Sense, Language, and Ontology in Merleau-Ponty and Hyppolite

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Abstract

Hyppolite stresses his proximity to Merleau-Ponty, but the received interpretation of his "anti-humanist" reading of Hegel suggests a greater distance between their projects. This paper focuses on an under-explored dimension of their philosophical relationship. I argue that Merleau-Ponty and Hyppolite are both committed to formulating a mode of philosophical expression that can avoid the pitfalls of purely formal or literal and purely aesthetic or creative modes of expression. Merleau-Ponty's attempt to navigate this dichotomy, I suggest, closely resembles Hyppolite's interpretation of Hegel's "speculative" mode of expression. In particular, his emphasis on the "mediating" character of philosophical language, which moves between descriptive and creative expression, suggests a debt to Hyppolite. This reading provides more evidence to think that Hyppolite cannot be straightforwardly understood as an anti-humanist or post-phenomenological thinker, and paves the way for a *rapprochement* between his work and the broader phenomenological tradition.

Keywords

Merleau-Ponty – Hyppolite – language – meaning – ontology

1 Introduction

> [Merleau-Ponty's] proper theme, was the problematic of sense (*sens*) (the sense of all sense), and the location of this problematic could not but be philosophical expression as such.
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> HYPPOLITE, *Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France*

In his Inaugural Lecture to the Collège de France in December 1963, Jean Hyppolite paid homage to Merleau-Ponty, a thinker that Hyppolite "needed to refer to."[1] Hyppolite claimed his thought was "knotted" with Merleau-Ponty's, "above all during the final years."[2] But the received view of Hyppolite's influence on 20th-century French philosophy suggests a greater distance between their respective projects. As early as Deleuze's 1954 review of *Logic and Existence*, it has been argued that Hyppolite's view of the relation between Hegel's *Logic* and *Phenomenology* breaks with human-centered and phenomenological accounts of sense and ontology, and with subject-centric and historicist interpretations of Hegel advanced by Wahl, Kojève, and by Hyppolite in early writings.[3] Later commentators have extended this line of argument, and stress that *Logic and Existence* was formative for the anti-humanist and post-phenomenological work of Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, whose theses Hyppolite directed.[4]

If the anti-humanist reading of Hyppolite is right, what are we to make of his professed proximity to Merleau-Ponty? If we take these commentators and Hyppolite both at their word, then Merleau-Ponty's later work must depart from phenomenology in general and from his own subject-oriented account in *Phenomenology of Perception*.[5] But this view does not have wide support in the literature. Despite their differences, most scholars agree that his later ontology continues to engage with phenomenological themes.[6] Alternatively, one could

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1 Hyppolite 1971, 1016. All translations mine.

2 Ibid., 1015. After meeting at the École Normale, they remained close friends until Merleau-Ponty's unexpected death in 1961. See le Baut 2011, 21 and Roth 1988, 48. See also their exchange at Merleau-Ponty's defence of his doctoral work in *The Primacy of Perception*. For early published references to Hyppolite, see *The Structure of Behaviour* 244/175n.1, "Hegel's Existentialism" and "Concerning Marxism" (*SNS* 120/241). Hyppolite wrote three interpretive essays on Merleau-Ponty after his death in 1961 (Hyppolite 1971, 687–758); see also "The Human Situation in Hegelian Phenomenology," which approvingly quotes Merleau-Ponty (Hyppolite 1971/1973, 181/162).

3 Deleuze 1954, 457/Hyppolite 1953, 191 and 459/194. Henceforth, *Logic and Existence* will be cited as *LE*. See also Foucault 1969.

4 See Lawlor's 'Preface' to *Logic and Existence* (*LE*, viii–xi); Baugh 2003, 30–32; Roth 1988, 20; 69–70; Gutting 2011, 30. For background see Gutting 2013, 254 *ff.*. For recent accounts of Hyppolite's anti-humanism, see Geroulanos 2013, Bianco 2013, 109–113.

5 See Geroulanos 2010, 288, who claims that Hyppolite's anti-humanism is a development of Merleau-Ponty's purported "suspension or even near-erasure of the human."

6 Prominent interpreters either contend that Merleau-Ponty's ontology is consistent with his phenomenology (Barbaras 2004, 68–78), or that his early work anticipates his later ontology (Dillon 1988, 85,106). Even scholars who argue that his ontology is a new development deny that it breaks with his early work (Madison 1981, 231–232).

deny that Hyppolite's work shares common goals with Merleau-Ponty's. To accept this view, however, would be to ignore what I will argue are significant and under-appreciated points of contact between the two thinkers, which the prevailing anti-humanist reading of Hyppolite has suppressed.

In this paper, I will explore a set of seldom-discussed themes at the heart of Hyppolite and Merleau-Ponty's philosophical relationship. I begin with a look at their shared focus on the problem of how language expresses sense or meaning (2).[7] Despite offering contrasting explanations, they agree that a successful account of sense must avoid both formal or literal *and* aesthetic modes of expression (3). In Merleau-Ponty's later work, this distinction is worked out as one between pure creation and pure description (4). The creative nature of philosophical expression, however, threatens to obscure the description of experience, which is a basic task of ontology. Evidence suggests that Merleau-Ponty's attempt to move beyond this impasse, and to develop a language proper to ontological inquiry, was informed by an engagement with Hyppolite. Of particular importance is Hyppolite's understanding of Hegel's "speculative" mode of expression, with its emphasis on the concept of "mediation" (5). This view, I suggest, has been unhelpfully opposed to human expression in natural language. As I show, Merleau-Ponty's move to embrace a form of expression centred on mediation, which moves between description and creation without being reducible to them, closely resembles Hyppolite's view of speculative mediation (6), and provides more evidence that his account is not straightforwardly anti-humanist or post-phenomenological. I conclude (7) that these results suggest the need to move beyond the terms that have hitherto controlled the reception of *Logic and Existence*, and pave the way for a renewed *rapprochement* between Hyppolite and phenomenology.

2   Sense and Language

I would first like to consider an ostensible challenge to the view that Merleau-Ponty and Hyppolite share fundamental presuppositions about the relation between sense and language. Despite a shared focus on sense, their accounts of how language expresses sense seem to be mutually exclusive. As I will suggest in the next section, however, even if Hyppolite denies that meaning is extra-linguistic, a closer look reveals deeper points of contact with Merleau-Ponty.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty claims that phenomenology aims "to understand what is, in us and in the world, the relation between

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7   In this paper, "sense" and "meaning" will be used to translate the French "*sens.*"

sense and *non-sense*" (*PhP* 452/491).[8] A focus on sense can be detected in many of the *Phenomenology*'s analyses of embodied experience.[9] According to Merleau-Ponty, the task of phenomenological reflection is to explicate (*expliciter*) subjects' primary experience. In other words, phenomenology attempts to understand and describe the sense of everyday experience.

