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MERLEAU-PONTY

HORIZONS DE GUERRE, DE CRITIQUE, D'AVENIR

**HORIZONS OF WAR, OF CRITICISM, OF THE
FUTURE**

ORIZZONTI DI GUERRA, DI CRITICA, DI FUTURO

[ET UN DOSSIER SUR
AND A SPECIAL SECTION ON
E UNA SEZIONE SU
INÉDITS 1946-1949]

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FEDERICO LEONI

WAR WAS TAKING PLACE. MERLEAU-PONTY, THE IMMORALIST

Facts and conditions

War has taken place. The title of Merleau-Ponty's essay is definitive. It owes its force to the sharpness of an inarguable statement. A macroscopic event, the French philosopher is saying, has marked our lives, our everyday landscape. Impossible, now, to avoid measuring ourselves against this event.

Yet the whole essay proceeds as a counterpoint to the brutality of the statement. It is as if the nakedness of the title elicits a silence, and that silence makes room for a question. There is an unwritten subtitle in the margin of the well known title. The unthinkable happened, but why did we not fight it from the start? How could we have been so blind? "How could have we waited so long to decide to go to war?"¹

This is why Merleau-Ponty's essay, as has been said, actually functions as a phenomenology of perception.² It is perhaps a new phenomenology of perception, written just a short while after the extensive volume published under that title. But it is precisely a phenomenology of perception. This cannot come as too much of a surprise. If perception was Merleau-Ponty's word for experience, for the human operation in which every other human operation is summed up, it goes without saying that Merleau-Ponty brings the problem of the moment back to his perceptual paradigm. And here are the political questions we have just asked, rediscovered from the point of view of perception, and its tragic failures: How could we avoid perceiving the enemy as enemy? How could we have failed to see that the Jews would pay the highest price? How could the French remain insensitive, for months or years, to the monstrous slavery that the German occupation imposed on an entire city, an entire people?

These implicit questions explain Merleau-Ponty's discourse, which in its title evokes a brutal, inescapable fact, but immediately builds a maze of conjectures around it. "We were not guided by the facts," he says. "We had secretly resolved to know nothing of violence and misfortune as elements of history." "We lived in a country too happy to envisage them." "We had been taught that wars grow out of misunderstandings which can be cleared up and from accidents which can be averted." "We were encouraged to suspend history which had already been made, to recapture the moment when the Trojan War might still not have taken place."³ Immediately, in other words, the question about the

phenomenology of perception, which asks under what conditions the enemy would have been perceptible as an enemy, under what conditions we would have been prepared to fight the invader, is transformed into a question about the conditions of possibility of that perception. The misunderstandings would have been dispelled if... The brutal fact dissolves in the maze of conditions of possibility, in the Kantian question of what makes that fact possible. Namely that fact we name perception, perception of the enemy.

Another phenomenology of perception

The entire text of *La guerre a eu lieu* is permeated with an underlying astonishment. An abyss separates the enormity of what happened from the blindness of the consciences. In every way our consciences did their best not to see what they saw. "We had secretly decided to ignore". "We had been taught that wars are born of misunderstandings...." "They invited us to revoke in doubt the history already made..."

Are these not all formulas of consciousness? Perhaps consciousness itself is a perceptive obstacle, not an organ of knowledge. Consciousness is a screen, and like every screen it functions according to the dual logic of showing and hiding, or showing by hiding and hiding by showing. Consciousness is the screen on which something becomes visible, it is the screen on which the perceptual becomes evident. What the screen does not sift and withhold, does not isolate and raise to prominence, falls into the imperceptible. What does not correspond to the grain of the screen, because it is made of an entirely different wavelength, passes through it, and is definitively lost. Is it not the basis on which the overall movement of the later Merleau-Ponty announces itself? The shock of war shakes what remains of consciousness in the Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology of perception. Then a new season arrives. What is at stake will be the idea of a radically asubjective, deconscientiated perception, freed from all egological reference, consigned to an intermediate, ambiguous region, neither subjective nor objective, neither worldly nor consciential. Here, perception makes itself, from itself and in itself: in the unconsciousness of that subject who, when all is said and done, will understand that perception as its own, and in the inconsistency of that object which, when all is said and done, will take shape over there, in the middle ground of what is, at present, simply an amorphous, intense but faceless thing.

