1. The traditional approach to ethical theory often attempted to base itself on a theory (or science) of human nature, established variously by rational discourse (Plato), divine revelation (Augustine), or empirical observations (Hobbes). Once a human nature has been carefully uncovered and articulated, an ethics, a theory articulating the best and fairest way for human beings to live, could then follow. Usually these traditional positions attempted to disclose a fixed theory of human nature, a completely constituted and completely grasped unchanging essence, whether arrived at empirically or by means of rational reflection and intuition. The traditional approach is troubling because of its often rigid and absolute view of human nature, and because (some will argue) particular theories of human nature, despite their claims to universality, often represent the bias of a particular class or culture.

The postmodern approach to moral theory is quite different, for it argues that a science of nature is impossible, and consequently that a science of human nature is likewise futile. All supposed worldly distinctions, this view asserts, are actually the product of the play of language within a given linguistic system. How does one get a morality out of a system like this? Here morality becomes simply the agreement between interlocutors. Morality becomes consensual agreement (Rorty, 1979: Ch. 8). Even though this position appears to be more inclusive and democratic, it is troubling because of its radical skepticism with regard to nature and human nature and consequently with regard to its "groundless" (some might say arbitrary) morality.

Merleau-Ponty comes between these two positions and resolves some of the difficulties of each by arguing that we cannot use a passive perception (or a detached, disinterested intellect) to give us already fixed realities or fixed natures, nor can we abandon perception for language (or thought) alone. Merleau-Ponty argues that an active, interested perception is in contact with a perceptual world, a world that is sublimated in a linguistic expression that will in turn act back on and help articulate its perceptual foundations, a perceptual foundation that nevertheless remains primary. Merleau-Ponty will argue that an active perception is in contact with and can understand nature's objects and species, including the human species that will then provide the basis for his moral theory and practice. It will be a theory of human nature (of the body and its behavioral form) that rests on perception but that is open to the corrective views of other perceptual and linguistic perspectives. On the one hand, then, Merleau-Ponty's careful working out of a theory of human nature as a foundation for ethics has a connection with the great works of the philosophical tradition, since it attempts to develop a theory of human nature, yet, on the other hand, it also has the elements of a more contemporary or postmodern position that is open to the perspectives of all. Merleau-Ponty's position represents an advance over both of these more extreme positions because he grounds knowledge in a perceptual field and yet attaches this grounding to an open ended perceptual and linguistic corroboration.
My purpose here is not to argue against the alternative positions just mentioned (for this time and space limitations will not allow) but to reconstruct Merleau-Ponty's position and offer it in a general way as an alternative to the positions now on the philosophical horizon. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy has been unjustly eclipsed by current philosophical discussions, discussions to which he originally contributed and to which his work remains vitally relevant. His work therefore needs to be brought to greater awareness. My intention in this paper on his ethics is therefore to reveal and reconstruct Merleau-Ponty's theory of human nature, for it is dispersed throughout his major works, and to show how his theory of human nature (his theory of the body) acts as the foundation for his ethical theory (something he himself does not do explicitly). It is my hope that the richness, balance and appropriateness of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, once it reaches a wider audience, will stir further interest in his writings and provide a more significant (and deserved) place for him in the current philosophical debates.

2.

First of all, in the attempt to uncover Merleau-Ponty's theory of human nature, it is clear that Merleau-Ponty does not abandon perception and perceptual truth for an autonomous structure of language. Human beings do get perceptual information from the world. The structures that are found in perception are not simply a product of language. True, for Merleau-Ponty the world, the sensing body and language all contribute to the patterns or structures of experience. In lived through experience, where all these elements converge, structures are formed, yet, for Merleau-Ponty, perception is still the primary or founding term. Where bodily, operative intentionality meets and blends with the world, there meanings are formed that are then sublimated into the more abstract expressions of language, which in return fold back on the perceptual field. Merleau-Ponty explicitly argues that there is a non-reciprocal reversibility between perception and language, with perception as the primary term. Perception is sublimated in language, and language travels along paths already travelled by the aesthesiological body. Yet language helps express the perceptual, helps articulate it. Merleau-Ponty with his characteristic balance recognizes that all of these elements contribute to the structuration of experience, with the prime emphasis given to lived through bodily perception. Thus language and culture can act back on the perceptual field but they cannot create any structures they wish. Language is neither omnipotent nor created ex nihilo (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 127; Dillon, 1988: 194ff., 208ff.; Low, forthcoming).