Perceptual sense is understood as a "mute" or "silent" text (lxxix/15–16, 43/66, 50/77, 54/80). This is to say that perception is meaningful prior to description. Subjects can meaningfully recognize objects, perform tasks, and communicate with one another without explicitly attempting to understand their embodied motor-intentional projects. However, the full scope of perceptual meaning can only be understood in phenomenological description. Put differently, the linguistic description of perceptual experience tells us something deeper about its meaning (lxxxii/18, 22/45, 36/60, 50/75, 54/80, 353/394). While Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl in claiming that perceptual sense is ontologically and temporally prior to linguistic sense (the former "founds" the latter), language completes and supplements the meaning of perceptual experience (414/454).[10]

Contrast this view with Hyppolite's position in *Logic and Existence*. This work offers an interpretation of the relation between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic*, whose basic goal is to understand "the being that is sense and the sense that is being" (*LE* 5/5).[11] On Hyppolite's reading, Hegel's thought struggles against the idea of an "ineffable," or a domain of sense independent from its expression in language. The existence of "ontological silence" threatens the very possibility of Hegelian logic, which (according to Hyppolite) holds that all meaning is linguistic: "dialectical discourse is a progressive conquest of sense" (21/25). This is not to say that sense precedes its formulation in language. On the contrary: "[o]ne does not go from a silent intuition to an expression, from an inexpressible to an expressed, any more than from nonsense to sense" (21/26). Linguistic sense is not a "translation" of non-linguistic intuition. Instead, the pre-conceptual domain is only understood through *logos* or Hegelian logic, that is, language. Sense "does not remain … mute" (23–24/27).

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8   Abbreviations: *Phenomenology of Perception=PhP; The Prose of the World=PW; Institution and Passivity=IP; The Visible and the Invisible=VI; Signs= S; RC=Resumés de cours; NC=notes de cours.* Citations refer to the English translations (occasionally modified) and the French original, respectively.

9   See *PhP* 11/34, 53/79, 57/83, 104/131, 126/157, 133/164, 148/182–183, 172/207, 182/216, 450/489.

10   For *Fundierung* see Husserl 2001, Investigation 3 §21.

11   As this quote indicates, for Hyppolite Hegel's logic is "ontologized" ("On The Logic of Hegel," Hyppolite 1971/1973, 165/175). See Lawlor 2002, 89–103, for a helpful overview of this work.

When Hyppolite claims that "[t]here is no sense before language," he explicitly contrasts this reading of Hegel with Merleau-Ponty's position (24/28). Art, and especially poetry, offers only the "illusion of an ineffable which would be sense without speech, and in relation to which we could say, in paradoxical form, that speech is itself mute" (24–25/28–29). A note in the text indicates that Hyppolite is referring to Merleau-Ponty's "*Cogito*" chapter, which works out the relation between sense and language described above, and holds that "[s]peech is just as mute as music ..." (25 n.2/29 n.1).[12] With this claim, Merleau-Ponty is in part arguing that there is no single privileged form of human expression (*i.e.* artistic or philosophical). He also wants to call attention to the fact that, while everyday communication makes it seem that we transparently accomplish our expressive goals, upon closer scrutiny it is difficult to explain with a high degree of precision how we seamlessly express ourselves and understand others. Speech is "mute" in these two senses: an explanation of its workings is hard to come by, and the relative equality of expressive forms entails that linguistic expression is on a par with non-linguistic (or "mute") forms of expression like music or painting.

For Hyppolite, Merleau-Ponty conflates the non or pre-linguistic (and by extension, the non-significative) domain with that of language, which is the proper location of sense. Hyppolite holds that among the arts, poetry is "supreme" (25/29). Unlike other art forms, it can express its meaning in language. Still, poetry remains "nostalgia, an immediate language which evokes an authentic, but lost, language of being" (44/54). Poetic language is secondary to properly philosophical discourse, or a "mediate" "language of being."

The implications of this evaluation seem clear. While Hyppolite claims that the "decisive point" of Hegelianism is the *logos* that "thinks sense in its relation to non-sense," his account of the relation between sense, non-sense, and expression runs up against Merleau-Ponty's (102/131). Even if Merleau-Ponty's later work no longer advances a founding relation between perception and language, and rarely defines perception as a primary text, perceptual meaning continues to motivate a response from language-using subjects.[13] And sensible experience is still defined as a layer of "mute" meaning that is supplemented by linguistic meaning.[14] Despite the intertwining of perceptual and linguistic sense, they are not identical, and it is important for Merleau-Ponty that they

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12   "Speech is just as mute as music, and music is just as eloquent [*parlante*] as speech" (*PhP* 411/451).

13   See *VI* 154/199–200, 170/221–222, 176/227.

14   See *VI* 126/165, 154–155/200, 179/229.

remain ontologically distinct. Even with these refinements, Merleau-Ponty remains committed to tenets that Hyppolite would likely reject.

3   Formal vs. Aesthetic Expression

However, as I will show in this section, a closer look suggests a more important point of convergence. In addition to a shared focus on sense, Hyppolite and Merleau-Ponty agree that the expression of sense must be neither purely formal or literal, nor purely aesthetic or creative. What is more, textual evidence suggests that Merleau-Ponty's attempt to formulate an alternative to these views of expression was directly influenced by Hyppolite.

Hyppolite thinks the search for the formulation of a philosophical language that cannot be reduced to either formalism or poetry is an underlying motivation of Hegel's logic. While dialectical *logos* is "closer to poetry" than it is to "abstract discourse," it rejects the immediacy associated with poetry and the formalism of mathematics or calculus, which Hyppolite takes to be a mere manipulation of symbols (45/54). In fact, "ontological logic is the antithesis of a formalism" (51/63). While it is not akin to art, philosophical expression is not formal either.

Similarly, the early 1950s find Merleau-Ponty struggling against the reduction of philosophical expression to formalism. This is a major concern in *The Prose of the World*.[15] For him, formal languages may have the virtue of precision, but they often ignore the fundamentally creative, indirect, and opaque operations that make them possible. The well-formed languages of mathematics or scientific inquiry present their findings as if they did not rely on creative operations whose direction and goals are often fundamentally unclear or confused (*PW* 124/173).