Of course, the consciousness of which Merleau-Ponty speaks in the pages of *La guerre a eu lieu* is not consciousness in the general sense, is not the consciousness of which any philosophy of experience speaks. It is the good democratic consciousness, the educated and equanimous consciousness that comes from calmly examining a field of operation considered in an equally calm way. "We lived in too happy a country." "Being wary of facts had become almost a duty." "We had a whole old school around us at which generations of socialist professors had been trained."⁴ But this doesn't change things. There

is indeed a profound analogy between what is objectionable in the general concept of conscience and what is objectionable in this partial, specific, political concept of conscience as good political consciousness. In both cases, the word conscience names an overall and extrinsic apprehension, indeed overall because extrinsic. From outside, from above, from the viewpoint of things done, of struggles now fought, of peace finally established, of rights stably acquired, nothing can be seen of the swarming of events, of their microscopic process. Nothing can be felt of the small perceptions that grasp those microscopic events, that register them on a board that no subject is observing. Viceversa, on the plane of that continuous, minute, imperceptible happening, as well as on the plane of that perception of the imperceptible that happens without pause and without subject, on that plane the conscientialist assumption becomes false. It is no longer current the Kantian adage according to which "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me."⁵

On possibility

This is to say that the phenomenology of perception will have to be purged of all conscientialism, and reconstructed from another point of view on the basis of an entirely different idea of temporality.

The two points of view, perception and temporality, do, after all, only name different aspects of the same problem. Conscientialism implies a certain theory of time, and the fact that the perceptual phenomenon is not a consciential phenomenon finds not so much a concomitance, but an immediately equivalent expression, in the fact that the perceptual phenomenon is not a phenomenon of the present but of the past, that perceptual temporality is all structured by the logic of the *après coup*, that when we say we perceive we refer first of all to what we have perceived. The present thing, in other words, is the object of an apprehension that is not perception, and the temporality of apprehension is in no way arranged in the linearity of the *après coup* but in a kind of absolute present. In it, the continuity between the so-called present instant and the so-called past instant is one with the continuity between the so-called percipient subject and the so-called perceived object.

In other words, the lesson of war demands a theory of perception and a theory of temporality of an exquisitely Leibnizian nature. The event belongs to the order of continuity. Its progress is made up of small differences. The consistency of those small differences is necessarily that of the imperceptible. Our awareness arrives late, it must have many small differences to be able to name it as a macroscopic difference, it must be able to look at things from above and is therefore deaf to the flat, minute continuity of the process. It is not from the outside that we learn about the continuous occurrence of small

differences. On the contrary, the continuous occurrence of small differences is learnt from within, from its impersonal movement, just before it rises to subjectivity and just before it falls into the region of the object. Here, when all is said and done, sensation is a common knot or a common place between what we will call object or subject. And it is a common knot or common place between what we will call past and future, *après coup*.

It is the same difference we get when we compare the title of this Merleau-Pontyan text, *La guerre a eu lieu*, *The war was taking place*, with a possible variant: *La guerre était en train d'avoir lieu*, *The war was taking place*. Between the two formulations, between the difference that is taking place and the difference that has now taken place, there is a threshold that is both inextensive and abysmal. One thinks of the title of Giraudoux's famous work, *La guerre n'aura pas lieu*, which Merleau-Ponty's title implicitly echoes, and which the first page of *La guerre a eu lieu* openly alludes. "We were encouraged to suspend the history which had already been made, to recapture the moment when the Trojan War might still not have taken place."⁶ Of course, Merleau-Ponty was writing after the war, while Giraudoux was writing before the war. It would be easy to smile at this obviousness, pointing out that, precisely, one wrote before the fact and the other after the fact, and that this is all there is to say. And yet this obvious fact would miss the point at the very moment when it would bring us closer to it. The two positions are more similar than different. The two times we are talking about, the *ante-festum* that belongs to Giraudoux and the *post-festum* that belongs to Merleau-Ponty, are in fact one and the same time.