Furthermore, with a statement that can be held against the postmodernist, Merleau-Ponty claims that the world has a thickness, a presence that is not that of an idea. There is an existential modality that distinguishes the perceived from the idea (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 374). The world's thickness, presence and forms (or structures) are not just a result of linguistic structures. Not only can we not abandon perception of the world but we cannot abandon perception of the human body either. The body has a thickness, a presence and a form just as the world's objects do because it is like the world's objects and is one of them (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 133). The thickness and structure of the body is not just a product of the play of language. Yet, against a scientism that explains all events as a collection of atoms of matter in mechanical contact Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is different from the world's objects. It is a third category or type of being between physical things extended in space and a consciousness introspectively given to itself.

Is Merleau-Ponty able to produce a science of the body as this third category? Can he produce a science of human nature different from that which is produced by traditional empiricism and rationalism? Yes, for the structure of the body of human beings can be distinguished from other objects and the bodies of other animals by using an existential/phenomenological method. That is to say, within concrete, situated and lived through perception of the world, where there is a fusion of the subjective and objective,
of the perceiver and perceived, one finds three distinct types (or structures or forms) of behavior which, as will be observed momentarily, reveal at a broader level three distinct structures of being.

In *The Structure of Behavior* Merleau-Ponty uncovers three distinct forms of behavior. Syncretic form is a distinct type (structure) of behavior in which the species is unable to separate itself from rigidly preprogrammed responses. For example, a toad tries repeatedly to strike at a piece of bait that has been placed before it yet that is protected by a piece of glass. Species of this sort are unable to learn new forms of behavior because the a priori structure of the species determines the behavior inflexibly (Merleau-Ponty, 1963: 104-105). Animals displaying what Merleau-Ponty calls the amovable form of behavior begin to express an ability to go beyond preprogrammed responses. For example, a chimpanzee can stand on a box to obtain food out of reach rather than just leaping up and down and salivating in frustration. This behavior demonstrates some freedom from preestablished devices, yet very little, for the chimpanzee is barely able to vary its perspectives on, for example, the box as a ladder or the box as a seat (Merleau-Ponty, 1963: 112-114). The third distinct form of behavior that Merleau-Ponty perceives in the visual field is the human form of behavior that he designates as symbolic form, for this species is able to use signs as symbols and not merely as signals. That is to say, signs can be used to express a general meaning rather than simply being a stimulus for a preprogrammed response. Human behavior is a unique form of behavior because it can extract itself from the specificity of a situation and grasp a general meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1963: 140).

Merleau-Ponty extends the notion of form to include even physical events and displays what he believes are distinct orders of being, the order of matter, life and mind. Merleau-Ponty

“... maintains the original character of the three orders and accepts the fact that quantity, order, and signification - present in the whole universe of forms - are nevertheless the 'dominant' characteristics of matter, life, and mind respectively. Their distinction must be accounted for by a structured difference. In other words, matter, life and mind must participate unequally in the nature of form; they must represent different degrees of integration and, finally, must constitute a hierarchy in which individuality is progressively achieved. By definition, it would be impossible to conceive of a physical form which was the equivalent of a mental form. There would be no means of finding a continuous chain of physical actions between stimulus and reaction: behavior would have to be indicated by physiological and mental relations.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1963: 132-133)