By comparison, even if Merleau-Ponty extolls the virtues of indirect, literary language in *The Prose of the World*, he eventually claims that philosophical expression is not identical to literary, poetic, or metaphorical expression. In later writings, he eventually rejects the claim in the *Phenomenology* that Hyppolite criticized: that all forms of linguistic expression are on a par with artistic expression.[16] To be sure, he claims that "operative" philosophical language is informed by artistic forms of expression. But even if some passages in the corpus

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15   See Chapters 1–2, and *PW* 4/9, 106/150–151, 124/173, 128/180. Merleau-Ponty's arguments against the adequacy of formal accounts begin already in the *Phenomenology*. See Watson 2016, 38–39.

16   See *VI* 102–103/137, 133/173, 179/230–231, 221–222/271; *NC* 196.

praise poetic expression, and stress the similarities between philosophy and literature, in the end Merleau-Ponty is clear that philosophical expression is not identifiable with or reducible to them.[17] I will return to this point below.

Despite the differences in their views of the relation between sense and its linguistic expression, evidence shows that Merleau-Ponty's budding ontological research (still laboring under the title "The Origin of Truth") was guided by Hyppolite's account of the alternatives between aesthetic and philosophical expression. In a working note from 1955 describing his project, he claims that "[t]he centre of this research is evidently language [*le langage*]: for language is at the same time the ether of literature and the residue of *logos* (Hyppolite), being that says itself [*se dit*] …".[18] This text suggests that the need to formulate a rigorous account of philosophical language was central to Merleau-Ponty's ontology already in its early stages.[19] This remark also makes two claims about the nature of philosophical expression that are found in *Logic and Existence*.

First, the claim that philosophical expression is the "ether" of literature is a clear allusion to Hyppolite's use of the term to describe Hegel's system.[20] More importantly, Merleau-Ponty also claims that the language characteristic of his ontology can be understood as being that "says itself." According to Hyppolite, Hegel's logic supports a form of expression on which the meaning of being is stated (or "says itself") in human language, without being reduced to a human construction (either formal or aesthetic).[21] Crucially, Merleau-Ponty indicates that this form of philosophical expression underlies literary expression, without being reduced to it. This remark suggests that it is an important *desideratum* for his ontology that philosophical language be able to state the meaning of being, without being identifiable with aesthetic expression. That it cannot be reduced to formal expression is also an unstated consequence of this claim, insofar as being that "says itself," for Hyppolite, is opposed to formal modes of expression.

Of course, Merleau-Ponty does not want to simply adopt Hyppolite's view. In another note he clarifies, "*à propos* of Hyppolite *Logic and Existence*," that he intends, "before describing the world as a world-spoken [*monde parlé*], [to]

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17   For examples of the former, see *PW* 89–90/126–127; *S* 77/124–125; *MSME* 187, 209, 210, 213; *VI* 252/300 266/313; *NC* 187, 193, 196, 204, 391.

18   Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 26991, Manuscript Volume VIII, 128.

19   Recall that in 1955, Merleau-Ponty is explicit about his goal of developing an "ontology of the perceived world" (*IP* 133–134/179).

20   See *LE* 69/89, 93/119, 179/233.

21   See *LE* 20/25, 28/33, 39/47, 51/63, 104/134, 137/178 for Hyppolite's view that being "says itself" (*se dit*).

describe the world as a world lived by the body, make sense appear as a relief, coherent deformation, corporeal sense …".[22] In other words, he is still guided by a phenomenological focus on embodiment that does not index sense to language. But these remarks show that his search for a view of language adequate to his ontological commitments was directly informed by an engagement with Hyppolite, in particular, with his view of expression.[23] As I suggest below (6), the account of expression in *The Visible and the Invisible* provides further evidence for this hypothesis.[24]

4   Description vs. Creation in Merleau-Ponty

Before turning to that account, I would first like to consider a closely related problem in Merleau-Ponty's later account of expression. Following research from the early 1950s, his later work attempts to navigate a basic dichotomy between pure description and pure creation, an inheritance from earlier arguments in favor of modes of expression informed by literature, and against more formal views. On the one hand, he claims that ontology aims to describe sense as it appears to us. This seems to place ontological expression closer to literality. But the often poetic expressions marshaled for this attempt, and the transformations brought by philosophical reflection, both threaten this basic goal, and call for a solution.

In a number of texts, Merleau-Ponty claims that his ontology chiefly aims to understand meaning: "[w]e want to know precisely what the meaning [*le sens*] of the world's being is" (*VI* 6/2). Similarly, other passages show that he intends to offer a description or *explicitation* of the structures of perceptual meaning.[25]

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22   NAF 26991 BNF Ms. Vol. VIII 127.

23   In the mid 1950s, Merleau-Ponty was extensively engaging with Hyppolite's work. The 1955–1956 course *La philosophie dialectique* contains numerous references to *Logic and Existence* and to other studies by Hyppolite (see BNF Ms. Vol. XIV 59–65, 71–73, 79–86, 111–112). A number of remarks clearly indicate Hyppolite's direct influence on Merleau-Ponty's view of dialectic (*e.g.* 61, 64–65), mediation (*e.g.* 72, 82), and humanism (*e.g.* 80–82, 85–86). Unfortunately, the limits of this paper do not allow for further discussion of these points. See de Saint-Aubert 2013, 217–218, for Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Hyppolite's work on psychoanalysis.

24   Of course, one could point to other influences on this view, e.g. his engagement with Saussure (*PW* 23/33, 24/35, 37–38/54; *S* 39/63; *CPP* 64–66). While a consideration of other influences is beyond the scope of this paper, I am not suggesting that a focus on Hyppolite is sufficient to explain Merleau-Ponty's later view of expression.

25   On the need for description, see *VI* 52/76, 77/107, 87/119, 117/155, and 203–204/253–254.

His research in the 1950s demonstrated that linguistic description is neither formal nor literal. Hence, it is clear that description cannot be understood as a literal transcription of perceptual sense, which is chiefly guided by an ideal of fidelity.

