 people are killed following bomb attacks against three churches inKaduna.

August 7 – Deeper Life Church shooting, 19 people are killed when Boko Haram gunmen raid a church in Kogi State.

August 8 – Two Nigerian soldiers and one civilian are killed in a mosque in an apparent reprisal attack for yesterday's massacre.

December 25 – December 2012 shootings in Nigeria, 27 Christians are killed in Maiduguri and Potiskun by suspected Boko Haram militants.

December 28 – Another 15 Christians are killed in the village of Musari by unknown gunmen.

2013	Islamist insurgency in Nigeria 2013 fatalities were at least 1,000-1,007+:

January 1 – Nigerian Army raid kills 13 militants.

January 4 – Ogun prison break, 15 inmates are freed in a prison break in Ogun state. Boko Harm is not suspected to be involved in the attack.

February 8 – Attack on polio vaccinators kills 9 women.

March 18 – 2013 Kano bus bombing, between 22 and 65 people are killed in Kano by a car bombing.

April 16 – 2012 Baga massacre, 187 people are killed in baga in Borno State. It is unclear whether thenigerian military or Boko Haram is responsible for the massacre.

June – 9 children are killed in Maiduguri and 13 students and teachers are killed in Damaturu by Bokom Harma.

June 30 – Ondo prison break, 2 people are killed and 121 inmates escape following a prison break in Ondo State. Claims that Boko Haram took part in the attack are dispelled.

July 6 – Yobe State school shooting, more than 42 are killed by Boko Haram gunmen in a Yobe State school.

August 12 – 56 people are killed by Boko Haram in a Maiduguri mosque.

September 12 – ambush by Boko haram leaves 40 soldiers dead.

September 12 – 18 – An offensive by Nigerian Army leaves 150 Islamists and 16 soldiers dead.

September 19 – Benisheik attacks. 161 are killed in attacks blamed on Boko Haram.

September 20 – An Abuja shootout leave 7-9 killed.

September 29 – Guiba college massacre, more than 50 students are killed in Yobe State by Boko Haram gunmen.

October 10 – An attack at Damboa leaves at least 20 killed (15 suspected militants and 5 civilians).

October – Government forces raid rebel camps, killing around 101 Boko Haram fighters.

October 29 – Boko Haram raids Damaturu. At least 128 people are killed (95 militants, 23 soldiers, 8 policemen, and 2 civilians).

2014	January 14 – 30 people are killed in a bombing by Boko Haram militants in Maiduguri, Borno State.

January 26 – January 2014 Northern Nigeria attacks, 138 killed in total

January 31 – 11 Christians killed in Chakwawa by Boko Haram militants.

February 14 – Borno Massacre, 121 Christian villagers killed by Boko Haram militants in Konduga, Borno State.

February 15 – Izghe attack, 106 killed the village of Izghe, Borno State by Boko Haram gunmen.

February 15 – 90 Christians and 9 nigerian soldiers are killed in gwosa by Boko Haram

February 24 – Dozens killed as Boko haram again raids Izghe.

February 25 – Federal Government College attack, 59 students killed in a school massacre in Yobe State.

March 14 – Boko Haram attacks the heavily fortified giwa military barracks in Maiduguru, freeing comrades from a detention facility. The military then executes about 600 unarmed recaptured detainees, according to Amnesty International.

April 14 – April 2014 Abuja bombing, over 88 people killed in a twin bombing attack in Abuja.

April 15 – Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping, 276 female students in Borno State are kidnapped by Boko Haram.

May 1 – May 2014 Abuja bombing, 19 killed in Abuja by a car bomb.

May 5 – 2014 Gamboru Ngala attack, at least 300 people are killed in the twin towns of gamboru and Ngala in Borno State by Boko Haram militants.

May 20 – 2014 Jos bombings, at least 118 villagers are killed by car bombs in the city of Jos.

May 21 – 27 villagers are killed by Boko Haram gunmen in northeastern Nigeria.

May 27 – May 2014 Buni Yadi attack, 49 security personnel and 8 civilians are killed during a Boko Haram attack on a military base in Yobe State.

May 30 – the third emir of gwoza, Idrissa timta, is assassinated during a Boko Haram ambush.

June 1 – 2014 Mubi bombing, at least 40 people are killed by a bomb in Mubi, Adamawa State.

June 2 – Gwoza massacre, at least 200, mostly Christians, are killed in several villages in Borno state by Boko Haram.

June 20 – 23 – June 2014 Borno State attacks, at 70 people are killed and 91 women and children kidnapped by Boko Haram militants in Borno State.

June 23 – 25- June 2014 central Nigeria attacks, around 171 people are killed in a series of attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

June 25 – Ove 100 militants are killed by the Nigerian military during a raid on two Boko Haram camps.

June 28 – 11 people are killed by a bomb in Bauch.

July 18 – At least 18 are killed by a Boko Haram attack in Damboa, leaving the town almost destroyed.

July 22 – 51 people are killed by Boko Haram in Chibok.

September 19 – Around 30 people are killed by Boko haram militants at a busy market in Mainok, Borno State.

October 10- Lagos prison break, one inmate is killed following a failed attack to free inmates in a Lagos prison. Boko Haram is not suspected to be involved in the attack.

October 31 – At least 4 people are killed, 32 injured and 13 vehicles destroyed by an explosion at a bus station in Gombe.

November 2 – Kogi prison break, 99 inmates in Kogi State are freed by suspected Boko Haram rebels.

November 3-10 – 2014 Yobe State attacks, a double suicide bombing in Yobe State kills 15 Shiites on the 3rd and 46 students on the 10th.

November 25- Over 45 people are killed by two suicide bombers in Maiduguri, Borno State.

November 27 – around 50 people are killed in Damasak by Boko Haram militants.

November 28 – 2014 Kano bombing, at least 120 Muslim followers of the emir of Kano, Muhammad Sanusi II, are killed during a suicide bombing and gun attack by Boko Haram. The 4 gunmen are subsequently killed by an angry mob.

November 30 – Ekiti prison break, 274 inmates escape a prison in Ekiti. Claims that Boko Haram perpetrates the attack are refuted.

December 1-5 people are killed by two female suicide bombers who detonated explosions at a crowded market place in Maiduguri, Borno State.

December 6 – Minna prison break, 270 prisoners are freed from a prison in Minna. Boko Haram is not suspected to be involved in the attack.

December 10 – At least 4 people are killed and 7 injured by female suicide bombers near a market in Kano.

December 11-30 peolle are killed and houses are destroyed by Boko Haram militants in Gajiganna, Borno State.

December 13 – 2014 Gumsuri kidnappings, between 32 and 35 are killed and between 172 and 185 are kidnapped by Boko Haram in Borno State.

December 22 – 2014 Gombe bus station bombing, at least 27 people are killed at a bus station by a bomb in Gombe State.

December 28 – 29 – December 2014 Cameroon clashes, 85 civilians, 94 militants, and 2 Cameroonian soldiers are killed following a failed Boko Haram offensive into Cameroon's Far North Region.

2015   January 2 – Boko Haram militants attack a bus in Waza, Cameroon, killing eleven people and injuring six.

January 3 – 7 – 2015 Baga massacre, Boko Haram militants raze the entire town of Baga in north-east Nigeria. Bodies lay strewn on Baga's streets with as many as 2,000 people having been killed.

Book Haram now controls 70% of Borno State, which is the worst-affected by the insurgency.

January 3 – Fleeing villagers from a remote part of the Borno State report that Boko Haram had three days prior kidnapped around 40 boys and young men.

January 5 – News emerges that two days prior hundreds of Boko Haram militants had overrun several towns in northeast Nigeria and captured the military base in Baga.

January 9 – Refuges flee Nigeria's Borno State following the Boko Haram massacre in the town of Baga. 7,300 flee to neighbouring Chad while over 1,000 are trapped on the island of Kangala in Lake Chad. Nigeria's army vows to recapture the town, while Niger and Chad withdraw their forces from a transnational force tasked with combating militants.

January 10 – a female suicide bomber, believed to be aged around 10-years-old, kills herself and 19 others, possibly against her will, at a market in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

January 11 – More female suicide bombers, this time two, and again each believed to be around 10 years old, kill themselves and three others at a market in the northeastern city of Potiskum, Nigeria.

January 12 0 January 2015 Kolofata raid, Boko Haram militants launch a failed raid on Kolofata in Cameroon. The Cameroonian military claims the army lost only one officer while the Islamic group lost between 143 – 300 rebels.

January 16 – the military of Chad enters Cameroon to assist in fighting against Boko Haram insurgents.

January 17 – Following the January 16 Chad authorities decision to send troops to Nigeria and Cameroon to fight Boko Haram militants, the Russian ambassador to the country pledges to supply Cameroon with more modern weapons to combat the Islamist insurgents.

January 18 – Boko Haram militants kidnap 80 people and kill three others from villages in north Cameroon.

January 20 – Boko Haram leader Abubvakar Shekau claims responsibility for the attack on the town of Baga, Nigeria in which an unknown number of civilians were killed.

January 24 – 15 people are killed as Boko Haram gunmen attempt to burn down the village of Kambari near Maidaguri.

January 25 – Boko Haram rebels launch a large offensive against Nigerian forces in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, leading to the deaths of at least 8 civilians, up to 53 militants, and an unknown number of soldiers. Although the attack fails, the rebels

manage to capture the nearby strategic town of Monguno. The status of the 1,400 soldiers stationed in Monguno is unknown. As a result of these attacks, Boko Haram now controls four out of five roads leading into the major city, prompting fears that it will be taken as well.

January 28 – Boko Haram fighters killed 40 people while on a rampage in Adamawa State.

January 29 – The Nigerian military, in collaboration with Chadian soldiers, captures the border town of Michika from Boko Haram rebels.

January 31 – The African Union pledges to send up to 7,500 international soldiers to aid Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram. Chadian forces claim to have killed 120 Boko haram fighters while losing only 3 soldiers of their own during fighting in the north of Cameroon.

February 1 – Boko Haram again attacks the capital city of Borno State, Maiduguri. This time, the city is attacked from four out of the five sides. The attack is unsuccessful, but many civilians inside the city panic. Also, a suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber kills himself and eight others at the residence of a politician in Potiskum. Another suicide bomber kills five people outside a mosque in Gombe.

February 2 – A female suicide bomber attacks minutes after the President of Nigeria leaves an election rally in the city of Gombe resulting in at least one death and eighteen people injured.

February 4 – Boko Haram militants reportedly raid the Cameroonian town of Fotokol in Cameroon's far North Region with scores of people killed. Also on February 4th, the Chad Army claims to have killed 200 militants and lost nine soldiers while capturing the border town of Gamboru Ngala.

February 6 – 2015 Niger raid, Boko Haram forces launch raids on the towns of Bosso and Ditta, both in Niger, marking the first time that the group has attacked the country. The Chadian military assists the Nigerian Armed Forces in repelling the attack. 5 Nigerians are killed while the government claims 109 Boko Haram militants are killed as well.

February 7 – Nigeria postpones its general election for six weeks to allow its armed forces to control parts of the country currently controlled by Boko Haram.

February 9 – Boko Haram launch a raid on a prison in the town of Diffa in Niger. Authorities repel the attack.

February 12 – the West African allied Forces, led by Nigerian and supported by Cameroon, chad, and Niger, invade the Sambisa Forest in Borno State, a stronghold of Boko Haram, killing scores

of the insurgents. Elsewhere, the town of Mbuta, 15 miles northeast of Maiduguri, is raided by Boko Haram, resulting in the deaths of 8 residents. A dozen people are also killed in a suicide blast at Biu, 100 miles southest of Maiduguri.

February 13 – Boko Haram militants attack Chad for the first time after 30 fighters crossed Lake Chad in four motorboats and attacked the village of Ngouboua. Chad recently joined Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon in a military coalition against Boko Haram.

February 14 – Boko Haram forces assault Gombe, the capital city of Gombe State, for the first time. The Nigerian military repels the attack, although the militants managed to overrun a checkpoint on the edge of the city before retreating. The attack coincides with the beginning of a Nigerian offensive to rollback Boko Haram forces around the northeast.

February 15 – a suicide bomber kills 16 and wounds 30 in the Nigerian city of Damaturu.

February 16 – Nigeria regains the key town of Monguno from Boko Haram. The town had previously fallen to the militants on January 25th.

February 18 – The Nigerian army claims to have killed 300 militants in northeastern Nigeria. A warplane bombs a funeral

ceremony in Niger killing 37 civilians. The warplane remains unidentified, with the Nigerian government denying responsibility.

February 20 – Boko Haram militants kill 34 people in attacks across Borno State, 21 from the town of Chibok.

February 21 – Nigerian army retakes Baga, which had fallen to Boko Haram on January 3rd.

February 22 – A suicide bomber kills five and wounds dozens outside a market in Potiskum.

February 24 – Two suicide bombers kill at least 27 people at bus stations in Potiskum and Kano.

February 24 – Chadian soldiers kill over 200 Boko Haram fighters in a clash near the town of Garambu, close to Nigeria's border with Cameroon. One Chad Army soldier is killed and nine are wounded.

February 26 – At least 35 people are killed in two attacks targeting the cities of Biu and Jos.

February 28 – Two female suicide bomberskill up to four civilians near Damaturu.

March 2 – a senior military officer claims that 73 Boko Haram militants disguised as herders were killed near Kondunga town in Borno State. In addition, the Chadian military recaptures the town of Dikwa, also in Borno State.

March 7 – five suicide bomb blasts leave 54 dead and 143 wounded in Maiduguri. After the explosions, Boko Haram formally declaresallegiance to Islamic State.