It is important to remember that these are structures that Merleau-Ponty discovers in the perceptual field and not separate *substances* on different planes of reality. These structures however do display distinctly different forms. We cannot use the same means to understand living things that we use to understand physical events, for physical events seek a balance of mechanical forces (such as a soap bubble reaching an equilibrium with its atmospheric surroundings), and living things display a *behavior*, not understood in mechanical terms, which reacts to an environment "delimited for them by an internal norm", by an *a priori* of its species or by preferred attitudes. Furthermore, human behavior displays a distinct structure that can be grasped by neither of the preceding frameworks, for human behavior can escape from pre-established forms of behavior and can vary its perspective on the perceptual field. The human form of behavior therefore expresses 1.) a greater degree of freedom precisely because it can escape prefixed responses to stimuli and vary its perspectives and 2.) a greater degree of integration because the human organism can *adjust* its behavior to environmental stimuli rather than acting blindly along pre-established pathways. This freedom/integration clearly enhances the possibility of developing ethical forms of behavior, which require responsibility and therefore freedom from blind conditioning and preprogrammed responses.
Another thing that is important to remember here is that even though the forms of matter, life and mind are distinct, they are hierarchical and are brought together in the human body. Physical forms give rise to forms of life, and forms of life evolve into conscious life. For Merleau-Ponty there is no consciousness that is not embodied, yet conscious life takes up and expresses life and matter in a qualitatively new manner or form.

Merleau-Ponty is clearly attempting to establish that the human species is on a continuum with but distinct from other animal species and from physical events. He is clearly developing a philosophy of human nature based on the structures or forms that he finds in perceptual experience. These forms are not completely constituted and fixed essences. They are stable structures of perceptual experience. They are revealed by means of lived through perceptual experience, by experience that is partial and perspectival and that therefore must be corrected by other experiences and by the experience of others. More on this later. For now, let me provide further documentation of Merleau-Ponty's attempt to develop a theory of human nature, that humans share a similar nature, a similar structure or form (upon which he will base an ethics).

It has already been observed that the body is similar to physical objects: it is composed of the same stuff as they are and has thickness and stable structures. However, it has also been observed that it is different from them. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty (1962: 94) claims that classical psychology has "already offered all that is necessary to distinguish [the human body] from objects" although they also remain committed to a reductionistic ontology and therefore miss a proper account of the body. Merleau-Ponty discusses five ways in which the human body can be distinguished from physical objects, the first four of which have been articulated by classical psychology.

1) I can move away from objects but I cannot move away from my body. I can never get outside of it to perceive it like other objects, for it "is always presented to me from the same angle" (1962: 90). In fact, "... what prevents its ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted' is that it is that by which there are objects" (1962: 92).

2) The body is able to experience a double sensation. The body can touch as well as be touched, but cannot touch itself touching. "The body initiates 'a kind of reflection' which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects, of which I can indeed say that they 'touch' my body, but only when it is inert, and therefore without ever catching it unawares in its exploratory functions" (1962: 93).

3) "The body is an affective object, whereas external things are from my point of view merely represented" (1962: 93). In other words, I live through my body, its emotions and its pleasures and pains. My body is not represented to me as a thing outside of me.

4) The body is in immediate contact with itself and moves itself directly, whereas it can move external objects from one place to another only by means of the body (1962: 94).

5) The human body displays a special form of spatiality. "Its parts ... are not spread out side by side, but enveloped in each other". "I am in undivided possession of it and I know where each of my limbs is through a body image in which they are all included." This body image clearly then is not merely a sum of associated images, for it is a gestalt whole that is in some way "anterior to contents and makes their association possible" (1962: 98-99). Therefore, "The body is to be compared not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art ... [because] ... it is the nexus of living meanings ... " (1962: 150, 151).

In sum, it can be observed here that Merleau-Ponty is building upon and enriching his earlier The Structure of Behavior claim that human form must be distinguished from the way in which physical events are structured. The human body for Merleau-Ponty (1962: 96) is no longer simply a collection of atomistic parts and a series of liner events to be "passively submitted to". The human body is lived through; it is that through which objects are presented and experienced; and it is because of the special reflexivity of the human body that it is aware of itself and its experience and that it is in "inner
communication" with its parts and its world (1962: 96). The body of the human species experiences itself as aware of itself and as actively directed toward the world, and it is the only body that is able to do so.

Merleau-Ponty uses the term "existence" or "being-in-the-world" to express this unique human form of behavior or way of relating to the world. He (1962: 78-89) defines existence as a prereflective projection of not just our consciousness but our whole being not toward a representation but toward the world. The body plays a central role in the prereflective projection. One should even say that the body is this prereflective projection.