Instead, any successful description of experience must be supplemented by creative expressions. In addition to his interest in literary language, this claim is also motivated by Merleau-Ponty's view that the meaning of experience cannot be grasped using standard philosophical terminology. Perceptual meaning, he claims, is "latent" and "dissimulated" (*VI* 101/135). It cannot be deciphered using classical philosophical terms like "subject" or "object" because they hide conceptual commitments that obscure its deeper meaning. To claim that an active "subject" makes contact with an inert "object," for example, precludes the possibility of an analysis of perception that does not divide perceiver and perceived into active and passive terms. Accordingly, the need to formulate a new philosophical vocabulary, which will open up new possibilities for understanding experience, is a basic goal of Merleau-Ponty's later thought.[26]

On his view, a proper account of expression

> must seek in the world itself the secret of our perceptual bond with it. It must use words not according to their pre-established signification, but *in order to express* [pour dire] this prelogical bond. [...] It must interrogate the world, it must enter into the forest of references that our interrogation arouses in it, it must make it say, finally, what in its silence *it wants to say*.... (38–39/60; translation modified)

Put differently, this form of expression must be inventive. Non-standard locutions like "vortex," "whirlwind," and "*chiasma*," he thinks, actually bring out the sense of perceptual objects and perception itself; they express what experience "wants to say." This entails that these creative terms are not mere poetry or metaphor, as some commentators have suggested.[27] For Merleau-Ponty, philosophy chiefly aims to make the meaning of sense manifest: poetry and art "speak only silently," but philosophy is "the exhibition [*démonstration*] of this speaking silence" (*HLP* 49/60; translation modified). These creative terms, then, are invented for the sake of describing experience.[28] The need to bring

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26   See e.g. *s* 15/28–29; *VI* 167/219.

27   See Vanzago 2005, 465–468, and Sellheim 2012, 267–270.

28   See Watkin 2009, 62–63.

description and creation together is a recurring claim in Merleau-Ponty's later work.[29]

However, even if pure creation is insufficient for an account of sense (*VI* 174/255), Merleau-Ponty is clearly aware that his view can lead to an undesirable result: that philosophical expression will pervert the meaning of the objects it attempts to understand. If creation is a condition for the disclosure of sense, what is to prevent philosophical expression from becoming a human artefact, and a mere reflection of one perceiver's limited construals of experience?

Merleau-Ponty accepts that the "operative" language required for ontology is necessarily transformative (154–155/200). He no longer argues, as he sometimes did in the *Phenomenology*, that a pure description of sense is possible (*PhP* lxxiii/10, lxxix/16, 424/464). The descriptions issuing from reflective activity will always introduce some modifications into first-order objects of experience. But if ontology remains committed to its descriptive goals, a check on reflective activity is needed. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty develops a view of "hyper-reflection" (*sur-réflexion*):

> [W]e are catching sight of the necessity of another operation besides the conversion to reflection, more fundamental than it, of a sort of hyper-reflection (*sur-réflexion*) that would also take itself and the changes it introduces into the spectacle into account. (*VI* 38/59–60)

If transformation is a necessary effect of philosophical reflection, a methodologically enshrined scrutinizing of the results of reflection is required. On this view, the questions that subjects pose to access and describe the meaning of experience, and the concepts and explanations they generate to understand it, must be sufficiently sensitive to subsequent revision, and even rejection (120/158). Otherwise, a particular account of experience will quickly lose track and become estranged from the objects it supposedly discloses.

This requirement entails that for Merleau-Ponty, philosophical expression must have a dialectical character: while a particular description offers an analysis of an object, subjects must reconsider the success of their descriptions by testing them against the meanings first encountered in experience. As he claims, "the relation between thematization and behavior is a dialectical relation: language realizes, by breaking the silence, what the silence wished and did not obtain" (176/227). Philosophical expression is on a continuum with natural experience, and attempts to state the meaning of perception. But the

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29   *VI* 102/136–137, 197/247–248; *s* 14/28.

likelihood that it will transform perceptual sense compels it to return to perception, and to consider the extent to which descriptions diverge from it (as far as this is possible). Alternatively, philosophical expression "invites [us] to recommence description from closer up" (87/119).

These tenets lead Merleau-Ponty to the conclusion that philosophical language is best understood as a dialectical "mediation" between description and creation (6). As I will suggest, this view harks back to Hyppolite's account of the expression of sense in Hegel, in which mediation is the centerpiece. A look at his view of the "speculative proposition" will bring this connection into further relief.

5   Hyppolite on the "Speculative Proposition"

Recall that one of Hyppolite's basic aims in *Logic and Existence* is to determine the relation between language, sense, and being in Hegel. According to Hyppolite, meaning is the province of language, more specifically, of dialectical discourse, which is "the becoming of sense" (*LE* 26/31). The meaning of being is gradually clarified by linguistic expression. To better understand this view, I would like to first consider in what sense this form of expression can be said to be "anti-humanist."

It is widely assumed that Hyppolite's view of philosophical language requires that its subjective or human features be significantly curtailed, even to the point of effacement.[30] More strongly, it has been claimed that for Hyppolite, dialectical and human language are in no sense coextensive, *i.e.* they do not overlap.[31] This claim is not without some textual support. For example, Hyppolite holds that sense "says itself" in human language, but he understands this to mean that "[p]hilosophical dialectic is no longer a process of the philosopher; in the philosopher, it is the movement of the thing itself, its 'monstration'" (144/188).[32] Even if sense is gradually disclosed in dialectical discourse, "the unity of the proposition is not the unity of a human subject."[33]

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30   As Baugh notes, "in *Logic and Existence*, 'man' is suppressed in favor of Being itself" (Baugh 2003, 31; see also Geroulanos 2010, 300–301).

31   See Roth 1988, 72–73.

32   See "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" for Merleau-Ponty's claim that "[language] is entirely a monstration [*il* (viz. *le langage*) *est tout entier un monstration*]" (*s* 43/70).