They are one and the same time if we measure them on the basis of what we have called the war which was taking place, the present continuous of the event, and the insipid graduality of the process. Is it not true that the possible now realised and the possible not yet realised are the same, as are "the war" in both cases? Are we not talking about one and the same "thing"? Isn't that why we use the same word? The only exception to this play of mirrors between before and after is discourse of Giraudoux's Cassandra. She looks at things from the point of view of fate just as Andromache does not cease to plead the cause of the possible. It is as if in Andromache's eyes, which are the eyes of consciousness, the instants of time were separated from each other, and infinite hesitations, infinite counter-hesitations could take place between one and the other instant. But Cassandra strikes Andromache with a definitive sentence. She invites her, after all, to ignore that form of time which is familiar to all consciousness, the one in which instants are extrinsic to one another, are arranged extensively, and to look at things from the perspective of that other temporality, the one in which instants are perceptible in their intensive arrangement, intrinsic to one another. In this sense, the destiny of which Cassandra speaks is not require ascertaining the *après coup*, of the translation into action of a possible that could be or could not be, all formulations that presuppose the mutual extrinsicity of the instants. Cassandra says to Andromache who asks her what destiny is: "destiny is nothing but the accelerated form of time".⁷

This is a well-known track from the time of Bergson and his short and extraordinary article on *The Possible and the Real*.⁸ To say that war may not take place, i.e. that it is a possible that may not come to actualization, and to say that war has now taken place, i.e. that it presents itself to us with the features of necessity that is now unattainable, is in fact to move within the same understanding of modality or temporality. In both cases, it is assumed that there exists something like the possible: “the war”. In both cases it is assumed that we are facing a possibility which may or may not pass through the sieve of realization. But that is as much as to say that the possible is realized even before it is realized, that it is already assumed in its fulfilment, it is already that “thing” which is. Both thoughts are, in short, thoughts of necessity. Merleau-Ponty, of course, looking at realized things, has the air of noting a necessity. “If only we had perceived well.” “If only our good socialist conscience had not blinded us.” “If only...” But he immediately converts that necessity into a possible that could have remained a possible, that is, of a possible that on closer inspection could have been avoided and in a sense made impossible. Is a possible which remains possible, which never becomes reality or actuality, still to be considered possible? Isn't it a possible which is ultimately impossible?

The two perspectives cannot but spill over into each other in a kind of perfect equivalence. The logic of possibility is the logic of necessity. We will not go down the path of these mode considerations. Let's make only a final remark about this point. The entire essay, *La guerre a eu lieu*, is regulated on the temporal décalage of certain formulations. Now, then. Now we see this, then we saw other. It is because we are now after the event, that we see this and that. It is because we were then in the middle of the event, that we saw other things, or we didn't see other things. Now we see things done, then we were immersed in the making of things. Now seeing is possible, then seeing was impossible. Touch sometimes seems to be charged with the possibility of catching clues, glimmers, illuminations, within the ongoing process, and about the ongoing process. Maybe touch is the glance, the kind of vision a process can take within itself and about itself. And if vision is the sense of the process when it is considered from the outside, as a realized process or as a process which is still to be realized, touch is the kind of vision a process can take within its continuity, its making. Touch is the sense of the present continuous. A kind of blind but visionary vision.

Politics and ontology of compromise

All the phenomenology of perception, let us call it, that Merleau-Ponty would compose after the end of the Second World War, which also means after the *Phenomenology of Perception* of 1945, would go in this direction: a logic of impersonal sensation, an interrogation of perception that is springing and unassignable, an ontology of the flesh as a capillary fabric of minute scraps that make a chain. Similarly, all of Merleau-Ponty's political thought

after the Second World War⁹ will follow a line of dislocation that leads him to think of politics as the art of small differences, as the impersonal handling of unassignable micro-events.

It is something that can already be seen on the horizon in these pages, even if some might be suspicious of the bona fides of certain passages. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty intended above all to justify the deficit of audacity he had shown during the *drôle de guerre*. The pre-war existentialism had theorised a kind of heroic decisionism, which sometimes remained only on paper. It was convenient to hastily construct a new morality, capable of exonerating those who had prudently avoided the dangers of that decisionism.¹⁰ But the point is not even this, or not only this. The fact is that Merleau-Ponty becomes Leibnizian, so to speak, as he evacuates the privilege of conscience and reworks the trauma of war. In a sense, this is the terrain of the clash with Sartre. It is one of the effects of what has rightly been called '*l'épreuve de l'histoire*', in all senses of the word '*épreuve*'.¹¹ Test, torment, experiment, revelation.

