Selected biographical information about Maurice Merleau-Ponty
By Douglas Low, 2019

1.) Alden Fisher on Merleau-Ponty:


In his introduction to his collection of Merleau-Ponty’s writings, Fisher offers a rather rare personal impression of Merleau-Ponty:

“Merleau-Ponty was a man of medium stature with a striking Gallic face filled with character. A well and neatly groomed man, he had neither the flamboyant nor the disheveled appearance affected by so many European intellectuals. Indeed, he had the external appearance of a successful business executive, however quickly his eyes and speech dissipated such an impression. He was essentially timid and seemed happiest to live quietly with a few intimate friends rather than in the large circle his eminence would easily have made possible. Nevertheless, he was a most impressive lecturer and a very effective teacher with an obvious interest in his students and in young people generally. Extremely gentle and polite, he took time and effort to put people at their ease; a good listener, he left the impression of being genuinely interested in his interlocutor.” *Essential Writings*, page 7.

2.) Best and most complete biographical information about Merleau-Ponty:
The best and most complete Maurice Merleau-Ponty biography that I am aware of is “*Vie et Oeuvre,*” by Emmanuelle Garcia, contained in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty Oeuvres*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Auteur*), Claude Lefort (*Sous la direction de*), Editions Gallimard, 2010, 27-98. The biography, written in French, includes many photos of Maurice as a child, as an adult, with his wife and daughter, with friends, in professional settings, etc., as well as a wealth of biographical information, by year and by month. Since *Oeuvres* was produced under the direction of Merleau-Ponty’s close friend Claude Lefort, we have some assurance of its accuracy.

3.) Selected biographical information of Maurice Merleau-Ponty focusing on his connection to medicine: This connection, I believe (and as others have pointed out), helps us understand Maurice’s profound connection to, interest in, and facility with the sciences, medicine, and the functioning of the human body.

The information below indicates that Maurice had two uncles and a grandfather who were medical doctors, with uncle Jean Jules and grandfather Samuel (as well as aunt M Aline’s husband), each, at one point or another, serving as Chief Medical Officer of the Marines [Navy]. Also, Maurice’s wife Suzanne was a medical doctor and psychiatrist. [The information below has been gathered from genealogy sites. Links are provided.]

Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY, Philosopher 1908-1961
University of Lyon 1945 to 1948, Sorbonne 1949 to 1952, Collège de France from 1952 to his death in 1961.
Born March 14, 1908 (Saturday) - ROCHEFORT SUR MER 17
Deceased 3 May 1961 (Wednesday) - PARIS 75, age at death: 53 years.

**Maurice’s Parents**

Jean Bernard MERLEAU-PONTY, Captain of the Artillery 1869-1913

Julie Jeanne M Louise BARTHÉ 1876-1953

**Maurice’s Union (s) and child (ren)**

Married about 1940 to Suzanne JOLIBOIS 1914 (Parents: Emile JOLIBOIS, Professor of Philosophy 1885-1967 & M Louise GALUP 1884-1950) with one child, daughter, Marianne 1941-

**Maurice’s brothers and sisters**

Brother: Louis Bernard Paul MERLEAU-PONTY 1900-1956
Sister: Monique Jeanne Lucie MERLEAU-PONTY 1906-1990

http://gw4.geneanet.org/index.php3?b=pdelaubier&lang=fr;pz=pierre;nx=de+laubier;ocz=0;p=maurice;n=merleau+ponty

**Maurice’s father:**

Jean Bernard MERLEAU-PONTY Captain of the Artillery

Born July 22, 1869 (Thursday) - BORDEAUX 33
Deceased 4 December 1913 (Thursday) - SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL 33, age at death: 44 years.

**Jean Bernard’s parents**

Samuel Anatole Mazeppa MERLEAU-PONTY, Chief Medical Officer of Marine 1835-1904
Vice-Chairman of the Borough Council of Rochefort.

Marie BELLUE 1846-1923, Sister of Jean Belluc, Captain of Ship (III + II) in 1895

**Jean Bernard’s Union (s) and child (ren)**

Married 15 November 1899 (Wednesday), BORDEAUX 33, with Julie Jeanne M Louise BARTHÉ 1876-1953

Louis Bernard Paul MERLEAU-PONTY 1900-1956
Monique Jeanne Lucie MERLEAU-PONTY 1906-1990
Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY, 1908-1961

**Jean Bernard’s brothers and sisters**

Sister: M Aline MERLEAU-PONTY 1867-1962 Married 27th December 1888 (Thursday) with François Georges DUFOUR, Chief Medical Officer of Marine 1858-1929

Brother: Jean Jules MERLEAU-PONTY, Chief Medical Officer of Marine 1872-1956. Married 29 July 1898 (Friday), BORDEAUX 33, with M Joséphine Eugénie BOURRU 1875-1950

Brother: Jean Léon MERLEAU-PONTY, Doctor 1876- Married about 1905 to Isabelle LAURENT ca 1875-
Maurice’s grandfather

Samuel Anatole Mazeppa MERLEAU-PONTY
Born 16 February 1835 - Rochefort, 17299, Charente-Maritime, Poitou-Charentes
Deceased 27 October 1909 - Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, 33487, Gironde, Aquitaine, FRANCE, age at death: 74 years old.

Chief Medical Officer of Marine, Mayor of Saint Vincent de Paul (33) (1897-1909)

Maurice’s uncle

Jean "Jules" MERLEAU-PONTY
Doctor (1st September 1895 (de_2nde_Classe)), Chief Medical Officer of Marine (1st September 1913)
Born January 17, 1872 (Wednesday) - NOUMEA (New Caledonia)
Deceased 29 May 1956 (Tuesday) - NEUILLY SUR SEINE 92, age at death: 84 years old

Individual notes
-Enter the Navy in 1895,
-Auxiliary doctor on January 31, 1895,
-2nd class doctor on September 1st, 1895; port ROCHEFORT.
-On 1 January 1899, Aide-major at the 7th Marine Infantry Regiment.
-On 1 January 1901, on the battleship "GAULOIS", Wing of the Mediterranean (see Felix SALAÜN of KERTANGUY, Cdt).
-On January 1st, 1903, Officer supervising the Principal School of Marine Health Service in BORDEAUX.
-1st class doctor on February 5th, 1904.
-Knight of the Legion of Honor (does not appear in Léonore base).
-On January 1, 1911, Assistant Physician at the Direction of the Health Service of the 4th maritime district in ROCHEFORT.
-Senior Physician on September 1st, 1913.
-July 12, 1916, Deputy Director of the Health Service of the 5th maritime district in TOULON.
-Chief medical officer, 1st class may 2, 1925
-Commander of the Legion of honor on July 1, 1931