“In the last analysis, if my body can be a "form" and if there can be, in front of it, important figures against indifferent backgrounds, this occurs in virtue of its being polarized by its tasks, of its existence toward them, of its aims; the body image is finally a way of stating that my body is in-the-world.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 102)

Borrowing a term from Husserl, a term that he nevertheless gives his own meaning, Merleau-Ponty (1962: 121) sometimes refers to this prereflective bodily projection as operative intentionality, that is, as an intentionality prior to and below the categorical intentions of a reflective, intellectual consciousness, as an intentionality of our whole being. Operative intentionality is a bodily aiming at the world, where body must be understood as a third kind of thing. It is neither an object in-itself nor a consciousness for-itself. The human body must now be understood as a body that is both subject and object, consciousness and thing mixed together. The phenomenal body has the thickness of a thing, yet it can aim at the world meaningfully, not with a detached consciousness but with its whole being. Prereflective consciousness is the aware body aiming at or gesturing toward the world. The prereflective body is an aware, conscious body aiming at the world, a body that is aware of itself as being in the world that it aims toward.

It might well be asked at this point whether Merleau-Ponty can still maintain a science of the body even though it has now been radically distinguished from physical objects and redefined as a prereflective being-in-the-world? Consider the rather long but important series of quotes for an affirmative answer to this question:

“To the extent that I have 'sense organs', a 'body', and 'psychic functions' comparable with other men's, each of the moments of my existence ceases to be an integrated and strictly unique totality ... Insofar as I inhabit a 'physical world', in which consistent 'stimuli' and typical situations recur ... my life is made up of rhythms which have not their reason in what I have chosen to be, but their condition in the humdrum setting which is mine. Thus ... round the human world which each of us has made for himself is a world in general terms to which one must first of all belong in order to [live]...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 83)

Merleau-Ponty is here claiming that because of the human body, because the human body has a prepersonal structure that is shared by others, that the individual's life is not completely unique, that it experiences certain stable patterns within itself and within a world that is shared by others. This is even more clearly articulated in a later section of Phenomenology of Perception:

“Insofar as I have hands, feet and a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent upon my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way which I do not choose. These intentions are general ... in the sense that they are not simply mine, they originate from other than myself, and I am not surprised to find them in all psycho-physical subjects organized as I am. Hence, as Gestalt psychology has shown, there are for me certain shapes which are particularly favored, as they are for other men, and which are capable of giving rise to a psychological science and rigorous laws. The grouping of dots
is always perceived as six pairs of dots with two millimeters between each pair . . . It is as if on the
hither side of our judgment and our freedom someone were assigning such and such a significance to
such and such a given groups.”

“There is an autochthonous significance of the world which is constituted in the dealings which our
incarnate existence has with it, and which provides the ground of every deliberate Sinngebung.”
(1962: 440-441)

Merleau-Ponty is clearly stating here that individual life has its roots in a bodily structure that is shared
with others, and that the body is in tum rooted in a structured world. The structural meanings that human
beings experience are thus the result of a prereflective, prepersonal cleaving of a structured body to a
structured world. Or, it would be better to say that within the lived through bodily experience, where an
active, directed body and the world meet, stable meanings or structures are formed. These meanings can
be shared with others because their bodies are structured in a similar way and because their experience
opens to a shared world. Merleau-Ponty clearly attempts to develop a science of the body or of human
nature apart from both empiricism and rationalism. He is using an existential/phenomenological method
to describe shared stable structures of lived through bodily experience, an experience to which both the
world and the body contribute.4