March 8 – Forces from Niger and chad launch a ground and air offensive against Boko Haram Islamist militants in northeastern Nigeria.

March 9 – Chadian and Nigerian forces retake the towns of Malam Fatouri and Damasak in northeastern Nigeria.

March 13 – the Nigerian government admits to using foreign mercenaries in the fight against Boko Haram[39].

From the foregoing, the destructions of lives and properties in the country have done serious damage to the safety of ordinary Nigerians as well as socio-economic and political development of the nation as a whole. Thus, this has given a typical manifestation to a statement made by one British police officer in 1898 that "Murderous organizations have increased in seizing and scope. They are more daring. They are served by the most terrible weapons offered by modern science, and the world is nowadays threatened by the new forces which – may someday wreak widespread destruction"[40]. Hence, the destructions have become too challenging that the freedom one seeks to enjoy is overtly deprived. No wonder, Emmanuel Levinas declared that "it is an experience of terror that brings a free man under the domination of another"[41]. Currently, the ongoing

violence – the Boko Haram insurgence has brought forth not only suffering but also pain to the great number of people. Thus, Levinas would rightly say that "pain brought by suffering and coming from violence becomes the central phenomenon of the diseased State"[42].

In effect, the future of democratic developments is usually placed in danger by the high rate of terrorist animosities and as such. The greatest liberties in the modern states of human in a society are being limited as people continue to experience suppression, war, poverty, increase of inequality, corruption, overpopulation, religious politics, identity crisis and the influence of sectionalism. Deciding whether or not terrorism has certainly gotten worse requires weighing three variables; the frequency of attacks, the severity of each incident, and the cumulative lethality of terrorist campaigns"[43]. Consequently, the insinuation so far remains that terrorism in Nigeria is rather a political establishment which has its background in both imperial creations of Nigeria, the unresolved questions in the country and the rise of poverty well advanced by inequality, destitution, hooliganism, and which all rooted in the poorly environments that require positive action from history. Where such values as inequality, corruption and war are high, the state relationship between peace and safety becomes a shaky foundation of terrorist haven. Then, how can a terrorist be understood in Nigeria? What implications for the northern political architecture's responses to Nigeria political affairs? How does democracy subscribe to the violence and the act of terrorism in Nigeria? The questions are

typically on a political ideology shaping the country from reasoning essentially correctly to adopt a sense of nation states irrespective of languages, regionalism ideology and the radical surprises of political deceptions in Nigeria's politics. In order for Nigeria to escape the trap of her historical hatred, reaction to differences, deeply penetrated political strategy, the notion of historical preserved ideological practices must be addressed.

However, to reveal the reality of terrorism in Nigeria, could eventually lead us to link historical antecedent of the national political violence and the current political situation in the country. The emergence of political instability in the country dated with history has been a major problem even after independence in the 1960s. The objective trends here are the tensions, violence and counter threats, which were deliberately invited by some elites to the destruction of the country. This is why the appearance of violence and political conflicts has never been separated from the country politics in neither the past nor the contemporary political anger and hatred already been preserved in the country over the years. Nevertheless, the present violence through an act of terrorism is an opportunity for the country to re/evaluate the historical events of the country. To be sure; Laurence J. Lafleur, meditation on first philosophy notes:

> *The present is opportune for my design: I have*
> *freed my mind of all kinds of caring: I feel myself*
> *fortunately, disturbed by no passions; and I have*
> *found a severe retreat in peaceful solitude. I will*
> *therefore, make a serious and unimpeded effort do*

> *this. However, it will not be necessary to show that*
> *they are all false, a task[44].*

It should also be noted that the current instabilities in Nigeria's dispensations are not different from those in the past decade madness designed by political ideologies. While, the desired attentions among the courageous leaders, who have the striking opportunity to challenge the political heartbreaking situation facing the country have not been able to resolve the problem and gain the political attention.

In the main time, a cursory look at the historical origin of Nigeria as a nation reveals a form of violent relations and crisis of interests, goals and ambitions among individuals, groups and political structures in the process of attaining power and keeping it. While a historical appraisal of Nigeria political system reveals also an entrenched culture of political and electoral violence juxtaposed with materialism and monetary inducement in voting. The preview has as well revealed signs of high violence than the previous years even though the level of political awareness over the past six years has risen marginally. Violence in Nigeria has been on the rise since the surface of civilian government in 1999. The level, magnitude and the machinery applied and employed by perpetrators keep evolving. From the literature in this work, the Nigerian government or the political class are behind various violence activities in the country arising from the inability to implement policies, celebrating and entertaining corrupt leaders, human rights abuse and so on. And the question is

whether violence (of any kind) can be justified? Of what value will it be attached to Nigeria's democratic dispensation? To this end, next is set out to answer these and other questions.

5.3   Violence: Any Justification

From the foregoing, political violence is one of the most disturbing problems we are facing today. History of the world testifies to it. The present era has in particular witnessed more violence than hitherto known to humankind. It is found in almost all parts of the world, be it industrialized-capitalist societies, or the societies, or, still again, the developing countries of Asia and Africa. It is generally held that political violence manifests itself more in societies where political institutions are not sufficiently capable of dealing with socio-economic disparities and other grievances. Conversely, it is also held that in relatively egalitarian societies with stable, well-developed political institutions, political space in the power structure of decision making. As a matter of fact, some form of political violence is prevalent world over. However, the nature and causes of violence may differ from place to place and culture to culture. It depends, among others, on the nature of political institutions and the level of economic development. For instance, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) indulges in bomb blast to press for freedom of Northern Ireland from Great Britain. In South Africa the blacks protested for decades against the apartheid policies of the white. Minority government; when

their peaceful, non-violent protests often met with violent repression by the state, the blacks were compelled to resort to violent means to achieve their objectives. In some African countries tribal conflicts have resulted in mass violence, civil war and genocide. Rwanda and Somalia are prominent examples of full blown tribal conflicts. In Nigeria the colonial incursion is awash with various kinds of political violence and war. The internecine relationship among Nigerians and postcolonial realities (terror) has thus become a critical nature of Nigeria's society. The abortion of the bargained dividends of democracy, political independence and nationalist ideals in the wake of incessant military intervention in politics as well as political violence in Nigeria (especially this democratic regime) has elicited aesthetics of justice. In Latin America (Argentina, Cuba, Bolivia, Peru etc) there are many insurgency groups that indulge in guerrilla warfare, hostage taking and other types of political violence. Ernesto 'Che Guevara;, the Argentina-born guerrilla Marxist revolutionary who participated in Cuban revolution, believed in violence as a means to attaining every political goal. He was shot dead in Bolivia on October 9, 1967 after being captured by the Bolivian army while leading a guerrilla revolt against oppressive military rule there. He was a keen follower of Mao Tse Tung of China who declared that "power flows from the barrel of a gun". Since 1980s, terrorism has become a major form of political violence confronting every region of the world. Such widespread forms of violence have become a global phenomenon. It is, however, appalling to note that incidences and new forms of

political violence are growing at an alarming rate. Violence from their own world view and perspective.

Nevertheless, the profundity questions here should be whether violence is a necessary part of any radical political transformation? Is violence (of any form) justifiable? Is justification enough to legitimize violence? In answering these questions many philosophers and thinkers have dealt with the question of violence from their own world view and perspective. In Marxism, however, permissive space is defined first of all by the justification of revolutionary violence as a means according to a conception of just political and social ends. If revolution involves the outbreak of a kind of war between contending political parties, then this first pillar is justifying those who initiate it. The practice of revolutionary violence portrayed by Marx in *The Civil War in France*, for instance, presents the violence of revolutionaries in the Paris Commune of 1871 largely in a defensive attitude beset by reactionary forces willing to perpetrate all kinds of brutality[46-]. More generally, Marx argues, a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat needed to be repressive to the extent that the bourgeoisie resisted expropriation; but it was to be a short-term phenomenon different in kind and directly opposed to the alienated state form which it sought to destroy. Moreso, it has been argued that there is a textual and philosophical basis within Marxism for regarding members of the bourgeoisie as deserving of the violence they will receive from the proletariat on the basis that they perpetrate violence themsleves[47]. Just as Merleau-Ponty famously

argued that violence may be seen as justified in Marxist theory to the extent that it proves in the actual event to contribute to the elimination of violent exploitative human relations on the long run[48]; and Herbert Marcuse maintained that a rational appraisal of the probability of revolutionary success could be made in advance permitting an "historical calculus" concerning the validity of violence[49]. Thus, violence as to the extent that it is an instrument necessary in conducting revolution is said to be justified as a means of achieving fulfillment of the creative potential of humanity and all its members and of casting off the social structures of injustice[50]. to this end, the realization of this goal imposes an overwhelming obligation on political activists as it will appear to justifying whatever violent methods that may be required to achieve it without setting any natural limit. As such, the march of history towards just ends entails violence not only as justified choice but also as an unavoidable one. In other words, this aspect of Marxist theory (as may be called a just war theory) provides a doctrine of "necessity" by which the actions of revolutionaries may be said to have been excused (rather than justified per se) by the historical circumstances which compelled them[51].

Meanwhile, Sorel, the French radial speaks about the regenerative role of violence. He holds that through violence a class will discover its identity and resurrect itself.

> *Proletarian violence, carried on as a pure and*
> *simple manifestation of the sentiment of class*
> *struggle, appears [---] as a very fine and heroic*

> *thing: it is at the service of the immemorial interests of civilization; it is not perhaps the most appropriate method of obtaining immediate material advantages, but it may save the world from barbarism[52].*

George Sorel takes the most radical reading of Marxism in relation to the proletariat as he claims that proletarian consciousness constituted the basis for a complete break from established values, institutions, and practices. Anything contributing to the proletarian sense of separation and alienation from existing orders was therefore of benefit to the revolutionary struggle; anything tending towards compromise with the bourgeois world is inimical. While in practical terms, Sorel envisages small-scale proletarian violence that will help inspire the "myth" of an eventual cataclysmic confrontation. Myth is what occupies the consciousness of the revolutionary class and it is within the terms of this mythical consciousness that heroic, violent struggle against the 'force' of bourgeois authority is legitimated[53]. Sorel believes that this will give rise to a noble and restrained form of violence, trusting in the moral propriety of the revolutionaries. Sequentially, this myth will animate a final revolution and the creation of a fundamentally new social and moral order. In a sense then, violence in the context of capitalism and revolution serve the purpose of realizing a further, ultimate violent confrontation with capitalism: the end of violence is more violence.

According to Sorel, revolution is essential to re-establishing lost virtues of heroism and selfless courage, not only for the proletariat but for European civilization as a whole: "Not only can proletarian violence ensure the future revolution", he writes, "but it also seems the only means by which the European nations, stupefied by humanitarianism, can recover their former energy"[54]. The primary purpose of violence, therefore, is not instrumental (in the sense of Sorel's statement that "it is not --- the most appropriate method of obtaining immediate material advantages"[55]) but moral" it provokes hostility, it inspires, it educates and prompts further action. Violence thus moves from being the mere instrument sometimes called upon to facilitate change to being a key element in the moral transformation of the species. It becomes a means of tutoring and transforming revolutionary mankind and changing its consciousness; and to the extent that violence is rooted in the consciousness of a genuinely revolutionary proletariat, it will be governed by the emerging revolutionary hoeric ethos mediated through myth that stands in stark contrast to the resentful and vengeful ethos of bourgeois and socialist politics[56]. Both the purpose and form of violence, therefore, are intimately tied to revolutionary consciousness.

Furthermore, Frantz Fanon maintains that violence is the only tool available to the oppressed people for their struggle against oppression and exploitation. He says in his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* that the colonized people resort to violence to free themselves from the shackles of colonial rule. For him, therefore : "Violence can thus be understood to be the

perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end"[57]. He argues that colonized peoples have no other choice but to meet colonists' physical and emotional acts of violence with a violence of the same magnitude until "the last become first"[58]. Violent rebellion, he says, has the capacity to cure the ailments of the colonized while unifying a people as a basis for an new nation. Afterall, colonial power initiates to recognize the colonized people by force of violence. He argues in addition that colonial masters continue racism by the naked violence and then racism justifies the structural, institutional and individual violence. He therefore says that violence of the colonized does not need legitimation because it is the only option to overcome and stop the other's naked violence.

The violence of a native against the colonizer is presented as a necessary part of the preparation of true revolutionary subjectivity: it is, in fact, only through the expression of violence against an adequate object – the colonizer, rather than some surrogate victim – that colonial subjects shed the last remnant of colonialism and re-create themselves as the free subjects of a free nation.

> *The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot[59].*

Like Sorel, Fanon treats violence, not primarily as an instrument that may justifiably be used to overcome resistance, but as the means by which an adequate spiritual and psychological state can be achieved in the minds of the revolutionaries. In this view, 'revolution' stops being essentially about the transfer of power from one political group to another or even about the transformation of social structures. It becomes more essentially a matter of achieving true humanity through the moral reconstruction of the subject. Violence is part of this process not merely an instrument that can be used to create circumstances in which it may happen.