33   *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit (1946), by contrast, defines 'language' or the "prefiguration of the logos of the *Logic*," in terms of "*universal divine man*"

While Hegel claims in the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the Absolute "is essentially subject," Hyppolite thinks that the language of being is not identical to human language, and by extension, that the "subject" in question is not human.[34]

While that may be, the difference between human and philosophical language has been unhelpfully overstated. Before considering why that is the case, however, I want to acknowledge two views of "humanism" that Hyppolite is undoubtedly opposed to. First, if humanism is understood as the goal of grounding the meaning of history in human subjectivity, a view that can be found in Hyppolite's earlier work on Hegel, then it is surely to be rejected.[35] Commentators have rightfully stressed his eventual opposition to this view, and are also correct to call attention to the influence of Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" on Hyppolite's understanding of the ills of this version of humanism.[36]

Second, Hyppolite also defines humanism more narrowly in terms of what he calls "empirical thought." The basic problem with empirical thought can be seen in its account of negative judgment (*LE* 108/138). On this view, "[o]nly the affirmative judgment would be the form of truth." Empirical thought defines negation by appeal to the negating operation performed by human reason, which is understood as a positive activity or contribution by us (Hyppolite identifies Bergson and Brunschvicg as proponents of this view). The problem with a "merely human explanation of negation" is that it analyzes negative judgments in terms of negations performed by human thought. But this misses a condition that makes negation possible in the first place, which Hyppolite thinks Hegel's *Phenomenology* clearly identifies: "the things distinguish themselves from one another, and one has to start from this distinction in order to understand the negation in being and in thought, before we even study the meaning of the negative judgment in empirical thought and in speculative thought" (108/139).[37] Close attention to the phenomena associated with what Hegel calls "sense-certainty" show that negative judgments take direction from objects themselves, whose properties are already differentiated prior to

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(Hyppolite 1946/1979, 595/574), and claims that "only language can realize" human self-consciousness (403/390).

34 Hegel 1977, ¶25.

35 See "The Human Situation in Hegelian Phenomenology," Hyppolite 1971/1973, 104–121/ 153–168.

36 For a reference to Heidegger's *Letter* see *LE* 187/244. See Baugh 2003, 30; Roth 1988, Chapters 2–3; Lawlor 2002, 101; Kleinberg 2001, Chapter 5.

37 Hegel 1977, ¶32.

human activity. A merely human or "empirical" view of judgment goes astray, then, because it does not adequately track the structure of sense as it shows itself already "in being."

This observation is important. While Hyppolite clearly denies the adequacy of human-centric views, he does not claim that human subjectivity has no role to play in the disclosure of sense. Instead, he holds that "[n]atural language appears therefore as the proper medium of philosophical discourse; in natural language, this absolute genesis will be able to be said" (*LE* 53/65). To be sure, talk of "absolute genesis" makes clear that sense does not derive from human sense-making activity. But it is equally clear that sense only shows itself in natural language; natural language is a *necessary* (but not a sufficient) condition for the disclosure of sense.[38] Hyppolite even claims that "philosophical language preserves from the total poetic impulse the creative power and the immanence of the whole," and maintains part of "the understanding's determinations and fixations" (53/66). The expression of sense is neither purely formal nor purely poetic, but it still combines some of their more palatable features. Thus, it is misleading to claim that Hyppolite wholly extirpates subjective or human elements from philosophical discourse.[39] He is clear that "[t]he self must be decentered from the purely and solely human in order to become the self of Being" (74/91). To decenter the "purely" human subject does not entail a rejection of subjectivity *tout court*, but a mitigation of its supposedly central role in an account of meaning.

By contrast, "speculative negation," does not succumb to the ills of a limited human standpoint. According to Hyppolite, Hegel develops a "speculative logic" that unites creative invention with the rigor of Kant's categories (see the claim above about the "understanding") (96/122). This combination prevents philosophical language from stagnantly residing in the limited formulations of a specific time, place, or subject. But it also allows speculative logic to maintain a progressive character required by the dialectic. Speculative negation "is … a negation which determines," that is, its progression discloses new layers of meaning, and for this reason, it has a "creative value" (101/130). Hegel's logic is creative while stating the sense of being because it is a genetic movement that tracks the gradual and evolving manifestation of sense (23–24/27, 113/146, 161/209).

According to Hyppolite, the concept of "mediation" (*die Vermittlung*) is central to the "speculative proposition" (*der spekulative Satz*) (99/127).[40] The

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38   On this point see Gutting 2001, 30.
39   On this point, see Geroulanos 2013 and Baugh 2003.
40   See Malabou 2005, 167–183 for a helpful interpretation of the "speculative proposition."

speculative proposition is the form of expression that best accords with Hegel's system, and is the vehicle through which sense is to be disclosed. For our purposes, "mediation" can be understood as a process that unites two terms, producing a third.[41] Hyppolite sees mediation as a progressive movement. Alternatively, it is a process of conceptual transformation that results in a new condition or meaning.[42]

This view of mediation applies *a fortiori* to language: "Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of *mediation*. Signification such that it appears in language, sense as the becoming of the concept in discourse, exist first in relation to the movement which seems to engender them" (24/28). For Hyppolite, language is the principal medium of mediation: "[t]he Logos is authentic mediation" (133/104). As Lawlor has noted, "Hyppolite defines mediation as language."[43] Hyppolite understands linguistic mediation to be a process of expression that transforms one unit of sense into another. A focus on mediation shows that the meaning of philosophical expression is always in development. As Hyppolite sees it, a particular predicate only gets its meaning in relation to other predicates in a sentence. But because the attempt to understand the meaning of any predicate is a progressive process, which reveals new meanings associated with a given predicate, the total meaning of a sentence cannot remain fixed (47/58).

As its mediating character suggests, the speculative proposition eschews classical subject/predicate relations. The meaning of a speculative proposition cannot be grasped by focusing on the extension of the terms it contains, nor on the meaning of the predicates it attaches to objects. Speculative propositions do not admit of a rigid extension (or intension) because the meanings of their constituent parts are liable to change. Instead, the content of the speculative proposition is a generative movement that expresses a sense open to further development.[44] On this view of philosophical expression, what was once a subject can become an object, passing into a state that was previously thought to be determined by the subject or by a given condition.

Hyppolite claims that the structure of the speculative proposition is difficult to grasp because our default perspective is that of an empirical subject, or a particular human knower. We "would like to understand [the speculative proposition] as if it were an empirical proposition," which expresses the view

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41   Hegel 1969, 72.

42   See O'Connor 1999 for more on "mediation."

43   Lawlor 2002, 89.

44   Hegel 1977, ¶¶61–63.

of a particular agent, who identifies and ascribes stable meanings to individual linguistic terms (148/193; 145/189).[45] But this must be avoided:

> To say that the Absolute is *subject* is to sublate this conception of knowledge that is expressed in the empirical proposition. The empirical proposition assumes that predication has a fixed base, a pre-existing being, and a subject which reconnects all the predicates more or less arbitrarily to this base. By analyzing the empirical proposition's structure, we can understand why it continues to be an obstacle to the speculative proposition. The proposition is already the statement of a mediation.... (139/180–81)

A basic problem with empirical expression is that it is insufficiently dynamic, or, as Hegel says in the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "plastic."[46] Empirical expression takes it for granted that objects have a stable meaning, which is reproduced at the level of discourse. But if sense is non-static, then it must be expressed in a continually progressive form of linguistic expression.