Developing a theory of human nature that conceives of the body as being- in-the-world assists
Merleau-Ponty in his attempt to link the individual to others. Because I am not an isolated consciousness
given only to myself, as Descartes and much of the philosophical tradition maintain, and because my
body is not just a dumb thing given in external space, because both consciousness and the body are
being-toward-the-world (it is better to say that a third kind of thing is formed, that consciousness is the
body's aware directedness toward the world5), the recognition of other humans ceases to be a problem. I
am no longer trying to recognize another private consciousness hidden behind an analogous body, as
with the classical argument from analogy. Rather, because of the prepersonal functions of the body,
because consciousness is now defined not as an introspective awareness of one's own private experience
but as an aware bodily relationship to the world, my personal life is carried into an experience and into a
world that is prior to and includes me and others. My experience and the experience of others is cut out of
a shared experience that includes both of us. Our private consciousnesses meet or overlap at the thing, at
the world that includes both of us. I can therefore experience, at least in part, what the other experiences.
There is a sort of anonymous visibility or experience that we all share, that our personal experience is
individuated from. Furthermore, because we are both similar bodily gestures aiming at a shared world,
and because human beings are now defined as a third kind of thing, not as a private consciousness nor a
thing it-itself but as a prereflective bodily aiming at the world, gestures can couple or overlap. There
occurs what Merleau-Ponty calls an intentional coupling or impregnation of gestures. What the other
experiences as an active bodily orientation or aware gesturing toward the world streams over and through
my body because our bodies and gestures are similar, and because they aim at a world that includes us
both. There is therefore beneath my personal life a sort of anonymous group life, a world of shared
experience and gestures out of which my own experience and gestures are differentiated. This is
especially true for the child, Merleau-Ponty says, but it remains at the level of adult life (Merleau-Ponty,
1962: Pt. 2, Ch. 4; Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 96-155).
This ability to live the other's gestures is, I believe, what makes morality possible in Merleau-Ponty's system, for it involves recognizing the other as another human being and recognizing the other's human world. It involves recognizing the other as another being that is distinct from other objects and other life forms. It involves recognizing the other as a being like oneself, who can experience and suffer like oneself. There is here an empathy, and identification with the other, an overlapping of ego boundaries to include others. Morality then has its source in the recognition of human beings as human beings (Merleau-Ponty [1969: 111] says in "the recognition of man by man"), in a recognition that is accomplished by the body, by the unique structure of the human body. The recognition of human beings by human beings is accomplished through the prepersonal character of the body, through its aiming at and opening onto a shared world, and through the gestural coupling of human bodies, of bodies that are similar in structure. This unique structure of the human body allows Merleau-Ponty to base a morality in experience without committing himself to the difficulties of subjectivism, without having to worry about escaping one's own private experience. For experience is now a bodily being-in-the-world, a prepersonal bodily awareness of the world, not a consciousness introspectively given only to itself. Bodily experience thus occurs in the world, in a world already shared by others, in a world in which our gestures overlap. I couple with and feel the other's gestures of pain or anger because I am not a private consciousness given only to myself or a bodily thing in-itself, but a body aiming meaningfully toward the world.

With Merleau-Ponty's view, then, it is much easier than with the classical argument from analogy for us to recognize others like ourselves; it is easier to see how our experience can overlap and share a world view, how one's own ego boundaries can be extended to include others. It is easier for us to see how, to use the language of Hegel and Marx, the universal and particular can become one, how my experience and interests can overlap with the experience and interests of others. This is what Merleau-Ponty is expressing with his phrase "the recognition of man by man". We are all humans and have similar human experiences and interests. My experiences and interests are the same as or similar to those of other human beings. Yet Merleau-Ponty is not naively utopian, for he fully realizes that conflict exists. At the time of writing of *Humanism and Terror* in 1947, Merleau-Ponty held that these conflicts are largely a result of capitalism and he hopes, with Marx, that the proletarian class, with the formation of its class consciousness, will be the vehicle for the establishment of a classless society. The establishment of class consciousness as it is described in *Phenomenology of Perception* is accomplished by the body as being-in-the-world. Class consciousness is not established by material conditions alone, by the objective relationship of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie to material conditions, for these conditions must be taken up, lived through and brought into awareness. Nor is class consciousness formed by awareness alone. I do not identify with another because of a similarity between the contents of our consciousnesses, because of something going on privately inside each one of us. I identify with others because I see them laboring or acting (gesturing) in the world in the same way that I do. I identify with others because there is a lived coupling of our bodily gestures. We form a consciousness of class because we exist in the world in the same way or in similar ways. Class consciousness is formed by an overlapping of ways of bodily being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 442ff.).