Sartre elaborates this difficult passage with a kind of revival of conscientist decisionism. With one extraordinary exception, that of the pages of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* on the practico-inert. Here Sartre tends to make consciousness an anonymous terrain, the overall name of a transcendental field, made up of the heterogeneity of human history, the specific forms of the economy, the empirically available technologies, the vast and varied sphere of materiality. But Sartre does not elaborate a politics or a morality of the practico-inert. He does not think that one can do anything else with the practico-inert, other than bring it to consciousness. He does not make of the practico-inert the instrument of a renewed political consciousness, or of a renewed politics which would function, in a way, without consciousness. The practico-inert is something that one should reabsorb, handle therefore from outside, and, ultimately, make an object for a subject. It is also for this reason that the project of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, as is well known, remains unfinished, and its second tome remains unpublished for decades.¹²

One could say that Merleau-Ponty goes no deeper than Sartre, in the direction of a politics of ambiguity, or a politics without consciousness, or a politics of the active passivity of what Sartre would have called practico-inert. This is true. What might be a politics of the flesh, a politics of compromise, an anti-heroic *engagement*, remains barely sketched in these pages and those to come. But it is equally true that Merleau-Ponty does not recede from the vision of this fundamental ambiguity, and has no temptation to reabsorb it, or come to terms with it. The point is symptomatic, not surprisingly, of an entire political-philosophical world that is summed up in these two equally problematic, and perhaps definitively aporetic possibilities, Sartre's vocation to a politics of consciousness and Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of a paradoxical politics of passivity. It is the reason why we find ourselves in a similar impasse today. We too are faced with a war. We too repeat that the war might not have taken place. We too may find ourselves in five or ten years saying that we could have seen more clearly, that we could have acted instead of dozing off, that the

somewhat illusory wealth of our privileged countries had convinced us to let it go. And yet we have the crux of the matter before our eyes.

“Only the heroes have really been outwardly what they wanted to be inwardly.”¹³ The phrase resonates in the pages of *La guerre a eu lieu* as the acknowledgement of a defeat. It arouses in us the chill that accompanies any attempt to justify the unjustifiable. Yet it is perhaps the germ of a new morality, which has, if nothing else, a reason for profound interest. It corresponds point by point to the ontology of the flesh. It assumes to the very end the hypothesis that being is always an intermediate being. It strives to draw all ethical and political consequences from the idea that the chiasm contains the general structure of human and non-human things. Pre-war conscientialism had to bring with it a metaphysics of the hero, a hypostatization of that worldless consciousness which precisely for this worldlessness could imagine itself capable of pure and uncompromised acts. The new post-war phenomenology of perception, knowing that perception takes place in an intermediate terrain, which is neither of the world nor of consciousness, which does not allow itself to be explained either through the evidence of a perceptible object or through the pure ignition of an attention still without an object, must think of that action as the action of the non-hero.

Let us hypothesize that in politics two idealtypic gestures can be identified. The one gesture would descend from the Schmittian dialectic, from the idea that politics is the terrain on which friend and enemy are confronted. It is the gesture of deciding. Which side to be on? Which side to take? Now we all remember that in the Clausewitz-Schmitt line, war stands in substantial continuity with politics. Clausewitz writes in a famous or infamous passage: “War is but the continuation of politics by other means”.¹⁴ Schmitt echoes him: “War is but the extreme manifestation of hostility.”¹⁵ This is a terrible thought, on the one hand. They think war is the continuation of politics because they already think politics as war. Since they put war at the heart of politics, they see war as an uninterrupted continuation of politics. But on closer inspection, this is an optimistic thought. A very optimistic thought, however unintentionally optimistic. It assumes that it is possible to distinguish friend from enemy once and for all. Not for a moment is it touched by the idea that such a distinction might be opaque, or ultimately impossible. It assumes as obvious that the friend is all friend, that the enemy is all enemy.

The pages of *La guerre a eu lieu* question this obviousness or allow us to question this obviousness. They show that the Clausewitz-Schmittian world is a vaguely Disneyesque world. The first lesson of the *drôle de guerre* concerns precisely the difficulty of distinguishing friend from enemy. Difficulty not so much of fact as of principle. “One morning in March, 1939,” Merleau-Ponty recounts, “I entered the room of a Parisian German to tell him of the occupation of Prague. He leaped up, ran to the map of Europe, which he did have on the wall, and said with every intonation of sincerity: ‘But that is mad! That is impossible!’ Naïveté? Hypocrisy? Probably neither.”¹⁶ It is true that at a certain point of the *drôle de guerre* this decision about the friendship of friends and the

enmity of enemies became possible, indeed imposed itself as an inescapable evidence. But it is equally true that the moment of this late apprehension, to use a Baroque or Kantian technical term, was reached too late. The first lesson of the *drôle de guerre* concerns, in other words, the need to think and the need to act before the threshold of a definitive clarification. The need to learn to think the incomplete, to manoeuvre in the fog, to register all those clues that do not descend from clear and distinct vision, to act according to the minute palpation of incipient and almost imperceptible differentiations.