This observation clarifies the broader payoff of Hyppolite's anti-subjectivist arguments. A merely human view of expression, on which a subject unifies predicates in a sentence, must be rejected because it is insufficiently sensitive to the genetic and developmental character of sense. While we might associate a determinate meaning with a particular term, we often learn later that this meaning must be further qualified. In this vein, Hegel's "discourse of being" better captures the gradual development, or mediation, of sense. An overwhelming reliance on our conceptual schemes prevents us from attaining this goal, insofar as we remain locked within a limited theoretical framework. But if it genuinely tracks the mediation of being, philosophical language must also have a mediating character. This entails that the meaning of philosophical expression cannot be ultimately analyzed in terms of the formulations of a particular human perspective or of human subjectivity as such, for both tend to be limited by existing conceptual commitments. Instead, human judgment and expression is better understood as an evolving response to the structure of

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45   For more on the ills of empirical consciousness in the *Science of Logic*, see Hegel 1969, 76–77.

46   See Hegel 1977, ¶64 for the claim that "only a philosophical exposition that rigidly excludes the usual way of relating the parts of a proposition could achieve the goal of plasticity [*plastisch*]." See Nancy 1973/2001 for more on this point.

sense. But this does not, as I have suggested, entail that human subjects have no role to play in its disclosure.[47]

6   Merleau-Ponty, Mediation, and Language

As I have suggested, a basic aim of Merleau-Ponty's later thought is to express the meaning of experience (4). A key goal of his account of creative philosophical expression is to prevent the inevitable transformations expression brings to perceptual experience from perverting its meaning. As I will show here, this requirement leads him to conclude that philosophical language must be understood as a dialectical mediation between sense and its expressive formulation. On my reconstruction, Merleau-Ponty's proposal for moving beyond the impasses of description *vs.* creation is fundamentally akin to Hyppolite's account of the speculative proposition.

While I cannot consider this account in detail here, in his later work Merleau-Ponty develops a view of dialectic that he calls "hyper-dialectic" (*VI* 94/127).[48] As its name suggests, it is closely connected to hyper-reflection. Like its reflective counterpart, hyper-dialectic is a genetic movement. A distinguishing feature of hyper-dialectic is that it does not privilege one stage of dialectical synthesis. Instead of thesis, position, or pure negativity (*pace* Sartre), this view of dialectic emphasizes its fluid development, rather than any particular stage of dialectical synthesis (95/127–128).

One of the chief virtues of hyper-dialectic is that it can guide the reflective activity needed to understand the meaning of being. As I noted above, Merleau-Ponty characterizes the expression of perceptual sense as a dialectical undertaking (4). A dialectical form of expression offers us a "way to decipher [*déchiffrer*] the being with which we are in contact, the being in the process of manifesting itself, the situational being ..." (93/125). According

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47   The question of how this view of language is to be distinguished from an "all too-human" account is a pressing problem for Hyppolite, though not one that I can discuss here (*LE* 27/31). This concern is more prominent in later writings, but Hyppolite already claimed in *Genesis and Structure* that the self of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is insufficient if it remains "*human, all too human*" (Hyppolite 1946/1979, 557/537). He also held that "[t]he system of categories, speculative logic, is ... not only our thought [*connaisance*]" (584/561).

48   Merleau-Ponty indicates that this view is developed out of broader tenets of his later thought, including "reversibility" (*VI* 135–136/175) and "dimensionality" (*IP* 77/125, 195–198/254–256). In his final seminar on Hegel, he claims that the intertwining of subject and object, a key claim of reversibility, offers the grounds for a theory of dialectic (*PNPSMP* 26/ *NC* 292).

to Merleau-Ponty, "being" or "meaning" admit of a wide range of construals. He assumes that objects and experiences can yield different meanings if they are analyzed from different perspectives, at different times, places, *etc.* (*IP* 126/169–170). By encouraging subjects to check their descriptions against their original experience (and that of others), reflection informed by hyper-dialectic promises to open up perspectives that remained hitherto occluded.

Crucially, hyper-dialectic leads us to a fruitful view of philosophical expression, which is a precondition for the disclosure of meaning. A bad view of dialectic expresses being through "an assemblage of statements, by thesis, antithesis, and synthesis …" (*VI* 94/127). By contrast, "good dialectic" recognizes that "Being is not made up of idealizations or of things said … but of bound wholes where signification never is except in tendency." In other words, a hyper-dialectical view accepts that the meaning of being remains in development (or "in tendency"), and cannot be grasped by connecting rigidly defined linguistic units. By stating meaning in "univocal significations," or semantically-fixed expressions, reflecting subjects lose sight of the conditions under which a particular description arose, or its "ante-predicative context," and inhibit their ability to revise their interpretations of experience (92/124). On a bad view of dialectic, the expressions by which one "describes the movement of being are then liable to falsify it."

Recall that Hyppolite identifies similar problems with what he called "empirical thought." Empirical (or merely human) expression errs because it advances a static, rather than a dynamic or generative, view of judgment. On this view, the meaning of judgments (or their constituent parts) depend on the unifying activity of a human subject. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty decries a view of dialectic, and an accompanying account of expression, on which expression remains fixed, adheres to its own construals of perceptual meaning, and is impervious to subsequent revision. Hegel's logic does not succumb to this impasse, for Hyppolite, because speculative expression has a mediating character (see 5). This claim is also central to Merleau-Ponty's view of an adequate account of philosophical expression.

Shortly after the publication of *Logic and Existence*, Merleau-Ponty claimed that his analyses of institution (1954) were intended as a "revision of Hegelianism."[49] He praises Hegel's thought, which is nothing less than "the discovery of phenomenology, of the living, real, and original relation between the elements of the world" (*IP* 79/126). Still, "Hegelianism" needs revision because Hegel has a tendency to "subordinate" lived experience to the "systematic

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49   For an overview see Vallier 2005.

vision of the philosopher." But an alternative view of phenomenology and dialectic can be constructed from the positive elements in Hegel's thought:

> Either phenomenology is only an introduction to true knowledge, which remains estranged from the adventures of experience, or phenomenology dwells entirely within philosophy. Phenomenology cannot conclude with the pre-dialectical formula that "Being is," and it has to take into account the mediation [*la médiation*] of being. (79/126)

As this remark suggests, a basic problem with non (or insufficiently) dialectical thought is that it circumscribes the meaning of being in rigid formulae, *e.g.* that being "is" one way or another (and will remain so). By contrast, an account focused on mediation is more sensitive to the possible development and evolution of the meaning of being. Most basically, here Merleau-Ponty contrasts "mediation" with the merely static or permanent.