However, in the writings of Sorel and Fanon, two important stresses are added to the theory as it appears in the writings of Marx and Engels" first of all, they emphasis and radicalize the idea that the consciousness of the proletariat, as a class and, consequently, the consciousness of post-revolutionary humanity as a whole, will involve break with contemporary values. Secondly, they see this form of consciousness as being achieved fully only at the end of a process of development within capitalism (or in Fanon's case colonialism). To echo the *Manifesto*, only at the actual point of revolution itself and not prior to that moment does the proletariat assume a form of subjectivity in which it really has "nothing to lose but (its) chains"[60]. If it still has something to lose, then it still has a possible particular interest and is therefore not purely proletarian and not yet truly revolutionary. An important issue for these thinkers, therefore, concerns the establishment of this authentic form of revolutionary subjectivity, a

process that each of them addresses in part through a psychological framework[61]. In all three cases, this results in two thoughts about revolutionary violence, viz, first, that it may be *justified* by its contribution to the formation and dissemination of revolutionary subjectivity; and secondly, that it is *legitimate* to the extent that it originates in this emergent form of consciousness. To the extent that the consciousness of the revolutionary class is understood to give rise to new values for a new order, this opens up further possibility that whatever kinds of violence result from it are self-validating and not subject to the norms of existing conceptions of justice.

For some other scholars, their major concern is whether and under what circumstances political violence can be justified and how they can be employed in thinking ethically about violence. It begins by looking at arguments about the justifiability of violence that draw on major ethical theories such as deontology, utilitarianism and consequentialism. Whether there are obligations to obey the law, the relationship between violence and reason, and between violence and democracy, and/or whether our duties and obligations regarding the use of violence are universal in scope or are limited by national, religious, community and class affiliation. To this end, a justification for violence will urge that some or other violent action or campaign was or is the right thing to do, or any how permissible. Philosophical inquiries into justifiability of violence typically focus on what general conditions must be satisfied by any defensible moral justification for violence. Much philosophical discussion about political

violence is taken up with argument about whether and to what extent acts of violence can be justified as means to good ends. According to deontological ethics there are limits on what may justifiably be done in pursuit of good or worthy ends. Although many actions can be justified by their beneficial consequences, some actions are simply wrong in themselves. Immanuel Kant famously argued that it is wrong to tell a lie, even to save a life. Many deontologists would accept that bad actions can sometimes be justified in extreme or catastrophic situations – Fred suggests that killing an innocent person would be justified if it will save a whole nation while maintaining that in normal circumstances such actions are morally prohibited regardless of their consequences. Deontologists typically take the view that, other than in circumstances of war, the only acceptable justification for violence is that of self-defense or defense of others from wrongful attack. No wonder Robert Young asserts that political violence is justifiable when it is interpreted in the concept of just war in which:

> *There is a failure to grant citizens effective means of peacefully gaining redress against tyrannical abuse of power; when these maters are not respected revolutionary activity will be justified if there is a strong likelihood the government (or sovereign) can be toppled without ensuing tyranny or anarchy and bloodshed of an inordinate extent[62].*

Persons have moral rights not to be wrongfully injured or killed and, consequently, they have the right to defend themselves against wrongful

physical attack. We can only be justified in using as much violence against an attacker, however, as is required to defend ourselves. Thus, political violence is justifiable where it is undertaken indefence against murderous states, police or militia.

Deontologists have also claimed that violence can only justifiably be directed against those who are directly involved in it or responsible for it. Failure to prevent murder or injury, they argue, although it may be blame worthy in some circumstances, does not make one responsible for it. If for example, members of an ethnic group or an occupied territory are routinely tortured, beaten, and murdered by soldiers and police, other citizens may be considered blameworthy for failing to protest or put pressure on their government, but they cannot be held responsible for the murders, tortures, and beatings: they are innocent of those crimes. If they pay taxes and provide services to the army, their responsibility for death and injury is not increased by that. Bombs planted or detonated in order to kill such citizens, and to terrorize the population, could not count as a defense against the actions of the army and police. To be responsible for a person's death requires that one intentionally causes their death. (Not necessarily that one intended that the specific victims of one's actions should die, as with assassination, but that the specific aim of bringing about deaths). Only those involved in carrying out murders and beatings and their political masters may properly be considered responsible for violence and only they can be legitimate targets for defensive violence.

For utilitarians, the right thing to do is obvious and straightforward: the lives of the many outweigh the life of the one. According to Williams, while many of us might agree with the conclusion, we would not regard it as so obviously and straightforwardly the right thing to do as utilitarian thinking would have it. One reason why we would not, as deontologists have emphasized, is that we have a sense of responsibility and justifications for our own actions. As Williams observes, it is difficult to see how any moral outlook could get by without treating the distinction between action and inaction as morally significant, but at the same time we do hold people responsible for things they could have prevented but chose not to. As things stand, at any rate, the question of whether taking lives can be justified if doing so will save more lives is given clear, unequivocal and opposing answers by deontological and utilitarian ethics, neither of which is easy to embrace with conviction. Thus, Merleau-Ponty will simply say that the difference between (terrible) violence intended for domination and (superior) violence intended for freedom does not completely agreeably determine the disturbing characteristics of violence for the existentialists either – they as well raise up the Weberian theme of disaster[63].

Consequentialist ethics, of which utilitarianism is a kind, holds that actions are right or wrong not because of their intrinsic characteristics, but because of their consequences. One should decide how to act according to whether one's actions are likely on balance, to cause more good than harm or more right than wrong. But in reality, any beneficial consequences of acts of

political violence, particularly in relation to their aims, are often far from obvious. By contrast, the immediate consequences of violent action tend to be all too clear and weigh against their justifiability. Most consequentialists take the view that the harms caused by acts of violence are only likely to be outweighed by their helping to bring an end to substantial evil or injustice. For consequentialists therefore, a justification for political violence should satisfy the following three conditions: (1) that it aims and can realistically be expected to rectify serious and remediable wrong; (2) that it does not bring about worse consequences than would happen without it; and (3) that there are no alternative means of securing its aims that would have better consequences. Whether an act of violence satisfies the first condition would depend among other things on one's view of what counts as a serious and remediable wrong.

Nevertheless, in an ideally good or just society, we may suppose, violence for political ends will not satisfy the consequentialist conditions for the justification of violence mentioned above, either because such a society, by definition, would not permit a serious and remediable wrong or because it would have effective legal and political alternatives to violence for remedying wrongs and injustices. Thus, for consequentialists, whether political violence is justified will depend to a large extent on how far short of good or just a given society's arrangements, practices and laws fall. According to the principle of utility, a good society is one whose institutions, practices and social arrangements maximize overall happiness and minimize overall suffering.

Critics of utilitarianism have pointed out that a good society, understood in this way, is compatible with, and in some circumstances may positively require unfair and unequal rules and social arrangements, even slavery.

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls argues that the regulative principles according to which the consequences of rules and social arrangements should be assessed are those that embody the idea of justice as fairness. Rawls argues against utilitarianism that the right is prior to the good and cannot be reduced to or defined as that which will maximize the good. A just society, according to Rawls, must satisfy what he describes as the *Principle of Liberty and the Principle of Difference*[64]. The Principle of Liberty stipulates that all members of society should have the maximum liberty consistent with equal liberty for all. The Principle of Difference calls for as much inequality as is required to make the worst-off better off than they would be in a more equal state of affairs. The Principle of Liberty takes precedence over the Principle of Difference. This has the consequence that restrictions on liberties, which could include property rights, cannot be justified in order to make the worst-off better off. For a Rawlsian consequentialist, therefore, what would qualify as serious and remediable wrong are rules, practices, and social arrangements that seriously violate the two principles. Given the ordering of the principles, it is unlikely that serious violation of the Principles of Difference alone would be sufficient to justify political violence since it is difficult to see how any act of violence could fail to infringe someone's liberties. Thus, for a Rawlsian, political violence is

only likely to be justified in states that seriously restrict freedom in a way that is not required by maximum equality of liberty for all. But then, where there is no freedom, there must be violence and violence as such brings no social change. In effect, Martin Luther King, Junior declares that:

> *A social change must be non violent. If one is in search of a better job, it does not help to burn down the factory. If one needs more adequate education, shooting the principal will not help. To destroy anything, person or property, cannot bring us closer to the goal that we seek[65].*

For King, violence is the language of the unheard who wants to assert that he would rather be dead than ignored. As a result, he believed that it is ultimately self-defeatist and suicidal[66]. In view of this conviction, he refused to yield to violence under any circumstance. In theory, he says, fine and interesting distinctions could be made between aggressive and defensive violence. But in practice the line of demarcation between them is very thin: "The minute a program of violence is enunciated, even for self-defence", he says, "the atmosphere is filled with talk of violence, and the words falling on unsophisticated ears may be interpreted as invitation to aggression"[67].

In line with the above declaration, Helder Camara, in addition, proclaims that violence cannot be "life-giving" or a "cleansing force". For him, therefore, neither the covert and subtle violence of injustice nor the overt and tyrannical violence of repression can change his commitment to nonviolence. In his book, *Church and Colonialism,* he says:

> *I respect those who feel obliged in conscience to opt for violence – not the all too easy violence of armchair guerilleros – but those who have proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of their life. In my opinion, the memory of Camilo Torres and of Che guevera merits as much respect as that of Martin Luther King. I accuse the real authors of violence: all those who, whether on the right or the left, weaken justice and prevent peace. My personal vocation is that of a pilgrim of peace --- personally, I would prefer a thousand times to be killed than to kill[68].*

By implication and in the way of justifying nonviolence as stated above, it means that violence is inherently wrong and that it is less effective than nonviolence. That is why Mahatma Gandhi vehemently asserts that:

> *Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity[69].*

Nonviolence, for Gandhi, is the ethical principle that should guide a human being in all aspects of his or her life. It may also be seen that non-violence can never be considered as a mere means for reaching some ulterior goal; non-violence is an end in itself. Besides, political freedom is only one of the many implications of non-violence. Whereas, political violence negates peaceful coexistence, law and order. In addition to security concerns, it militates against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. This in turn impact on

the social and economic well being of the nation and creates imbalance in social relations. It is because of this reason that Jerzy Popieluszko advises:

> *Do not fight by means of violence. Violence is a sign of weakness. Whatever cannot win by influencing the heart tries to win by means of violence. The most splendid and lasting battles known to history are the battles of human thought. The most ignoble and the shortest are the battles of violence. An idea which needs weapons to survive, will die by itself. The idea which prevails merely through the use of violence is perverted. A living idea conquers by itself. It is followed by millions[70].*

Meanwhile, it is obvious that political violence brings complex set of events such as poverty, ethnic or religious grievance which affect the social relationship of the people in the society. Marx (1968) posits that violence, particular political violence, represents a disturbance movement to the political equilibrium and peaceful co-existence of the system.

Alubo (2011) asserts that the refugee problems that accompany these disturbances also have implications for attainment of target in, and access to social development such as education, reduction in maternal mortality and childhood deaths as well as other aspects of productive health. Indeed, the mass rape of the female population in many areas fuels the spread of HIV/AIDS which is already a high prevalence and regarded as a social problem (especially in Nigeria). Furthermore, the continued eruptions of political violence have implications for national peace and security, and thereby threaten the dissolution of the nation-state.

Political violence impact negatively on many forms of human development such as the inability for people to interact with one another, creates unhealthy child growth. Moreso, during political violence a lot of people abandon their ethnic, cultural values, religion or traditions to pledge allegiance to new, artificial and unproven states. This unfortunate states have plugged people into deeper crises, poor interaction resulting to fierce elimination of people. Political violence is a determinant of armed conflict, complex interplay of ideology, quest for power by competing groups, specific in the country and international conditions. The economic determinants of conflict, in turn, are often related to poverty, inequality and social exclusion. To this end, however, it is obvious that people can justify violence but it will cause more violence and it will lose its legitimation on the other ones. *One step for violence causes another one.*

5.4   Human Democracy: A Pragmatic and Tolerant Approach to Non-Violent Society

> *Men being by nature all free, equal and independent, no one ought to be put out of his estate and independent, no one ought to be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent, which is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living. And thus, that which begins and actually constitutes any political society is nothing but the consent of any number of free men capable of majority to unite and incorporate into such a society. And this is that and that only which did or*

> *could give beginning to any lawful government in the world[71].*

The democratic form of government as being practiced today is developed largely by Locke as stipulated in the above quotation. The citizens elect who governs them and have right to withdraw their allegiance if the ruler goes contrary to their interest. But the contemporary events and chaos not only in the Nigerian politics today but also in the world at large have left no one in doubt about the need for effective review of the democratic process especially in Nigeria. Our dailies, magazines and of course, on the general note, our mass media are replete with series of moral aberrations, and confusions prevalent in the country on daily basis. As a matter of fact, if democracy truly means the government of the people, it means the people's mind and body should be developed to occupy a pride of place for a sustainable and qualitative governance. That, government belongs to the people means that everybody should be carried along to realize his humanitarianism in democratic dispensation. At least, democratic government does not refer to wild animals and plants. It solemnly refers to human beings and as such, democratic government should be anchored on what I may call *Humane Democracy*.

Humane democracy is a form of democracy that considers the value of humanity – showing concern and kindness to the citizenry and of course, treating one another as ends rather than means. It is a form of democratic government that is aimed at removing violent political behaviour, which is

exhibited (in most cases) before and after an election. It is a form of political system that should be championed not only by the political elites, the political contestants as well as the electorate and the larger Nigerian populace. This form of democracy is deemed imperative because of the terrible psychological effects of violence and bloodletting regularly experienced at the eve and after political elections in Nigeria. Humane democracy (HD, hereinafter), however, will enhance the process of healing the political wounds that have been created by the actions and inactions of all the actors in the Nigerian political sector over the years.