In *Humanism and Terror* the move toward the moral or just situation, the recognition of each human being by all the others, is to be accomplished by the proletariat because it is the universal class, the class that is oppressed and that therefore will attempt to set up a society that is without class interests, that is in the interest of all. In his later works, *In Praise of Philosophy* and *Adventures of the Dialectic* Merleau-Ponty continues to adhere to the view that "the recognition of man by man" is the moral and just situation. He (1988: 54-55) states it this time by drawing a parallel between "the recognition of man by man" and language, where "the will to speak is the same as the will to be understood".
“Just as language is a system of signs which have meaning only in relation to one another ... so 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. When equilibrium is destroyed, the reorganizations which take place comprise, like those of language, an internal logic even though it may not be clearly thought out by anyone. They [the reorganizations] are polarized by the fact that, as participants in a system of symbols, we exist in the eyes of one another, with one another, in such a way that changes in language are due to our will to speak and be understood.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1988: 55-56)

In this later work (as well as in Humanism and Terror), Merleau-Ponty visualizes society as a gestalt whole, as a collection of individuals and groups in relation with one another, each seeking recognition from one another. Balance or harmony is temporarily reached and yet a change somewhere in the system may give rise to a need for change elsewhere and the need for greater recognition by one group or another. Thus reorganization occurs when individuals or groups seeks recognition from others in the context of previously established yet changing institutions and material conditions. For Merleau-Ponty the moral or just society is the one in which each human being recognizes the humanness and therefore the human rights of all the others.

In the pages that have preceded I have tried to show that Merleau-Ponty does develop a theory of human nature (of the body) and that this theory is grounded in perception, in lived through perceptual experience. His theory, then, does not abandon perception and perceptual knowledge for a detached linguistic system, as the post modernists attempt to do. Primarily Merleau-Ponty's perceptually grounded theory states that the human being cannot be understood as a simple thing or even as a simple organism. Humans must be understood as displaying a special form of behavior, a form of behavior that is not tied to a special a priori of the species but that can vary its view on the environment and form general meanings. Human beings must be understood as neither a pure thing nor a pure consciousness but as a third kind of being, as a bodily awareness directed toward the world. It is this bodily being-in-the-world that acts as the basis for the genuine recognition of other human beings and subsequently for ethical interaction between human beings. And even though Merleau-Ponty does argue that a theory of human nature can be arrived at through perception, he does not argue for a human nature that is fixed and completely given, as the philosophical tradition tended to do. For Merleau-Ponty knowledge of nature and human nature is based on a perception that is bodily and that is therefore situated, perspectival and limited. For Merleau-Ponty true knowledge involves the attempted inclusion of all perspectives, an attempt that can never be completed because nature is inexhaustible and its objects, including the human body, are ever changing and evolving. Furthermore, just as his theory of knowledge is inclusive, his ethical theory involves the recognition of all human beings by all the others, a recognition made possible by the special structure of the human body. Both knowledge and ethics involve a knowing grounded in a perception that is not absolute, that is partial, perspectival, and that attempts to include all perspectives. Thus Merleau-Ponty's ethics and the theory of human nature upon which it rests provide a balanced alternative to traditional philosophies that tended to be biased and absolute and post modern philosophies that tend to be inclusive yet arbitrary.

I would like to mention one last comment in closing, a comment that cannot be elaborated here because of the limitations of time and space but that is important to bring to mind. As was already mentioned above, just as Merleau-Ponty sees a hierarchy of forms of behavior and forms of being, he likewise observes a hierarchy of forms within the human being. Human nature embodies the forms of matter, life, and mind in a hierarchy that sublates the lower form of matter into higher forms of life and conscious life.
“The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 146)

When viewing this hierarchical aspect of Merleau-Ponty's theory of human nature through the perspective of ethical theory, one can easily find similarities between Merleau-Ponty's work and that of both Marx and Maslow. One might say that for all three of them the ethical society would be one that is organized in such a way that all its members would be provided with food and shelter (satisfying the biological needs), with freedom and universality (satisfying the need for a sense of autonomy and yet also the need for social belongingness), with self-esteem and esteem from others (satisfying the human need for a sense of dignity and recognition from others), and with meaningful activity in the free fulfillment of one's full range of human capacities. Obviously, a more detailed study and analysis of these comparisons needs to be done. I mention them here to suggest important research that remains to be done and to show the richness of Merleau-Ponty's theory that remains to be tapped (Marx, 1964; Merleau-Ponty, 1969; Maslow, 1968; Low, 1987).