In later writings, he is clear that self-mediation (*médiation par soi*), "a movement through which each term ceases to be itself in order to become itself, breaks up, opens up, negates itself, in order to realize itself," is the crucial term of dialectic (*VI* 92/124–125). On this view, "mediation" is a process that surpasses the limits of a given term or concept, but also builds on them to yield a better account. A fruitful view of dialectic emphasizes the development and transformation of its constituent parts. In his 1955–1956 course *La philosophie dialectique*, Merleau-Ponty links Hegel's concept of "the negation of the negation," a movement by which a given limit is surpassed, to "self-mediation" (*médiation par soi*) (*RC* 78–79). Mediation becomes the focal point of dialectic once interpretations that emphasize terms like "identity," "coincidence," or "pure negativity" are shown to be inadequate. The point could not be put more clearly: "the concept of mediation" is "dialectical thought itself" (*RC* 83).

According to Merleau-Ponty, mediation is fundamentally a *linguistic* movement. Existing interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's view of dialectic have helpfully drawn attention to fundamental features like "circularity" and "transcendence."[50] But even scholars who note the importance of mediation have overlooked its fundamentally linguistic character.[51] As I suggested,

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50 For example, the concept is noted without further discussion in Taminiaux's account of circularity (Taminiaux 1978, 37–38).

51 Dastur notes the importance of mediation for Merleau-Ponty's view of hyper-dialectic, but she does not mention its linguistic import (Dastur 2009, 37; 43–44). Larison offers a more sustained argument that mediation is central to Merleau-Ponty's view, but she does not stress its linguistic character (Larison 2016, 122–123; 192 *ff.*).

the concept of hyper-dialectic partly aims to rectify an unhelpful view of philosophical expression. By extension, a linguistic view of mediation lies at the heart of a good account of dialectic (*VI* 89–92/121–125). And because hyper-dialectic guides our attempt to express the meaning of experience, mediation is key to a successful view of philosophical expression.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty makes the following observation about philosophical expression:

> We would err as much by defining philosophy as the search for essences [or] by defining it as the fusion with things, and the two errors are not so different. [...] They are two positivisms. Whether one installs oneself at the level of statements [*énoncés*], which are the proper order of essences, or in the silence of things, whether one trusts in or distrusts speech absolutely,—the ignorance of the problem of speech [*parole*] is here the ignoring of all mediation [*médiation*]. (*VI* 127/166)

This passage offers a version of the dilemma that Merleau-Ponty and Hyppolite both find unpalatable. On the one hand, philosophical expression (or "speech") can be understood formally or literally. Since the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty has claimed that phenomenological essences require a highly formal and precise language, here associated with propositions (*les énoncés*) (*PhP* lxxix/16). This sort of expression, Merleau-Ponty thinks, best accords with the atemporal and necessary character of essences. On the other hand, philosophical expression can be defined as an attempt to return to the pre-reflective meanings we claim to find in the world. Instead of attempting to describe these meanings in precise language, on this view we must instead embrace aesthetic or poetic forms of expression that better accord with "mute" or "silent" meaning (as Merleau-Ponty noted above, poetry is "silent").

Merleau-Ponty's privileging of mediation suggests that both options are untenable: the former subordinates the meaning of experience to our activity, while the latter ignores the transformations we bring to it. As we saw, expression is always creative, even if it attempts to state the meaning of being.[52]

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52   The role of human subjectivity in articulating a creative description of sense puts pressure on Bimbenet's claim that Merleau-Ponty's later work results in a gradual "effacement" of the human or the subject, which is allegedly marked by his tendency to explain the subject and language in terms of a pre-linguistic contact with nature or the sensible (Bimbenet 2004, 207–208, 218–220). As I have suggested, a non-trivial reflective activity is required to understand our pre-linguistic contact with sensible experience, and this activity always transforms its meaning.

To ensure that creative descriptions (like "flesh" or "*chiasma*") do not misconstrue the meaning of experience, philosophy or ontology must be understood as a linguistically-focused endeavor situated in the unceasing movement between the comprehension of sense and its expressive formulation. This movement is neither wholly literal (or formal) nor wholly creative (or aesthetic): "if language is not necessarily deceptive, truth is not coincidence, nor mute" (125/164). Rather, a sophisticated account of philosophical expression recognizes that it is a "quasi-natural displacement," which must scrutinize its descriptions in light of experience itself (235/284). When the reflecting subject becomes aware of the limits of her own partial perspective, she transforms (or "negates") it, in search of a more refined state. Philosophical expression must continue mediating between the sense initially given by experience and that produced by the reflecting subject, or between what we take to be unthematized sense, and the meaning that issues from the creative and interpretive activity we bring to bear on it.

Despite his view that philosophical expression must be inventive, Merleau-Ponty can still claim, with Hyppolite, that "[w]hen we speak of the flesh of the visible, we do not mean to do anthropology, to describe a world covered over with all our own projections …" (136/182). His point is that we must prevent philosophical discourse from becoming a human artefact, or "anthropology" in Hyppolite's sense (*LE* 166/216). Philosophical expression is not a mere invention of subjectivity, even if creative activity is partly needed to sustain it (*VI* 174/225). Merleau-Ponty is clear that his later work does not lead to any kind of "compromise with *humanism*," but it still attempts to study "[l]ogos also as it is realized in man, but in no case as his *property*" (274/322; translation modified).[53] The properly human character of expression, then, remains a part of this study. Nevertheless, the basic problem that Hyppolite identifies with humanism, namely, that "[t]he one who speaks reduces that of which he speaks to his own human subjectivity, or he projects it into an in-itself which turns out later to be in-itself only for him" (*LE* 37/46), is also identified by Merleau-Ponty, in just these terms: dialectic and philosophical expression go awry whenever "we want to consider a thing *in itself*, and in doing so, concentrating ourselves on it, we come to determine it such as it is *for us*" (*VI* 90/122). A view of language as mediation, he contends, will remedy this problem.