Democracy, actually, has championed every other system of government because it has regard to human dignity. But of what democracy? Ever since the concept *democracy* has become more satisfactory in theory rather than in practice. The large holdings of democracy today are diluted and sustained by violence. It is never a mistake when Merleau-Ponty asserts that "in democracies the principle is humane but deception and violence rule daily life. On top of that, propaganda has a fine game"[72]. The rationality behind it has been overwhelmed by the mentality of "I'm born to rule". What we have are rulers and not leaders. The only struggle in our democratic government is who rules and of how many times? Of what tribe and of how much selfish gain actualized? No wonder Merleau-Ponty maintains that" "Once history had ceased to be a history of rulers and had become human history, each individual should rediscover himself in the common enterprise and realize himself in it"[73]. The

selfish interest of the so called "leaders" has made it in such that there is no difference between our world and the animal world – the survival of the fittest. The changing mechanism of democracy did not yet receive adequate HD. If it does, policy makers, politicians, social groupings, will devise a method to cultivate morally, psychologically ways of appreciating humane society. Animals are not the bombers of our democratic institutions but the actions, we portray in our social and political lives elevate the act of threats we all face in the 21st century.

The fact that the present democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. The notion behind this HD is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest, which of course can never happen except through non violence. Hence, for both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, nonviolence is a way of life which offers a better prospect for a healthy human society. For them, it is neither a tactical alternative nor a pragmatic approach to social conflicts. It is a way of life that has to be embraced and lived without primarily asking for immediate results because it is the only way that is truly in keeping with the dignity and the moral responsibility of all mankind. It is a way of life that has to be embraced and lived if man must remain man, different from animals that thrive on instinct and brute force. The principle of HD, however, advocates that nonviolent means of administration remains an activation of the universal spirit of humanity that is

within us which will lead to the activation in us of true courage, honor, faithfulness, integrity, and loyalty to truth and justice.

HD showcases also a tremendous reduction in the gap between rich and poor. In this, it agrees with American philosopher John Dewey who argues that progress in democracy necessarily requires a democratization of the sphere of economic decision making as well as the sphere of politics. The HD is premised on both aspects of genuine democracy, one that institutionalizes real provisions for citizen participation and nonviolent change, and the other that creates a global economics of prosperity and removes the possibility of exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The HD, in effect, is premised on the moral foundations of the sovereignty of the people, universal human rights, the principle of unity in diversity, the equal suffrage and the right of all to a freedom compatible with the equal freedom of everyone else. The substantive law here is clear. HD is an internationally prescribed human right. Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides:

> *The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, this will shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures[74].*

HD therefore operates on the principle that all men, no matter the social status, race or colour are equal. Every human being has equal right as any other in whatever that gives value and meaning to human life. This value is ultimately dependent on humane relationship with one another. Normal moral norms and behaviour is expected of individuals within a polity in respect of the general welfare of the community. In support of this, however, Merleau-Ponty proclaims:

> *Whatever one's philosophical or even theological position, a society is not the temple of value-idols that figure on the front of its monuments or in its constitutional scrolls; the value of a society is the value it places upon man's relation to man. It is not just a question of knowing what the liberals have in mind but what in reality is done by the liberal state within and beyond its frontiers. Where it is clear that the purity of principles is not put into practice, it merits condemnation rather than absolution. To understand and judge a society, one has to penetrate its basic structure to the human bond upon legal relations, but also upon forms of labor, ways of loving, living, and dying[75].*

In cognate with the above declaration, HD aims at providing social justice and equal opportunity for all to develop their potentials, so as to live a happy and fulfilled life. For this reason and for the purpose of establishing a democracy of this kind requires removing the institutional violence of economic scarcity, manipulation, and exploitation. This is because such economics ignores or disregards moral values. Gandhi, in respect of this writes that "the extension of the law of nonviolence in the domain of economics means nothing less than the

introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered when regulating international commerce"[76]. He further states that: :Immediately as the spirit of exploitation is gone, armaments will be felt as a positive unbearable burden. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another"[77].

However, violence has permeated nearly all the institutions of our society. Most individual violence and both private and public terrorist violence are consequences of and reactions to the pervasive institutionalized violence of modern democracy due to its selfish model of operation in the sovereign nation-state. But when HD exists, then the only alternative is to institutionalize a nonviolent society. Behold:

> *Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity[78].*

A nonviolent society is not only a spiritual commitment on the part of persons everywhere but must be institutionalized both politically and economically in the form of democratic world government and federated democratic government at all levels of governing especially in Nigeria. The entire present democracy (more especially in Nigeria) has got to be reconstructed. A real democracy does not suppose to go together with violence. And it is not true as well that non-

violence can only be practiced by individuals and never by nations which are compound of individuals. It emanates from individuals and circulate round the nation-state.

A HD will necessarily be a genuine democracy, since it will have to be founded on humane governance-truth, freedom of speech, inquiry and press, rather than on manipulation of the public by dominant elites through violence, deception and propaganda. Its democratic framework and its ways of dealing with law-breaking must be practiced strictly in accordance with constitution, and of which the constitution should be deductively existing from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will, as a result, cultivate the spirit of nonviolence in our society. People will see for themselves that their rights are respected and that equality, freedom and justice are promoted.

Nevertheless, the humane democratic government would by no means eliminate conflict nor violence entirely. It will rather institutionalize nonviolent ways of dealing with conflicts on all levels. For Gandhi, it can only eliminate the intention to harm one's opponent. An American philosopher Robert Holmes also suggests something similar. For him:

> *This doesn't require changing human nature or transforming the world into a community of saints. It does require recognizing that if we don't cherish the human person, there is no point to the many other activities and strivings that consume our time; no point to saving the environment unless we value the beings that inhabit it; no virtue in self-sacrifice when at the expense of the lives and happiness of others. It does require a massive*

commitment of time, energy, and moral and financial resources to exploring nonviolent ways of getting along in the world[79].

Therefore, HD does not aim to end conflict. That would be utopian and might not even be desirable. The aim precisely is to develop nondestructive ways of dealing with conflict. Violence by its very nature cannot do that. Nonviolence can. Therefore, if we create HD, and real economic justice, we will have institutionalized nonviolent society. With today's system of "militarized" democracy and vast disparities between extreme wealth and extreme poverty, we will continue to have pervasive institutionalized violent society. But if we ratify this militarized democracy and create HD premised on the dignity, freedom, and equality of every person on earth, we will eliminate the need not only for the individual but also for terrorist violence. And what is even more fundamental, HD will have laid the groundwork for a transformation of the human spirit.

5.5   Democracy, Violence and Practical Challenges

Obviously, democracy is generally defined as government by the people. It is assumed that in democracy all the people in a country, state, province or region collectively govern themselves. But this is a theoretical concept rather than reality. What happens in reality is that the people elect representatives to govern them. It is assumed that in this way the elected representatives will act in the collective interest of all the people leading to a government in best interest

of the people. But there are several challenges or problems in achieving these ideals and objectives of the government. In the first place, representatives elected by people may not really be the most capable for forming the government. Not all people know what is the best way of governing, or who are most capable and willing to run the government in that way. Realizing this limitation, the right to elect or vote for the representatives for forming the government is restricted to majors, or people who have attained the minimum prescribed age to become eligible for voting. Though this does eliminate voting by minors, who are not considered mature enough to decide on the matters relating to government, still there are usually many other people who may not really be able to take sound decision in this matter.

Another is that the elections always result in a government by a majority rather than government of all the people. Joseph Schumpeter refers this as "democratic violence" and describes it thus: "A majority taken collectively may be regarded as a being whose opinions, and most frequently whose interests, are opposed to those of another being, which is styled a minority"[80]. The practical challenge here remains that the interests of the minority are not protected, and this is why Schumpeter upholds that democracy is an unlimited power of the majority or the "tyranny of the majority". Besides, the liberty of majority rule is even restricted and held by a relatively small representative. Elizabeth Anderson, in addition, highlights how democracy as a majority rule denies the right people: "within a conception of democracy as majority rule, individual

rights tend to be construed as constraints on democracy rather than constitutive features of it"[81]. Anderson explains that from the standpoint of democracy, this reading of rights is misconceived: numerous rights, such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, as well as rights that secure the equality of citizens (such as the freedom of religion and the prohibition on discrimination) are constitutive of democracy[82]. "A majority that silences or segregates minorities --- is tyrannically undemocratic[83].

The rate at which poverty increases, which is reinforced by mass unemployment is another practical challenges to Nigeria's quest for consolidating her democracy. A society of beggars, parasites and bandits cannot develop. It cannot know peace or stability and cannot be democratic[84]. This shows that any individual deprived of the basic wherewithal cannot participate effectively in a democratic set-up. A poor person is therefore not a full fledged social individual, as he/she lacks the basic freedom to engage in the life he/she enjoys. Poverty, in effect, remains a hindrance to democratic consolidation since economic chaos can topple democratic institutions. The problems of poverty and injustice are good part of Nigeria, and the citizens do not seem to understand what is in their culture preventing them from achieving a just, prosperous-dignified life and true democracy. It is essential to note that about 70% of the Nigerian populations are estimated poor. Is there any wonder why the society is chaotic?[85] The consequence of the above estimation substantiates

how the masses in Nigeria are easily brainwashed and their right of choice terribly manipulated making an objective choice seldom to consideration.

The forces of ethno-religious factor have also contributed greatly to socio-political instability in the country. The latest sectarian turbulence in the country and the clamor for the presidency by the varied ethnic groups indicate that our country is still balkanized by tribal and religious sentiments. Each ethnic nationality in Nigeria has its own faith, interest, culture, language and level of aspiration and these forces seem to affect the economic fate of each group. In addition, they make the creation of a common identity problematic, thereby exacerbating the difficulty in attaining a true democracy in the society. Currently, Nigeria lacks the necessary democratic values (civic and human abuse is rampant, freedom of speech and expression is hampered, lack of social security and distributive justice) hence the rampant social unrest in the polity[86].

Lack of true federal structure in Nigeria is a stumbling block to the nation's ongoing democratic enterprise. The federal government is very overbearing as it controls about 80% of the country's resources leaving state and local governments at its mercy. Where regions, states or geographical zones have the power to control their resources and to have access to the necessary funds for community development programs, democracy strives. In fact, it is only true federalism that can guarantee fairness and justice in any society. More importantly, it enables each locality to progress according to the aspirations of the people. A durable and enforceable people's constitution is an indispensable

tool to make this feasible, as the constitution protects the people and determines socio-political activities in a society. As noted in the philosophy of Aristotle "we can decide the identity of a state only by examining the form (and contents) of its constitution". In Nigeria, we lack the reality of such a federal constitution and true federal state[87].

Furthermore, mass media is a watchdog of the public interest and as such becomes very crucial to democratic solidity. The media is democratically seen as vanguard for holding governments accountable and guarding against the abuse of power. This can be done by raising countervailing structures of surveillance to monitor government activities and stem an inherent disposition towards excess. But in Nigeria especially in this republic, there are constraints on press media resulting in suppression of information, provision of disjointed and half hazard information and thereby limiting the capacity of individuals to develop a reservoir of political knowledge to assist them in controlling authoritarian rule and participating adequately in political activities. Our media has been subsumed into the elite structure "the big man" syndrome. This is actively inimical to the survival and deepening of demcoracy[88].

Experience has shown that widespread discontent and loss of confidence in the system have ways of affecting national political stability. Invariably continuing escalation of violence and crises across the country will impinge on the survival of our democracy. The fact that the practical challenges as against popular expectations, that the country would become more positively persuaded

towards the provision of important socio-economic goods, an action that will potently quarantine financially persecuted adult human beings from violence; owing to the anticipated "dividends of democracy", has become autonomized and indifferent. The question therefore is, is democracy democratizing violence? The philosophy of dignity of human person has become mutually entangled with the idea of democracy. Acts of violence are common place crimes committed against the Nigerian state day after day. However, destructive incidences of violence became particularly well known in the regime of democratic governance in the country. It is sufficient contradiction in itself, that political violence which has become a recurring decimal since the Nigeria-democracy intercourse is mostly necessitated by the electoral process, agreed as a measure of democracy. If taken to be true, we may rightly argue, that in the case of Nigeria, the object of democracy is actually a necessary condition for violence.

Notwithstanding, the grim intersection of violence and voting has become one of the central challenges to meaningful democratization in Nigeria. Ever since a complicated politics has emerged in which ex-regimes and current regimes (not exempted) used to deploy violence to balance the international pressures for democratization with their desire to stay in or go into power. They neutralize insurgent challenges by making violence part of mainstream politics. Despite the many grounds for possible rebellion, insurgency has become diverted and diffused into patronage-laden, illiberal, and above all, violent

democracy. The rise of the "parochial" rebels who are central to electoral violence in Africa especially in Nigeria today has localized interests, articulated few consistent political positions, and exist in a symbiotic relationship with politicians and the state. In respect of this, William Reno rightly argues that:

> *The advent of democratic competitive elections has catalyzed parochial rebel violence in some countries, as competition for office weakens old mechanisms of control and causes politicians to rely more on armed groups to entrench their authoritarian electoral regimes and to protect ethnically defined communities behind the multiparty facade[89]. Patronage-based regimes have been particularly vulnerable[90].*

So far in Nigeria, competitive elections in this context have also pressed opposition politicians and ethnic tribes to recruit parochial rebels to protect their interests; (the Boko Haram sect is a typical example of this). Similarly, Reno added that in Nigeria, the "civilian electoral regime thus reinforces the role of the political godfathers, the senior politicians who finance elections and organize violence through using their offices to divert state assets, exempting others from the enforcement of laws, and through the allocation of state contracts"[91]. In this Niger Delta, despite rampant local grievances, parochial rebels' "struggles are often geared toward gaining better positions within Nigeria's politics of patronage"[92] rather than mobilizing for anti-systemic change electoral violence has preempted and de-fanged insurgency[93].