The experience of the occupation offers precisely the emblem of this foggy element. This is why the war in question is *drôle*, compared to all the others we knew, or we thought we knew. The *drôle de guerre* shows politics and war as a terrain that knows no clarity and yet teems with small differences. A terrain whose structure cannot be ascribed to the Germans Schmitt or Clausewitz, but to the Chinese Sun-tzu. A terrain with a non-dialectical structure, and yet not amorphous. It is the very conformation of this terrain that imposes to identify a second ethical and political gesture. If the sovereign subject had its fundamental performance in the decision of the state of exception, that is to say, in the statution of an outside and an elsewhere, and by that means of an inside and a sphere of belonging, what remains to be thought of in the wake of the Merleau-Pontyan ontology of ambiguity is the profile of a political gesture that can correspond to what a new chiasmatic geography, to a space which is articulated according to immanent distinctions rather than the mutual transcendence of enmities, to a landscape which is not undifferentiated but whose differences are not dialectically structured. How to act when everyone is equally suspected of being an enemy and everyone is equally suspected of being a friend, or better still, when everyone is effectively and in some ways an enemy, and everyone is effectively and in some ways a friend?

Paranoia, diplomacy, immoralism

It is often said that it is the world of contemporary economics, of financial capitalism, of the planetary interconnectedness that became global for a few decades, and then immediately reinsularised according to geometries of alliances and rivalries that stratify divergent mappings on the same territory, making of the same subject the friend of other subjects from a certain point of view, and the enemy of those same other subjects from another point of view. Deciding becomes impossible at that point, because every decision ends up throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

But the world of contemporary economics only makes more evident a fact that in the past could perhaps be less visible, but far from absent. This is what an example by Merleau-Ponty suggests with brutal simplicity. 'The garage mechanic had to repair German cars if he wanted to leave.'¹⁷ It is a deliberately low example, because politics lives from everyone's life and not from the life of the little few, from everyday life and not from Sundays, from

pressing needs rather than from needs that can be deferred. It is at the bottom that small differences swarm. It is at the bottom that the process takes place. It is at the bottom that wars begin to take place and continue to take place and are always in a way taking place. It is by looking at the bottom that Merleau-Ponty concludes that the real is made up of small differences, and the chiasm is a geometric figure more fundamental than the Euclidean straight line that divides space into regions defined by mutual negation. This is to say that the ontology of ambiguity is one and a same thing with a politics that could be described by three features, which are low, again, far from our good consciousness, again, and in the end a little bit monstrous.

Paranoia. A politics consistent with an ontology of ambiguity must precisely suspect that the partition between friend and enemy is anything but reliable, and that the very category of friend is ultimately misleading. Where there are no friends, because every single friend shows itself to be traversed by conflicting instances, the site of multiple and divergent alliances, involving us and every other subject in equally differentiated and conflicting ways, here, in this most treacherous of fields, there begin, paradoxically, to be no more enemies. If paranoia is a logic of generalised suspicion, once everything is stripped of its innocence and invested with the possibility of guilt there is no more suspicion and no more guilt, only opportunities. The large fields of the friends and of the enemies are replaced by finer, almost imperceptible *quadrillages*. Paranoia breaks down the field of enemies into lines, fine fibres, divergent movements. It breaks down the field of so-called friends into equally numerous, divergent, fragmented regions. It builds bridges between one fragment and another. It finds similarities between things that seemed divided by a definitive boundary. It recognises that segments of the enemy field are friends with those we assumed as friends, that segments of the friend are friends with segments of those we assumed as enemies.

Diplomacy. Diplomacy is after all the mode of action corresponding to that mode of perception that is paranoia. Confrontations and battles conducted on this chiasmatic field will be confrontations and battles that do not aim at eliminating an enemy, but at diverting its initiative in the direction of our own. The price to be paid for this Leibnizian taste for inflection, for curvilinear continuity, for folding, will undoubtedly be high. Our initiative will in turn allow itself to be diverted in the direction of the enemy. We will become to some extent similar to him. And that is how we will serve our interests, how we will affirm our principles, how we will realise our values. Which, however, will turn out to be strangely related to theirs. What is properly ours, what is properly theirs, all this will fade, little by little, into the undecidable, and at the limit into the irrelevant. Rather than the foundation of a strategy, these old positional values of us and them, friend and enemy, will reveal themselves for what they always were, the transitory effect of a tactic that is also transitory. A more or less long period of stagnation, moreover guaranteed by previous wars and all innervated by the still perceptible echoes of those wars, had canceled

the mark of transience and consolidated the semblance of the inalienable. The very possibility of thinking in terms of strategies vanishes, leaving on the field a kind of generalised tacticism. The prestige of identity disappears, the rhetoric of values is dismantled. The renunciation to the imaginary of being someone and wanting to achieve something, saves sometimes more lives than projects, principles, values.