By stressing the importance of mediation, Merleau-Ponty moves beyond the dilemma of a purely descriptive (formal) or wholly creative (aesthetic) view of expression. And by relying on the term that Hyppolite sees as the heart of Hegel's dialectic, he is able to prevent expression from becoming a partial,

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53   *Cf.* Bimbenet 2004, 221, who links this remark to Heidegger.

limited, and ossified human artefact, without devolving into a poetic "saying" of being of the sort found in the later Heidegger.[54]

Conclusion: Phenomenology Beyond Humanism and Non-Humanism

I have argued that Hyppolite and Merleau-Ponty both attempt to surmount a dilemma between a literal or formal *versus* a purely creative or aesthetic view of philosophical language. Direct and indirect evidence suggests that Merleau-Ponty's proposed solution to this problem was informed by and closely resembles Hyppolite's reading of Hegel's speculative mode of expression. In addition to a common focus on the relation between sense and language, the attempt to develop a sophisticated and nuanced form of philosophical expression as mediation is a common feature of their respective projects. These results reveal deeper points of convergence between Merleau-Ponty and Hyppolite than anti-humanist interpretations of Hyppolite allow for.

These observations must of course be qualified. To be sure, Merleau-Ponty reserves a more active role for subjectivity than Hyppolite would likely be comfortable with. Merleau-Ponty is clear that reflecting subjects are tasked with inventing locutions that can adequately state the meaning of being. While he does not claim that creation is absent from Hegel's mediating dialectic, the view that invention and description are *equally* important is likely a view of subjective activity that for Hyppolite goes too far. Still, the evidence I have presented offers an opportunity to reevaluate the prevailing anti-humanist reading of Hyppolite.

In his reflections on Merleau-Ponty's work, Hyppolite claimed that Merleau-Ponty established a "good" view of dialectic that could take account of the

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54   See Heidegger 1971. Hyppolite was certainly sympathetic to Heidegger's account of the ills of humanism, and claims that language is the "house" (*la demeure*) of being (*LE* 166/215). But when he works out the claim that being "says itself" in human language, his analysis unfolds with reference to terms like "positing" and "negativity," which do not suggest a proximity to Heidegger (51/63). For Heidegger's influence on Hyppolite, see Roth 1988, Chapter 3. See Rockmore 1995, 54, for the view that Heidegger's influence on Hyppolite has been exaggerated. According to Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger's view of poetic saying places too much emphasis on passivity, which is belied by his need to call attention to the language that delivers us to being (*HLP* 51/63). See Noble 2014, 222–228, who argues that Merleau-Ponty defines his later work in contrast to Heidegger (see also Madison 1981, 232–233). *Cf.* Lawlor 1999, 242–244, who claims that Merleau-Ponty took direction from Heidegger's "direct ontology."

vicissitudes of lived meaning. For Hyppolite, mediation is the centerpiece of this view: "[t]he mediation that is between existences is neither of a pure positive, an identity, nor a pure negative."[55] Merleau-Ponty demonstrates particularly well how an account of sense "could also be otherwise, another sense than what we believed we had discovered."[56] As Hyppolite sees it, Merleau-Ponty's view of mediation can take account of sense without falling prey to the ills of humanism, even if he reserves an important role for the subject.

This observation should give us pause. Hyppolite argues that Hegel's "discourse of being" comes to maturity when it moves beyond the standpoint of experience, becoming "a logic of philosophy and no longer only a phenomenology" (*LE* 20/24). His point is that Hegel's philosophy is not *exclusively* "phenomenology," that is, it is not solely concerned with subjective experience. But he is clear that "Hegel does not want to do without experience but to *reduce* (in the modern sense of the term) anthropology and to show, at the very heart of the onto-logic, that 'philosophy must alienate itself'" (166/216).[57] In other words, Hegel and Hegelian inspired philosophy does not offer a merely human (or phenomenological) description of sense. But the disclosure of experience remains an ineliminable concern of this conceptual approach. Hyppolite stresses throughout *Logic and Existence* that the task of Hegel's *Logic* is to explicate the results of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Despite his reservations about the tenability of a purely human language, he claims that

> Speculative thought does not construct the Absolute by opposing itself to experience. It merely puts to the test the logicity of being; it performs what today some would call a *reduction*. It suspends … the hypothesis of an empirical human subject who knows according to his own particular opinions and his own viewpoint. (136/177)

To "reduce" the subject is to indicate its insufficiency, not deny its importance. The merely human perspective must be reduced in order to prevent a one-sided and dogmatic interpretation of meaning. As I have suggested, Merleau-Ponty's later work takes direction from a similar impulse, without denying an active role to the subject, or embracing "anti-humanism." Still, this does not prevent Hyppolite from praising Merleau-Ponty's understanding of

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55 Hyppolite 1971, 1021. For a summary of Hyppolite's Inaugural Lecture that confirms an emphasis on the importance of mediation for Merleau-Ponty, see Devaux 1964, 153–154.

56 Hyppolite 1971, 1016.

57 See *LE* 42/51 for more on the reduction. Passages in which Hyppolite identifies "anthropology" with "phenomenology" (*e.g.* 73/91, 166/216) should be read in this vein.

dialectic and the problem of sense.[58] This suggests that talk of Hyppolite's anti-humanism must be qualified.

Merleau-Ponty claimed that his account of philosophical dialectic and expression owes its possibility to the Hegel whose "dialectic our contemporaries are rediscovering," namely,

> the Hegel who had not wanted to choose between logic and anthropology, who made dialectic emerge from human experience but defined [us] as the empirical bearer of Logos, and who placed these two perspectives and the reversal which transforms them both at the centre of philosophy. *s* 156/253–4

As I have argued, this sort of non-reductive account of the relation between language and ontology in Hegel is advanced by Hyppolite, and it seems to have exercised an important influence on Merleau-Ponty. Their shared attempt to develop a properly philosophical mode of expression that avoids the ills of humanism, formalism, and aestheticism alike demonstrates the possibility of a deeper convergence between Hyppolite and phenomenology, already identified by Derrida, who claimed that *Logic and Existence* is "a work that, on a great many points, lets the profound convergence of Hegelian and Husserlian thought appear."[59] I hope to have shown that Merleau-Ponty has as much of a role to play in the *rapprochement* between Hegel, Hyppolite, and phenomenology as Husserl or Heidegger do.

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58 Hyppolite 1971, 1022. See also Hyppolite's 1963 Zaharoff Lecture at Oxford, "Sens et existence dans la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty" (Hyppolite 1971, 748–749).

59 Derrida 1978, 67 n.65. See Watson 1999, 123 on Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl and Hegel.

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