Taken together, violence poses a major challenge to democracy in Nigeria especially during democratic transition. Violence is caused by the intersection of liberalization pressures from above with patronage, armed groups, winner-take-all politics, and weak institutions on the ground. Thus, the explosion of violence as a practical and central challenge detailed above surrounds mainly on the decreasing state control over violence; the weak and highly personalized institutions that could not provide an autonomous or credible check on the excesses of politicians and their armed followers; and finally, the winner-take-all politics that is being fueled by ethnicity and patronage, raising the stakes of electoral victory.

5.6 Potentiality and Implicit Nature of Humane Democracy in Merleau-Ponty's Political Liberalism.

Merleau-Ponty never wrote about humane democracy. But some of his phenomenological and political ideas in accounting for the value of humanity parallels in intent and manner in my postulation of humane democracy. In 5.4, it has been demonstrated that humane democracy (HD) is a model that first considers man as an end and not a means (come what may) in any socio-political administration. Thus, it emphasizes an ethics of kindness, benevolence, and sympathy extended universally and impartially to all human beings. This idea, however, should be employed in executing our democratic dispensation in order to make a difference from the "militarian democracy" that does not

differentiate itself from the animal world-the survival of the fittest syndrome. Man is not a carnivorous animal that feeds on another for it to survive. He is a rational being that needs to harmonize issues in actualizing a common goal. To this end, Merleau-Ponty is not totally out of this range in his political liberalism. He advocated that the rationality of a human person is still a hope for establishing a more democratic society. In *Humanism and Terror*, he thus offers a position of what is now called a multicultural approach, for he argues that rationality remains to be established and will only be established by listening to all voices, even those we may disagree with.

> *To seek harmony with ourselves and others, in a word, truth, not only in a priori reflection and solitary thought but through the experience of concrete situations and in a living dialogue with others apart from which internal evidence cannot validate its universal right, is the exact contrary of irrationalism, since it accepts our incoherence and conflict with others as constants but assumes we are able to minimize them[94].*

Rationality for Merleau-Ponty is thus something different from the modernist adherence to pre-existent forms of thought and logic proposed by the liberal tradition. Since rationality is connected to the shifting contingencies of perceptual structure, rationality is provisional and open and remains to be established. Yet since perception displays relatively stable patterns, the structures of rationality are not arbitrary and themselves remain stable. They may well act as guiding ideas, ideas that must be continually checked against

democratic (political) violence which is totally opposed by HD. Politics within this context is more of making a formal judgment on who leads well – the capability of what one can do. As such, democracy should not be based on violence whether political, social, economical and otherwise. It should rather be based on rationality, which is, in other words, more of non-violence. Democracy by its origin cannot excel without the ultimate use of rationality. Political campaign and all forms of democratic activities should be relied on the application of rationality. When democracy is said to be characterized by majority rule, it is not a majority by violence (of any kind) but a majority by rationality in concordance with the will of the masses. In accordance with this, however, Merleau-Ponty defines rationality as an agreement of perceptual profiles, of mine within me as actively open upon the world, and of mine with those of others as we actively open upon the world together[95]. It is true that different rationale exist among different sets of minds but a system of rationality should be justified in our democratic dispensation. Besides, two heads are better than one. And while it is true that one system of rationality may be better than another, because it offers greater clarity and adaptation, and because it solves problems that others cannot, it is also true that the system must continue to prove itself as such, and it must do so from a variety of perspectives.

Merleau-Ponty thus focuses on an *embodied* rationality, but this in no way implies a biological or materialist reductionism. First of all, Merleau-Ponty adheres to a subtle and complex form of emergentism, that the human species

has evolved from simpler forms of life to which the species can no longer be reduced. Now, humans are certainly influenced by their environment, unlike our democracy that has been influenced by violence, yet because of a more complex form of phylogenic development we have the capacity to pause and reflect upon our environment and our behaviour within it. We can break the rigid chain of material cause and effect. This does not mean that we can stop completely out of it, but we have enough awareness to take up our conditions and our past in order to try to move them in a different direction. Secondly, and subsequently, when attempting to understand human beings, and their behaviour within them, all aspects of human experience must be taken into account[96]. We must try to understand not just the biological or religious aspects of human experience and behaviour, but also politics, economic and law. To gain access to this general milieu, this life-world within which these aspects interact and flow into one another, here in *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Merleau-Ponty appeals to the young Marx and his notion that human labor inscribes meaning into nature[97]. When laborers perceive their creations, they are able to perceive their own subjective forms impressed upon them, including certain habitualized forms of behaviour and common human relationships. Human experience thus opens not only a material world but also a human one. Humans are born into not only a material world but also into certain economic, social and political institutions, into patterned ways of acting into and interpreting the world, including so-called forms of discourse. We take these patterns, usually without understanding the

whole, in order to gain recognition, to confirm satisfactory relationships and challenge dissatisfactory ones. And this is how our politics moves: individuals living in a geographical area take up the past in the form of customs and institutions, grasping them only incompletely, and attempt to move them toward a more satisfactory future. Moreover, if people do not have legitimate ways to do this, they will often seek other means, including "underground" economies, violence and even terror as it is in the case of Nigeria today.

In addition to his conception of rationality, Merleau-Ponty mediates a proto-ethical relationship and communion of embodied responsive (inter-) subjects in the world. His phenomenology of relational corporeality, and embodied decentred intersubjectivity can serve as a fruitful medium through which a HD can be cultivated. He develops his ideas on intersubjectivity, both in *Phenomenology of Perception and the Visible and the Invisible*. For him, human lives are always intertwined in intersubjectivity and in one world. The phenomena do not appear before my consciousness and the consciousness of others separately, they appear before us. Just like in the perception by one individual person many perspectives slide into one another and are gathered together in the phenomenon, in a comparable way the perspectives of several subjects slide into each other in one world. For him:

> *But we have learned in individual perception not to conceive our perspective views as independent of each other; we know that they slip into each other and are brought together finally in the thing. In the same way we must learn to find the communication*

> *between one consciousness and another in one and the same world. In reality, the other is not shut up inside my perspective of the world, because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it slips spontaneously into the other's, and because both are brought together in one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception[98].*

His opinion, like Husser'ls (1982), is that our perception of others is enough to assure ourselves of their existence as other body-subjects. We can know people, according to Merleau-Ponty, by our perceptions of their behaviours, which they manifest on their bodies through action and speech[99]. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty's idea of intersubjectivity holds that we are aware of ourselves only through our awareness of others' behaviour and speech. We do not fully perceive ourselves, and so it is through the other that we obtain self-awareness. Moreover, our bodies respond to the world and in responding to others we constitute our individuals selves[100]. In this process of mutual constitution, self and the other intertwine. Within this intertwining both parties learn the specific cultural patterns, bodily habits and common language required to continue interaction.

What the above position signifies is that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of intersubjectivity contributes to an enriched understanding of practice in nation-state and leadership, and HD in particular by returning to experienced phenomena and events in our life-worldly situatedness, inter-relationality and cocreated meanings. Phenomenologically, HD is embodied,

involving various bodily modes of practical belonging and engagements in the world. In particular, with Merleau-Ponty we can recognize the humane significance of the sensous, perceptive, expressive, epistemic, and responsive capacities of the habitual, yet open, living body and embodiment. The humane democratic importance of his work rests both upon the account he provides of the relational, bodily nature of the primordially inter-connected selves as mind-bodies and in their ambiguity, openness, creativity, and transcendence of relations involved.

From a phenomenological perspective also, a HD can be seen as a "function" and emergent process of a bodily subjects and embodied inter-subjective and corporeal processes, in which selves and agencies are always already situated as well as in which they take part actively and transformationally in their contextuality. Such an embodied democracy requires genuine recognition of the other as intrinsically valuable and differently "other" including foreigners, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, and above all, anything that possesses humanity. For if humane society can truly exist (i.e.; as regards to animals being treated with kind) what about the human world itself especially in our democratic dispensation. What is humanly valued, need to be rooted in every aspects of our life, and what democratic practices require are openness and sincerity as well as relating sustainably without violence. Instead of a detached objectivity and an autonomous subjectivity, for Merleau-Ponty, there are always already social processes of a becoming with others at play in

and towards the world. In such becoming the mutual fluidity of reversible and ambiguous interplay is acknowledged, without reducing the difference(s) of the other to the standards of the self-same[101]. With Merleau-Ponty, we can recognize a bodily-mediated and embodied understanding of practicing HD as part of an interwoven, "post-dichotomous nexus of 'self-other-things'"[102] and as part of a perspectival "integral being"[103]. Accordingly, the threshold of democracy lies in the materiality and tangibility of the relations between selves and others within integrative life-worldly enactment and practicing of HD. To put it differently, the life-world is seen as humanly democratic relevant and meaningful with respect to the way in which the masses perceive, feel and act within it, and which acts upon them. Hence, this corporeal democratic dimensions play an important role in forms of embodied labour. In such labour members of the nation-state operate as bodily-engaged beings within their occupational milieus. Through this practical work and its sense-making, emobidied (humane) democracy in nation-state(s) create, manage, reproduce, negotiate, interrupt, and/or communicate somatic sensations and meanings that are related to a true democratic concerns and issues. Likewise, various forms of affective labour are democratically relevant as they produce or modify dramatized and emotional experiences by influencing humane sensations as part of contemporary experience of democracy.

Above all, the foregoing has shown the potentiality and implicit nature of HD in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology for an embodied, intersubjective,

responsive and thus responsible practical democracy in governmental life-words. Such conceptualization does not only reconceive the embodied 'base' of practicing HD, but also allows conceiving new ways of approaching how they co-evolve within the multidimensional nexus of violence. If democratic dispensations are shaped by bodily processes and embodied operative intentionalities and responsiveness, the occurrence of different series of violence especially within election periods will definitely cease to manifest.

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CHAPTER SIX

AN APPRAISAL OF MERLEAU-PONTY'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ON VIOLENCE AND LIBERALISM

6.1   The Defects of Merleau-Ponty's Political Philosophy.

It is obvious that the political philosophy of Merleau-Ponty found in his book- *Humanism and Terror* is too ambiguous. The book is a very mixed bag. It is not an easy model. Ostensibly, the sophisticated argument about history, existentialism and the democratic and communist political opposition were almost lost on me. But then *Humanism and Terror* is an inimitable and impenetrable quasi- intellectual style which a certain kind of philosophers seem to love.

Nevertheless, the part of the book which discusses Koestler's thesis, however, is really poor. Merleau- Ponty ascribes to Kosetler himself the views that Rubashov and his inquisitors share, namely a sort of Hegelian- mechanistic interpretation of History as the infallible guide of politics, and the risks and destructiveness this implies. But as it is clear from an elementary reading of Kosetler's book, he himself does not share this view at all, and precisely wrote the book to attack this viewpoint. It is really odd that someone with the philosophical and literary training of Merleau-Ponty does not see this.

In the subsequent discussion of Koesstler's problematic itself, namely whether one can support communism but not communist policy, whether one

can be a communist outside the party, whether there can be such a thing as a democratic socialism, whether economic development is a prerequisite of such democratic socialism or not and what sacrifices are valid to achieve it, etc., Merleau-Ponty does not make this error as much. Yet here he makes a different error: especially in the discussion of the Moscow Trials, which take up the middle part of the book, he completely and uncritically adopts the Stalinist line. He believes every word in the "confessions" of the accused to be actually intended and seriously meant by them (not writing a word about the torture applied before the Trials began), and he also uncritically adopts the Stalinist line that the suppression of all opposition was necessary to defend the USSR against foreign aggression. On the other hand, he clearly does not believe the actual charges themselves, for which there was blatantly no evidence whatever, as he freely admits. For Merleau-Ponty, the question is then reduced to why people like Bukharin and Trotsky would argue for the party that "hat to" destroy them. An interesting dilemma, but an irrelevant one, since it is by no means necessary to adopt this assumption in the first place. Koestler's book is clearly superior to Merleau-Ponty's in this, since it makes no such assumption.

Meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty asserts that Marxism comprises the only valid philosophy of history. That is why he emphatically acclaims that:

> *On close consideration, Marxism is not just any*
> *hypothesis that might be replaced tomorrow by*
> *some other. It is the simple statement of those*
> *conditions without which there would be neither*
> *any humanism, in the sense of a mutual relation*

> *between men, nor any rationality in history. In*
> *this sense Marxism is not a philosophy of history;*
> *it is the philosophy of history and to denounce it*
> *is to dig the grave of Reason in history. After that*
> *there can be no more dreams or adventures[1].*

But the truth is that his Marxism by and large elaborates different concerns and as such makes his social philosophy too difficult for comprehension. He does not make Marx an object of his study. He takes certain concepts for granted without discussing them openly and explicitly (e.g. history). He assumes that his reader will be acquainted with the works of Marx and will have had an opportunity to experience these issues first hand. He also does not find it worth distinguishing between Marx's Marxism and the ideas which have been developed by other Marxist, faithful or not, such as Lenin. In other words, he considers Marxism (like capitalism) to be a 'living' ideology, a body of thought that develops and mutates according to history and according to its scholars.

Another is that the rejection of determinism as a tool of the human sciences lay at the heart of all of Merleau- Ponty's social thought, be it Marxian or phenomenological. In discussing culture, causal thinking remains insufficient, for it can never on principle account for creative meaning. Similarly, politics can not be construed as a chapter in some preordained history any more than it can be regarded as an exercise in pure morality, instead, Merleau-Ponty found in politics "an action which invents itself". A philosophically coherent Marxism will have to admit the absence of determinism and the importance of creative meaning, as well as the centrality of

subjective factors- even though such a reformed Marxism may become a philosophy that "Marx undoubtedly would not have wished to recognize as his own"[2].