**Notes**

1. I will use the word "science" in the broad realist sense, that is, as the belief that the world is structured, that the human mind is capable of grasping this structure, and that the beliefs arrived at by one person can be checked and corroborated by others.

2. Hobbes' materialism remains present in contemporary forms of behaviorism. Both define human beings as a sum of physical processes. If, however, the human body is like any other physical object, that is, like any matter extended in a space in which change occurs by means of efficient, linear causality, then it is difficult to see how morality is possible, since each human action would be a result of prior physical conditions and not that of a free and therefore responsible subject.

3. Here I use "science" in the broad sense that was defined above.

4. As I have stated above, what I mean by science is the following: the world has a structure that I can grasp and that can be shared or experienced by others. For Merleau-Ponty this is complicated because he believes that the structure of experience is influenced by both the world and the active body. Yet he also believes that the world is greater than and runs beyond the individual's experience. He is critical, as was mentioned above, of reductionistic materialism that reduces everything to matter extended in space and reduces all change to mechanical or efficient linear causality. He is also critical of the narrow empiricism that usually goes along with this view, that reduces experience to the world's mechanical impact on the passive physical/physiological human body. For Merleau-Ponty this position reduces experience to the interaction of things in themselves and therefore eliminates the experience. In rejecting this view Merleau-Ponty argues that we never experience the world and its structures in themselves, that we always experience the world through human experience, through a lived through body. Yet this does
not mean that we are somehow reaching only a veil of phenomena constructed by the human body. Margorie Grene has an insightful way of expressing this when she says that for Merleau-Ponty being "phenomenalizes" itself in human experience (Grene, 1976: 606). Human bodily experience is not a veil that separates us from being but is our access to it, to a being that is greater than and includes the experience. Merleau-Ponty thus argues for, as Gary Madison says, a transcendence through immanence. The world and its objects transcend human experience, yet human beings reach the world and its objects only through their experience. Both the body which I live through as structured and a structural world contribute to the structures of experience, to a structured experience that is similar for human beings because their bodies are structured in a similar way and because their experience opens to the same world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 318ff.)

5. This is especially true of Merleau-Ponty's later work, The Visible and the Invisible.

6. Merleau-Ponty says that the just society is the one in which one finds "the recognition of man by man".

7. "Marxism seeks to destroy the alternative of subjective and objective politics by submitting history neither to the arbitrary will of certain men nor to the exigencies of an ungraspable World Spirit, but to the exigencies of a certain condition considered human by all men, namely, the condition of the proletariat." "[Marxism] recognizes a mission in the proletariat - not a providential one but an historical one and that means that the proletariat, if we take its role in a given historical constellation, moves toward the recognition of man by man" (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: 111). "In the name of the proletariat, Marx describes a situation such that those in it, and they alone, have full experience of the freedom and universality which Marx considered the defining characteristics of man" (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: 113). "In its essence Marxism is the idea that history has a meaning - in other words, that it is intelligible and has a direction - that it is moving toward the power of the proletariat, which as the essential factor of production is capable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism, or organizing a humane appropriation of nature, and, as the 'universal class', able to transcend national and social conflicts as well as the struggle between man and man" (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: 129). "In modern language, it is to believe that history has a Gestalt, ... a holistic system moving toward a state of equilibrium, the classless society which cannot be achieved without individual effort and action, but which is outlined in the present crisis as their solution - the power of man over nature and mutual recognition of man" (Merleau-Ponty, 1960: 130).

8. At the time when Adventures of the Dialectic was written, while being critical of both capitalism and Soviet communism, Merleau-Ponty argued that the best means to bring about "the recognition of man by man" is parliamentary democracy, for it provides at least a minimum of opportunity of dissent, of having one's voice heard, whereas Soviet communism, with its authoritarian party control, does not. (Merleau-Ponty, 1973: final ch.).

References