During the immediate postwar period, Merleau-Ponty had attempted to accommodate Marxism to his own thought, in the process producing several rather disingenuous restatements of the deterministic prejudices of orthodox Marxism.

> *For Marxism --- the historical determination of effects by causes through human consciousness, with the result that men make their own history, although their doing so is neither disinterested nor lacking in motives---. Since human decision is motivated by the course of events, it will therefore seem – at least in retrospect – to be called forth by these events, so that no rupture or hiatus between effects and causes will ever be discernible in completed history[3].*

Such a line of reasoning obviously blunts the cutting edge of his critique of determinism in the social sciences.

In *Adventures of the Dialectic,* Merleau-Ponty detects a fatal equivocation in Marx's own theory between determinism and a genuine dialectic steering clear of abstract alternatives such as idealism and materialism Marx's concept of society as "second nature" most strikingly crystallizes this equivocation by analogically justifying the treatment of social relations as natural data. Merleau-Ponty feels the practical consequences of such an objectivistic understanding can only prove onerous. If society is literally a second nature, men would be

justified in governing it as they govern first nature: through technical domination. Technical action would replace the self-conscious proletariat, and guiding historical development would have become the prerogative of a party elite. The "milieu of the revolution" would less and less be "relations between men, and more and more 'things' with heir immanent necessity"[4]. Orthodox Marxism has already taken this turn. It will be a mistake to pretend that Marx himself can emerge unscathed from an historical development clearly implicating his own theory. Merleau-Ponty therefore criticizes Marx (somewhat inaccurately) for positing a dialectic of history executed behind humanity's back. This formulation illicitly attributes dialectic to things – relations of production, means of production – rather than men.

In the same vein, Merleau-Ponty refers to Marxism as just another name for a "rationalistic politics". A Marxism strips of rationalist as well as deterministic guarantees cannot, he comes to feel, justify the designation "Marxism" any longer. While it may retain a relative heuristic value, Marxism cannot therefore be considered true – "certainly no longer true in the sense it was believed to be true"[5]. The options of Merleau-Ponty's eyes are simple. One either remained a dogmatic Marxist, owing allegiance to communism as a movement, or one opted for a powerless, skeptical radicalism, without immediate political efficacy, but also without intellectual compromises. Thus, he says:

> *It is clear that a revolutionary politics cannot be maintained without its pivot, that is, proletarian power. If there is no 'universal class' and exercise of power by that class, the revolutionary spirit becomes pure morality or moral radicalism again. Revolutionary politics was a doing, a realism, the birth of a force. The non-Communist left often retains only its negations. This phenomenon is a chapter in the great decline of the revolutionary idea --. Its principal hypothesis that of a revolutionary class, is not confirmed by the actual course of events[6].*

At its inception, Merleau-Ponty's adherence to Marxism has depended on an essentialist view of history and the proletariat: the latter provisionally incarnated the teleological meaning of history. He comes to criticize Marxism harshly because he feels that history can no longer sustain such a conception. Despite his attempts to formulate a Marxism without guarantees, his idiosyncratic fusion of Lukacs's 1923 view of class and Husserl's later notion of the *telos* of history thus ultimately fueled a despair at ever realizing a rational historical philosophy. Disheartened and politically exhausted, Merleau-Ponty fails to entertain the possibility that the proletariat-and history – has been misunderstood in the essentialist conception from the outset.

However, the tortured logic of *Humanism and Terror* reveals the illogic of any philosophy of history founded on criteria gleaned from an harmonious end of history, an end somehow deciphered before the event. Truth might well be on the horizon, but if we have not yet encountered it, how can it shed light on the mundane world of the here and now? The kind of absolute criteria such truth

yields, seems, upon reflection, to invite the application of arbitrary criteria. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's commitment to a supratemporal absolutethe classless society of communism – vitiates this critique of soviet communism and compromises his handling of the Moscow Trials. Because he strains to interpret Stalin's policies as harboring the seeds of a rational future, he neglects to scrutinize sufficiently the Soviet theory and practice of socialism; similarly, because he avers that Marxism is correct in its belief that truth – the classless society of communism – will win out, he proves eager, in effect, to justify the Stalinist state on the grounds that it points the way toward this truth.

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty has remained critical of Marxism. He refers to the possibility that the USSR may become just another regressive regime, thus, he says:

> *One cannot postpone indefinitely the need to decide whether or not history has received the proletarian philosophy of history. […] But although two, three or four grains of sand do not make a heap, after a while the heap is there and that nobody can doubt[7].*

In accordance with his phenomenological understanding of politics, only experience will be able to prove (or disprove) the validity of Marxism. At the time when *Humanism and Terror* was written the USSR was at a crossroads between acknowledging the need to make compromises in order to fulfill the historical mission of Marxism and just professing unbounded violence. The subsequent flow of events alone would tell whether Marxism deserved being

denounced. Here too, Merleau-Ponty resorts to a qualitative analysis of violence that is never conceptualized clearly. It is doubtful whether the Soviet experience can be taken as testimony on the value of the Marxist ideology considering that Russia never attained the necessary industrial development required by the conversion to communism, as prescribed by this ideology according to the concrete experience of living under a system that reflects its claims. However, judging Marxism as a whole (be it the writings of Marx himself or of the body of thought called Marxism that resulted) according to its main 'embodiment' at that time (i.e. Soviet governments) was perhaps not the most astute idea as it cannot be guaranteed that the latter is an honest realization of the former.

In line with the above, however, Crossley criticizes Merleau-Ponty's Marxism for analyzing the social struggle and violence from the standpoint of economic relations only[8]. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty claims that Marxism is an all-inclusive method of social critique. He believes that it contextualizes apparently isolated events and relates them to the social whole by giving them meaning. He goes so far as to state that Marxism is a philosophy of mind that only illustrates its tenets with reference to economics (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). While in *Humanism and Terror* he declares that his Marxist critique has a broad focus, analyzing all at once "forms of labour, ways of loving, living and dying"[9], he ends up only ever referring to the political apparatus that sustains the "forms of labour". Neither does he offer a philosophical, nor an empirical explanation for his belief that all social relations are revealed by economics. As Crossley points

out, other perspectives such as gender can be just as informative and fruitful for the understanding and analysis of social formations.

Notwithstanding, it is obvious that Merleau-Ponty later and finally denounces his original intentions and goals he sets about Marxism. As a matter of fact, Diana Coole suggests that Merleau-Ponty was influenced by the geopolitics of the 1950s in his denunciation of marxism[10]. Indeed, the USSR's role in the Korean War as well as the discovery of Soviet Labour camps convince him to radically reconsider the arguments outlined in his earlier political works (Merleau-Ponty 1955:129 and 1994:216). By the mid- 1950s, he breaks with Sartre and quits Les Temps Modernes[11]. After this, his only work entirely devoted to politics was the 1955 *Adventures of the Dialectic*. In what follows I will aim to argue that however valid his objections may have been, his overall critique comes across as clumsy, incoherent and somewhat dishonest. In denouncing Marxism he fails to meet the standards that he set in his earlier work. Moreover, he fails to address one of the fundamental questions for any political thinker: namely the position of the political philosopher in the dialectic between the objective and the subjective – the issue of self-reflexivity.

The *Adventures of the dialectic* seems to lack the pursuit of a core argument. In order to repudiate Soviet terror, the work expresses a drive to renounce Marxism at all costs. It consists of a series of essays, each of them offering an independent critique, which Merleau-Ponty then tries to piece together in his epilogue. In the introduction he praises Max Weber for his

analysis of the relation between capitalism and Protestantism. In Weber's account he finds a new dialectical method according to which the strata constitutive of different cultural configurations (the political, the religious, the economic, and the legal) are understood to be in continuous interaction with one another. However, a change in one of these strata does not mean that the others will be affected. Their development is a synchronic. To use his example, though Protestantism may have facilitated the coming of capitalism, Merleau-Ponty argues it would be unjustified to claim that capitalism was a *necessary* consequence of Protestantism. In so doing, he distances himself from Marx, who Merleau-Ponty depicts as having affirmed that capitalism itself announces the dawns of communism. From this new perspective, there is absolutely no way of interpreting or understanding the course of history ahead of events taking place. Merleau-Ponty announces that he wishes to apply this Weberian method in his analysis of the 'adventures' of Marxism but with regard to the text as a whole, this aim is then abandoned. Finally, while he states his admiration for a new type of liberalism, he never actually explains what it consists of and how it can help bring about the concrete liberties that he speaks about in his earlier works.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's political preference for Marxism is now replaced by a retreat into liberalism. Allegedly, this is a new type of liberalism, one that can make freedom possible – a super-liberalism. However, the

workings of this liberalism are not explained. The only thing Merleau-Ponty mentions is the importance of parliaments:

> *Parliament is the only known institution that guarantees a minimum of opposition and of truth. There are other limitations which are the result of parliamentary usage and maneuvers: these deserve no respect at all, but they can be denounced by parliament itself[12].*

The institution of parliament is quite a minimalist guarantee for effective political opposition and truth. There are countless examples of authoritarian regimes utterly suppressing opposition while maintaining parliamentary assemblies. Are not parliaments just another example of an institution that claims to safeguard negative rights (such as the right to political opposition) but that through its abstractness can only serve to mask violence? Does Merleau-Ponty's early criticism of liberal democracy not perfectly apply to this new form of liberalism that he now endorses? One could think of no reason why it would not and since he does not argue against his early criticism of abstract rights, his later apologetic stance with respect to this new liberalism is unconvincing.

What is more, arguing that Marxism is simply scientism, doomed to end up in his vulgar materialist positivism that serves to justify violence and tyranny, would mean (according to his early thought) that intersubjectivity is impossible. If the proletariat, who share similar living conditions, are not able to attain any self-consciousness and fail to identify in Marxism a 'common project', it means that his whole understanding of perception, and therefore his

entire phenomenological project needs reviewing. Considering that this was the fundament for his epistemological studies, it would appear that truth, if we are ever able to attain it, does not happen in the way he described it. It would also mean that man is unable to attach meaning to common projects and that history is a '*sens*' – less bundle of events.

Hence, the way in which Merleau-Ponty describes the condition and rights of the proletariat under this new kind of liberalism is again evidence of a certain degree of dishonesty in his argument,. He claims:

> *There is a class struggle and there must be one, since there are, and as long as there will be classes. There is and there must be a means of exceptional action for the proletarian class, the strike, since its fate is also exceptional [...] Moreover, this party has the right to be represented [..] by a party which refuses the democratic game, since the game places it at a disadvantage*[13].

Whilst still accepting his early comments about the proletariat as the disadvantaged class (whose exploitation is facilitated by liberal democracy) he now only agrees to minor concessions such as preserving the right to strike and the right to be represented by the communist party. It is obvious that these do not pave the way for altering the condition of the proletariat and overcoming class struggle. By only minimally improving the life of the workers, this system merely conceals the struggle and institutionalizes violence. It would also be paradoxical to find the existence of a communist party (which promotes a non-democratic political system) desirable if the overarching form of government is

liberal parliamentarism. This only translates into a dishonest support for a new optimum of the masses (the workers' advent of the Revolution), doubled by the belief that the Revolution or the coming to power of the communist party are indeed impossible.

Similarly, by acknowledging that the working class is the target of violence in bourgeois society, yet by condemning any Revolutionary violence (be that in the form of an actual revolution, or perhaps in milder forms, such as a tough taxation policy) Merleau-Ponty is tacitly agreeing with and promoting bourgeois violence. In a Kantian fashion, he is pretending that one has the possibility of not choosing violence when it is in act a case of only being able to choose the type and the direction of the violence.

In cognate with the foregoing, Lydia Goehr argues that for Merleau-Ponty, political thought is a form of political praxis[14]. The thinker is engaged in politics simply by commenting and analyzing politics. As mentioned in the previous section, Merleau-Ponty criticizes the role Marxism attaches to political elites. But Lefort draws attention to a different issue: Merleau-Ponty never questions the role of the philosopher in the dialectic[15]. It is clear that the philosopher who attempts to legitimize a certain kind of violence is himself a subjective voice. As such, he/she cannot claim that a class, namely the proletariat has an objective component (in what the objective-subjective-dialectic that defines the nature of proletarian action is concerned) once that claim is in itself subjective. As Merleau-Ponty notes a "philosophy, like art and

poetry belongs to a time"[16]. The philosopher cannot use such a subjective claim to justify terror and the fate of the supra-structure, unless he/she becomes the Hegelian guardian or the Platonic philosopher king.

The question of the situated philosopher can be analyzed by means of a materialist approach which claims that praxis is always embodied and that the embodied subject is always in direct relation with the world. In other words, the fact that our morals, beliefs and values, and indeed our whole worldview are influenced by the structure of the world we live in. If this is true, and if we live in a world where violence is regressive and where the political mechanism serves to justify and mask exploitation, there is no escape to our thinking reflecting this.

When disillusioned with Soviet Marxism it would appear that Merleau-Ponty had three options: he could have pressed on with his Marxist critique and with the occasional revisions, conceding that the Soviet Union was a malformation of Marxism. Indeed, it would have perhaps been difficult to come up with an explanation as to why this has happened and to publicly support an ideology that justified the Stalinist purges or the Korean War. His second option was quietism, a complete negation of his early writings: the claim that Marxism did not offer a viable alternative to the violence of liberalism and that even if regressive, this is still more desirable than Soviet terror. This option, which he seems to have chosen, would have also required a rejection and revision of his phenomenological thought, which his political work was so closely intertwined

with. Finally, the third option was a re-examination of his own Marxist philosophy using a similar method as in his early critique of liberalism.

In his early thought Merleau-Ponty would appear to have favoured a process-based as opposed to a pattern-based approach to change in society. He felt that it was almost irrelevant what values liberalism held dear. What mattered was mainly the violence that resulted from its institutions and class system. Conversely, Marxism was superior to the former, mainly because it would justify its violence and because its violence was progressive. It would have perhaps been more profitable for Merleau-Ponty to keep this approach and to push this early materialism to its limits. In this way, he would have realized that Marxism's impotence to reshape the world of politics and social relations stemmed from the fact that its theorists were themselves subjective voices influenced by bourgeois capitalism.

This method can be illustrated by sketching an analysis of the role attributed to the communist party by Marxist thought. One can study this phenomenon of power-mongering without resorting to psychological concepts such as vertigo. Indeed, one could argue that it was because Marxist theory was developed under capitalism, where the bureaucracy's implicit role is to facilitate exploitation, that the new conceptualization of the communist party led to its separation from the proletariat and the naissance of a new class. To take this argument further still, what Merleau-Ponty failed to see by radically dismissing materialism was that because we live in an essentially evil world of exploitation

and because our way of thinking is inescapably influenced by social structures, one cannot justify every aspect of government using a preconceived pattern of what an ideal future would look like. This pattern in itself would be tainted by the supra-structure of the bourgeois world that we live in. Thus, the result of a project such as Marxism, envisaging change according to a minutely designed pattern of the desirable society can only be dystopian. Claiming otherwise would be Cartesian idealism, which is something that Merleau-Ponty rejected right until his death.

To this end, Hannah Arendt argues that it is praxis rather than a 'craftsmanship' of social structures that defines human interaction: Institutions are the secondary results of human action[17]. If this relation is conceived of in an inverted way, in order to resolve the problem of what Arendt calls the 'frailty of action' (the fact that action is not predictable, its effects spill over the initial meaning its authors intended and its final meaning can only be read once it is complete), if the fabrication of structures (as the result of philosophical thought) gains precedence over the engagement with others 'in word and deed', then society becomes an instrument directed against the individual. Often, this is achieved in accordance with the objective and pre-produced social structures conceived by the philosopher. As such, ever since Plato, the attempt to secure action, to make it predictable and malleable to the intentions of those who think they own an objective understanding of what the course of history will be, translates into terror. Similarly, it is precisely the fact that Merleau-Ponty fails

to situate his philosopher ego in this materialist dialectic that limits the scope of his later critique of Marxism. For this reason his denunciation of Marxism has serious shortcomings; it comes short of living up to the expectations raised by his early work and fails to deliver on the promises that he made as a Marxist.

However, the main issue in Merleau-Ponty's book, then, is the philosophical justification of violence. But there are at lest two factual considerations (not to mention morale ones) that undermine his argument. First, it is by no means obvious that the meaning of political acts does become clear after the passage of time. It may never be confirmed whether I am right or wrong, for example, when I do something so simple as investing in stocks. After six months it may seem I was "wrong" (I lost); yet another six months may show I was "right". The assessment of political acts in retrospect has no evident superiority to their assessment at the moment when they are done, as we can see from the continuing doubts among historians over the meaning of Caesar's conquests, the Crusades, and the regime of Ivan the Terrible.

Merleau-Ponty seems aware of this. He writes that "it remains open whether, historically, Thermidor and Bonaparte destroyed the revolution or rather in fact consolidated its result"[18]. Still, he does not notice the contradiction between this statement and his distinction between violence which is and is not historically justified. Violence, he argues, is justified if it leads to the abolition of violence and to an egalitarian humane society. But is there a clear historical example of such violence? A violent system of government may provoke a

reaction which destroys it – but this is hardly evidence for its merit. The self-abolishing system of violence Merleau-Ponty refers to has never existed.

We can, if we accept arbitrary criteria of progress, argue that some systems of violence were historically "progressive" because, for example, they increased the productivity of labor (e.g., the "historical [progressiveness" of slavery and of the primitive accumulation of capital in the Marxian schema). But Merleau-Ponty is claiming something different. He seems to believe that those who are actually victims of violence can, and even should, take the same attitude toward their destiny as the historian or philosopher who may reflect on the historical significance of this violence some years, or centuries, afterward.

This proposal runs counter to the simplest rules of moral behaviour. And Merleau-Ponty, in his ambiguous way, sees this. He writes that those who collaborated with the Nazis were not merely guilty of a "mistake" in predicting the outcome of events. Nor were the heroes of the resistance heroic because they were prescient in foreseeing the collapse of Hitler. On the contrary, he writes, they were heroes precisely because they took risks *against the probable*. Having said this, he persists, with astonishing inconsistency, in arguing that violence may well be justified by its (always uncertain) beneficial results for the future. But, if this were so, then those collaborators who believed that Nazism would, by some historical fatalism, bring about a revival of Europe, could have been condemned only after the war; while a decision to collaborate in 1940 would have been as ambiguous as one to resist. The sufficient reason for the

struggle against Nazism remains, Merleau-Ponty notwithstanding, that it was a system of absolute violence.

My modest conclusion in this, is that in the face of inevitable uncertainty about the "historical" meaning of our behaviour, we simply cannot rely in politics upon the obscure sentence of the Last Judgments of Clio. When we evaluate situations in which we ourselves are taking part, and not the actions of Tiberius or Henry VIII or even Stalin, we never are in a dialogue with History, but only with John and Peter. We would do well instead to justify our decisions not by appeals to historical Reason but only by the simplest moral considerations.

Obviously, this does not mean that our choices themselves will be simple or unambiguous ones. The boundaries between justified and violent resistance to violence, on the one hand, and aggressive violence, on the other, may be blurred. It means only that we will be able to avoid monstrous options – that we can exclude the possibility that those who torture and organize concentration camps may have justifications, based on "historical Reasons," which are as valid as the claims of those who oppose them, or that there are no arguments for judging their conflict.

If the reasons for political behaviour are based not on a philosophy of historical progress but on simple moral considerations, we will not, it must be said, have sufficient reasons for total political engagement or insurance against making great mistakes; but at least we can be sure that the means and ends of

political activity are not contradictory. Briefly, if I do not consult the wisdom of historical Reason, then I will not expect that a world of brotherhood and freedom will emerge from mass terror, oppression, and lies. I will no longer quote the favorite proverbs of the hangman… that "one cannot make omelets without breaking eggs," or that "history is not a bed of roses"… in order to justify (in a mysterious manner) all the crimes of police or military systems.

The philosophy of the ambiguity of history is, I believe, both justified and necessary, in so far as it may erode fanaticism and encourage skepticism about our own certainties. But Merleau-Ponty shows us that the same theory can be sued to do just the opposite, that it may provide the basis for saying that "since no decision has clear significance at the time it is made, then one choice is as good as another". This is not what Merleau-Ponty intended to say, but it is a possible application of his argument. So conceived, the theory of the ambiguity of history is antihuman, the perfect argument in support of Dostoevsky's famous statement. "If there is no God, everything is permitted."

It would be unfair, however, to attack Merleau-Ponty because the inconsistencies in his argument led him to ambiguities that he did not intend. His Preface and final chapter show that he had growing doubts whether the recent labor of History between Kamchatka and the Elbe had really brought the socialist utopia nearer. In fact, when it first appeared, *Humanism and Terror* was seen, as the Communist press of the period confirms, as an attempt to open up questions that were then closed among many on the left in France and to

shake the prevailing faith of French Communists in the automatic benefits of socialist terror.

After twenty-three years this meaning has faded. If the book is read by those still naïve enough to believe in the universal efficacy of violence, it may reinforce childish beliefs that all political activities are equally based on violence; and that there is no "essential" difference between life in societies where the traditional protections of law still have validity, notwithstanding corruption and injustice, and those where extreme despotism prevails.

Merleau-Ponty writes that "communism does not invent violence but finds it already institutionalized." Taken literally, this is so obvious that it means nothing. If we interpret it to mean that in all forms of social life violence is equally pervasive and inescapable, then Merleau-Ponty's view would simply cancel any hope for changing the world--- against his explicitly stated intention. That is why Merleau-Ponty is not only ambiguous about History but also about himself. He maintains that Koestler's dilemma – the Yogi or the commissar --- is not an inevitable one. He does not want to choose between the Yogi, who is interested only in internal perfection, and the commissar, for whom man is an object and all human affairs have no more than instrumental meaning. Merleau-Ponty assures us that other solutions are possible, and we must hope that they are. Unfortunately, he is not able to formulate them.

Moreover, Merleau-Ponty has argued that society is created by violence and exists continually through violence. In other words, the basis of society is

terror. And that even to always restraining from violence either towards a person or a class that is doing so is in itself an act of violence. Indeed, using non-violence in order to stop another violent act is a tacit form of accepting that act. Thus, he states confidently that:

> *We do not have a choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence. Inasmuch as we are incarnate beings, violence is our lot.---- Life, discussion, and political choice occur only against a background of violence. What matters and what we have to discuss is not violence but its sense or its future[19].*

And then, the question is: is violence intrinsically bad, or is it value neutral? The question cannot be answered by definitional fiat because any definition put forward would have to be shown to be adequate to the relevant phenomena, and relevance is determined by definition[20]. The etymology of "violence" as noted in chapter one (i.e. 1.8.1) is nonetheless revealing. The roots are value neutral, but the derivatives are laden with negative value. The ambiguity here, though I may not argue, is still essential. But the root words as it denotes "force", "power" etc still have the intrinsic nature of negativity. "Force" has the essential propensity for destruction; the question remains whether that propensity ineluctably manifests itself in some way, as Lord Action implied in his well-known assertion to the effect that power inevitably leads to some degree of corruption. The question is illumined by etymology, but cannot be answered by appeal to etymology.

Meanwhile, what Merleau-Ponty endorsed as regards to the position stated in the quotation above is marginally irrelevant to the political standpoint he attributes to society as it is challenged by the ethical implications of what society suggests to be. Deductively from the passage, "what matters is not violence but its sense (*sens*) or its future", meaning that there is no significant differences between violent and non-violent human behaviours and/or actions. Everything in life is all about violence. I wonder ever since the derivatives (even from the etymological point of view) are overwhelmed with negative value, if a snake will ever give birth to what is short. By implication, violence would not produce a lasting positive and value thing. Merleau-Ponty has denied the experiential certitude of non-violent act. He denied the fact that one cannot have a choice between violent and non-violent action. Yet, it is quite clear that the differentiating postulate is that there is always an alternative to violence, always a viable choice between violent and non-violent action. But this presupposition is ruled out by the claim that "we do not have a choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence". That means that everything about human existence is all about violence and nothing more. This is a complex position. As a political ideology, it has ruled out the belief that disputes should be settled without the use of war and violence. Hence, does it mean that violence is inevitable? If it does, what are the principal causes of these acts of terror and violence that seem to be inseparable part of human

societies? How certain and justifiable is it that violence itself can be adequate at bringing about a good society?

Merleau-Ponty has put man into a perpetual jungle life. He has turned the human society into the world of animal (the survival of the fittest), and has succeeded in shattering and underrating the rationality of humanity. For there is no difference between man and wild animals, ever since one cannot choose between good and bad, right and wrong, justice and injustice, and above all, violence and non-violence. But then I know that the differentiating postulate is that there is always an alternative to violence, always a viable choice between violent and non-violent action. Given this postulate, complex judgments are once again simplified: all other factors being equal, the morally justifiable choice is always to seek out non-violent means. Or, at worst, to choose the least violent of the available options.

The always available alternative to violent action is discourse, in particular or, more generally, an appeal to ideality, symbolism, moral exemplarity. Discourse, communication based on principles of rationality, is *ceteris paribus* always preferable to violence. The deployment of violence is war; the peace process is essentially linked to rational discourse.

Besides, only if there is a genuine distinction between the sword and the pen, between warfare and discourse, can there be an alternative to violent action, given the inevitability of conflict among divergent perspectives. If one holds that discourse is itself a form of violence, that discourse is inseparable

from violence, then this form of radicality, Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the inevitability of violence, wins by default, and violence becomes once again a morally neutral category. Mooting the question of which has the stronger force, if the pen is intrinsically mighty, if it has force (*vis*), and if force rigorously entails violence (*violare*), one can no longer cite discourse as an always available alternative to violence.

Merleau-Ponty has also forcefully imposed violence against the will of man to make a choice. He asserts that one has no reason whatsoever to condemn violence, and contrary to that will place one outside the range of justice and injustice. He clearly states this claim thus:

> *He who condemns all violence puts himself outside the domain to which justice and injustice belong. He puts a curse upon the world and humanity --- a hypocritical curse, since he who utters it has already accepted the rules of the game from the moment that he has begun to live. Between men considered as pure consciousness there would indeed be no reason to choose. But between men considered as the incumbents of situations which together compose a single common situation it is inevitable that one has to choose---[21].*

By implication, it means that we have no choice but to be violent. That is, our only choice is how to behave in a common situation, and that action or inaction will necessarily produce violence. Only if we were disembodied consciousnesses could we have the choice to be pure, that is, the choice not to violate others by imposing our will upon theirs in a manner contrary to their

interests and wishes. The only choices, forced upon us by our situation, are whom to violate, and how; and those choices are driven by the crucial question of why. This is terrible. To oversimplify, humanism amounts to a choice to promote universal ends rather than particular ones, but either choice – to serve human interests at large or that of a narrow elite – involves some form of terror. One cannot cite terror and violence as grounds for condemning action for they are the consequences of all action, including inaction: "to abstain from violence is to become their accomplice[22].

In addendum to the above section, the failure of Merleau-Ponty's positions lies in his radicality, his global pronouncements in a domain where discernment and judgment are essential. This failure has no merit. Granting that, there are still consequential differences between generals and bakers, ideologues and poets: history judges them differently. International war crimes tribunals punish combatants and, for the most part, let the civilian infrastructure alone. The distinctions operating here can find no ground in global pronouncements and radical theses. How do we assign moral responsibility when it is a matter of having no choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence? How should we?

The primordial ground of moral assessment is the transfer of corporeal schema, the recognition of another human body as like unto oneself, coupled with the transitivity of pathos[23]. This recognition or identification of living bodies across the difference of spatial separation is founded upon the

phenomenon of the reversibility of flesh. Violence as the forceful imposition of one will upon another is a refusal to respect and honor difference or ipseity, that is, a refusal of the mutuality revealed through the perceptual intertwining of flesh.

For more emphasis, however, given the reality of hostile others, given a threat that is genuine, consequential, imminent, and beyond mediation, violence will occur. Terror abounds – we have no dearth of instances – and when terror touches us, it co-opts, engages us one way or another; terror also preempts, can narrow our real alternatives down to the primordial choice between fight or flight. Whether or not it is always preferable to negotiate, it is not always possible. To attempt to negotiate in the teeth of an implacable foe may sometimes be heroic; at other times it may be fatally stupid.

Once again, and substantially from the question raised above, whether violence is intrinsically bad. Indeed, violence is intrinsically bad, even when it is warranted and can be justified. And this of course includes preemptive acts of violence. For all acts of violence, even acts of self-defense, retaliation, and retribution, are essentially preemptive of further harm. In fact, in a fierce fight, the victors do not walk away unscathed; those who are not killed are marked or maimed.

Although there can be good fights and just wars, but the injunction against moral binaries is well taken: good people die in wars and everybody gets injured and/or affected in a fight. There is no purity, but there is moral

vindication. Some acts of violence are justifiable, and some are irredeemable. And there is a third class rife with imponderables. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> *All action and all love are haunted by the expectation of an account which will transform them into their truth. In short, they are haunted by the expectation of the moment at which it will finally be known just what the situation was[24].*

This means, among other things, that it may take a long time for the vindicating or condemning judgment to consolidate historically. And every case is always open for review: those who are celebrated at one time may be ridiculed or condemned at another.

If violence can, in some instances, be vindicated, then the violence of an action is, automatically, insufficient grounds for its moral condemnation. But its intrinsic badness also means that violence is, in other words, the court of last resort, the least favourable alternative, something to be avoided, a moral negative.

Given the negativity intrinsic to violence, mediation is always preferable if not always possible[25]. The ultimate ground of mediation is truth. Truth commands assents, hence can provide a common measure across differences in perspective. In the Nigerian context and from the historical setting, one would simply note that most of the crises experienced in Nigeria were being resolved permanently via mediation and discourse, and not through violence. (for instance, the Niger Delta crises). Discourse can conceal truth as well as reveal it. Discourse as falsification and dissimulation is, no doubt, a form of violence.

But discourse of itself is not originary violence; fallible as it is, it is our prime recourse against violence. As disclosure of truth, as expression of a perspective, discourse allows us to measure conflicting perspectives against a non-discursive and obtruding perceptual reality that provides a measure among them.

Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty's political ideas are still remarkably relevant today as his social thought does not begin and end with *Humanism and Terror.* He has thus sets the "standards" for political thought, mainly, as he upholds that what defines a political ideology is not merely what it stands for (its values), but the way it deals with violence and whether this is acknowledged, justified and progressive. And most importantly, his claim (especially, in his later work – *Adventures of the Dialectic*) that strongly supports democracy at which there should be an equal participation in the political life of the community by all citizens of that community. Hence, this shall be showcased and be applied as its relevancy shall be of good benefits in the context of Nigerian democracy.

6.2 The Relevance of Merleau-Ponty's Political Philosophy in Nigerian Democracy

It is usually very interesting to make Nigeria a case study in any inquiry regarding the liberal values of democracy. It is not just because the practice of democracy in Nigeria has been in contradiction with the theoretical aspect of it, but because it has been a patchwork of incoherent and contradictory rumbling bristling with mischief and miscreancy. This is one of the reasons why Merleau-

Ponty attempts to apply his position to turn of the century conditions and events. In his first political treatise, *Humanism and Terror*, Merleau-Ponty states that the liberal values of Western democracies are associated with individual conscience, truth based on knowledge, the order of law, and with an appeal to universality and equality, that is, to legal and moral principles applied consistently to all. Merleau-Ponty supports these values, as he believes Marx does, but finds, as does Marx, that they are often not practiced as they are preached by Western societies. In fact, these societies often display a dramatic gap between theory and practice, for their appeal to law frequently justifies its use of force by appeal to rational argument, but, Merleau-Ponty argues, this rationality is its rationality, even the rationality of its dominant class, and it is neither absolute nor already established, as has often been presumed. This, of course, implies that the supposed purity of its principles is not so pure, for it frequently does not recognize that it is not the rational law of all things and, subsequently, its own face in its forceful and sometimes even violent imposition of its values and norms upon others. The West believes it brings truth, morality, and prosperity to all, but it is frequently not perceived this way by all. And this is not just a matter of a faulty perception or the lack of the proper public relations campaign. It is often the matter of substantial disagreements, disagreements that are often ignored or sometimes not even perceived by the West. Here, in this text, Merleau-Ponty offers the remedy of what is now called a multicultural approach, for he argues that rationality remains to be established

and will only be established by listening to all voices, even those of whom we may disagree[26]. However, the above illustration is a typical example of the Nigerian case if not worst compare to the Western democracies. Borrowing from Merleau-Ponty's contribution, Nigerians should imbibe the culture of listening to both the leaders and the lead. Not just to listen, but a reflective listening. A listening that prevails emotions and puts oneself in the speaker's shoes by indicating one's interest, and sharing ideas that will concretize and promote the values of democracy in Nigeria.

It is pertinent to note that Merleau-Ponty in his first political treatise – *Humanism and Terror* has a great of achieving a more democratic society which according to him shall be accomplished by a proletarian revolution. Given that this will be the first revolution of the majority of the population, society will be based on majority or even universal interests and not just the interests of a small dominant class, as has been the case in all previous societies. But in his second political treatise- *Adventures of the Dialectic*, he abandons this hope claiming that the class structure of capitalism will continue to interfere with democracy. For him, the continued existence of classes in capitalist societies make the possibility of a truly representative democracy highly problematic[27.]

However, taken together, Merleau- Ponty's political treaties continue to support democracy only that in his early work, he abandons hope that this will be accomplished by a proletarian revolution. Therefore, both works strongly support the democratic process, that is, the equal participation in the political

life of the community. The early work hopes that this will be accomplished by a working class revolution that establishes a classless society, while the later work arrives at the belief that parliamentary democracies at least in the circumstances of the mid- 20th century are the best means yet to achieve this goal, for they provide at least a minimum of access to the political process by the majority of the population. The later work also explicitly agrees that the aim of political action should be the increased awareness of and equal participation in the political process by all adult members of the society. Both political treaties also support various liberal principles, such as the order of law, equality of opportunity, and a minimalist moral/political framework. The order of law is supported because it implies the equal consideration of all in the creation and enforcement of the law. The equality of opportunity is supported because a society should give access to its goods and services in a way that is not greatly imbalanced by the structure of class, or by any other unfair advantage. And finally, the minimalist position is supported because the whole point of a minimalist framework such as "do what you want as long as no harm is brought to another" is to establish a principle of social constraint that grants as much freedom as possible to the individuals that must submit to the constraint. Meanwhile, the question of democratic process is central to Merleau-Ponty's liberalism. The "equal participation" in the political process is a recurring decimal in his history. The idea of equality among all becomes an indisputable qualities found in human person. It is the intrinsic logical of this inherent

dignity of the origin of which Merleau-Ponty attributes to *rationality* that makes man never to be used as a means to any other end. Nigeria however paints, in the main, a different picture. Democratic dispensation in our country today has been trampled upon. We must continue to point out where democracy does not live up to its ideals, always in an attempt to move toward increased democratic participation by all. Again, we can do this by pointing out the gap between democracy's theory and practice, between its ideals and what it actually does, between its claim to universal access to the economic and political process, on the one hand, and the inequitable influence of classes, on the other. Above all, Nigerian government and of course, individuals should put on a more democratic garb and participatoriness so that freedom, equality and justice will thrive.

Moreover, it has appeared that in his critique of liberalism and in his Marxism, Merleau- Ponty sets the "standards". For him, what defines a political ideology is not merely what it stands for (its values), but the way it is acknowledged, justified an progressive. Hence, he maintains that morally correct actions should aim at limiting violence and treating fellow men as men and not objects. In effect, our present democratic set up should reflect on this by experience and establish this by respecting the rights of each individual. We should endeavor to listen to all voices, try to move toward shared values, and support the government that allows us to do so.

However, surmise it to say that despite the inadequacies of his theory, it is not difficult to see the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical liberalism to Nigerian political society. Merleau-Ponty (still) proves himself an apostle of equality, freedom and human rights. The last word here is that Nigerian political life needs to be lived in such a way as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity.

6.3   Conclusion

Having been influenced and intertwined with his phenomenological studies, Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy starts off by trying to move away from the Cartesian tendency of seeing individuals as multiple consciousness relating to one another as subjects and objects. Instead, it regards individuals as embodied entities which are in a dialectical relationship with the social structure. This conception enables him to criticize liberalism and capitalism or their institutionalization of violence and to support Marxism and communism reluctantly accepting their violent as long as these are progressive and honest. However the turn of events in global politics convinced Merleau-Ponty to give up Marxism in order to support a new type of liberalism which is never fully conceptualized. Disappointingly, this accompanied by a quietist stance towards the general "standards" that he previously set for himself in his earlier thought

and is not followed by a re- evaluation of other areas of his philosophical work which were so closely related to his Marxism.

As the preceding discussion illustrate, the change in Merleau-Ponty's political thought was a result of what he felt was a more rigorous application of his focus on the tangible and experienced aspects of politics, rather than a shift in values and morals. I have argued that his later critique appears unconvincing as it lacks consistency and exhibits a sense of dishonesty as his later work on politics contradicts his earlier thought.

Moreso, it cannot be denied of the fact that human actions are partly characterized by violence but to acclaim that all of our actions are violent throughout our lifetime is not acceptable to Merleau-Ponty. Instead, man rather shares both violence and non violent behaviours. But in line with Gandhi, non-violence remains "the law of the human race.". it is this non- violence that binds men into a community and makes them to live in peace and brotherhood.

Using violence to avoid a perpetual state of violence as a standard will not be adequate at bringing about good society. Such standard is far from perfect, scarcely objective and that while it can serve to promote positive change in the present it might not do so in the long term. It would rather be a potential ground for the rise of violence as individual rights will keep to be dramatically violated.

Above all, if Merleau-Ponty's theory of violence should be in concert with the ongoing violence in Nigeria, it will not only affect the victims but will

hamper civilization and shatter the social network that unites us as one. Thus, *humane democracy* as demonstrated above should be put in practice as it will go a long way to avoid any political violence. Hence, we should continue to point out where our democracy precisely does not live up to its ideas, always in an attempt to move towards increased democratic participation by all.

Endnotes

1   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*, Translated by John O'Neil, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, p. 153.

2   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*. Translated by Richard C. McCleary. E Vanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 275.

3   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by H. Dreyfus and P. Dreyfus. Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 106.

4   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Translated by Joseph Bien. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973. Pp. 65, 84, 95 – 96. This Line of argument anticipates Albrecht Wellmer's Use of Jurgen Habennas; *See* Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, Translated Cumming (New York, 1971).

5   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*. Op. Cit, Pp. 9, 13. In his last lecture course, Merleau-Ponty implicitly opposing Sartre's claims for Marxism as "the unsurpassable framework of knowledge" for our time, pointedly remarked, that "one could even say Hegel maintains more of a sense of negativity and tension". *See Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Hegel*, Trans. Silverman, *Telos* 29 (Fall 1976), 46, 105.

6   Ibid, p. 329.

7   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, Op Cit, p. 153.

8   Nick Crossley, *The Politics of Subjectivity*. Aldershot: Avebury. 1994, pp. 55-61.

9   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, Op Cit, p. 60.

10 Diana Coole, Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism. Lanham: Rowman & Little Field, 2007, Pp. 3-9.

11 *Les Temps Moderns* was a Cultural Review established in 1945 by Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and de Beauvoir.

12 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of Dialectic*, Op Cit, p. 226.

13 Ibid; Pp. 225 – 226.

14 Lydia Goehr, *Understanding the Engaged Philosopher*. In: Hansen, MBN, et al (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, Pp. 318 – 351.

15 *See* Claude Lefort; *Flesh and Otherness,* 1978, Pp. 45 – 104.

16 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Op Cit. p. 132.

17 *See* Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, Pp. 220 – 228.

18 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, Op Cit, p. 74.

19 Ibid., p. 109.

20 The circularity here may be hermeneutic in the sense that it invites us to query our presuppositions thereby allowing us to thematize latent attitudes sedimented in our heritage. But hermeneutics will not give us a defensible answer to the question; at best it can only reveal our commitments. Hermeneutics is prolegomenon.

21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*. Op Cit, p. 110.

22 Ibid, P. 109.

23 See Martin C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 2nd ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997, Pp. 113 – 129.

24 Merleau-Ponty's Essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence", 1964. p. 74.

25   This was my major suggestion I gave in my unpublished article "phenomenological Analysis of Violence: The Case of Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria".

26   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*. Op Cit, Pp. XIII, XLI, 35 note, 187.

27   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of Dialectic*. Op Cit, p. 225.

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