Immoralism. It is clear that no one will be able to claim the palm of justice any more. No one will ever bear the mark of ultimate injustice. This double impossibility sounds like an unbearable scandal, to the ears of those who think in terms of rights, values, principles, which almost always means, on the other hand, acquired rights, values that by the very fact of being valid belong to the past that validated them, principles that below the surface reveal themselves to be rents of position. This is an unbearable scandal to the ears of those who, in other words, think of reality as a *fait accompli*, forgetting that rights are the fruit of a struggle against injustice that has also had to proceed by injustice; that values are the now settled figure of a composition of forces that did not avoid trampling on other values no less sacred in order to settle that figure; that principles seem to orient actions as an intangible cause but are no more and no less than the side-effect of the actions that left them on the field. “We were living in an excessively happy country...”, writes Merleau-Ponty, and this happiness that has all the hallmarks of illusion could be described as a case of misplaced concreteness. We had exchanged the regime of things being made with the regime of things now made, and we used things now made to navigate the making of things. Unhappiness and ineffectiveness are synonymous with each other, and they both are synonymous with this misplacing, sometimes of the past in the present, sometimes of the future in the present. Not justice but the teeming of the present is what will lead to justice. Maybe this is what Merleau-Ponty meant by writing in the last line of *La guerre a eu lieu*: “Outside this unique fulguration of being there is nothing.”¹⁸

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NOTES:

- 1 M. Merleau-Ponty, *La guerre a eu lieu*, in *Sens et non-sens*, Gallimard, Paris 1996, p. 169; engl. transl., *Sense and Non-sense*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1964, p. 139.
- 2 J-P. Cléro, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty et la guerre*, in “Revue philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger”, 2/2003.
- 3 M. Merleau-Ponty, *La guerre a eu lieu*, cit., p. 169; engl. transl., p. 139.
- 4 *Ibidem*.
- 5 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, engl. transl., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, § 16, p. 246.
- 6 M. Merleau-Ponty, *La guerre a eu lieu*, cit., p. 169; engl. transl., p. 139.
- 7 J. Giraudoux, *La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu*, Grasset, Paris 1935, p. 10.
- 8 H. Bergson, *Le possible et le réel*, in *La pensée et le mouvant*, in *Oeuvres*, P.U.F., Paris 1959.

- 9 For an historical overview of Merleau-Ponty's political texts of this years, C. Dodeman, *Le dilemme du cynique et du coquin. Merleau-Ponty face au réalisme politique en 1945-1946*, in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty. La politique au coeur de l'oeuvre et des mondes*, ed. by J. Melançon, Kimé, Paris 2021.
- 10 J-P. Cléro, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty et la guerre*, cit., p. 317.
- 11 M. Crépon, *L'épreuve de l'histoire*, in *L'intervalle du pouvoir*, a cura di J. Melançon, Kimé, Paris 2022.
- 12 J.-P. Sartre, *Critique of dialectical reason*, Verso, New York 2004, in part. Book I, Section 3, "Matter as totalised totality".
- 13 M. Merleau-Ponty, *La guerre a eu lieu*, cit., p. 178; engl. transl., p. 146.
- 14 C. Von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Area Verlag, vol. 1, sez. 1, § 24.
- 15 C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen. Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Korollarien*, Duncker und Humblot, Berlin 2009, p. 31.
- 16 M. Merleau-Ponty, *La guerre a eu lieu*, cit., p. 171; engl. transl., p. 140.
- 17 Ivi, p. 179; engl. transl., p. 147.
- 18 Ivi, p. 174; engl. transl. p. 152.

War was taking place. Merleau-Ponty, the immoralist

Merleau-Ponty's article, "La guerre a eu lieu", contains, as has been said, a kind of new phenomenology of perception. Its research question could be formulated as follows. What prevented German-occupied France from perceiving the enemy as an enemy for so many months or years of alienating cohabitation? The "drôle de guerre" would, among other things, be linked to this singular perceptual impasse. An impasse that is as dramatic as instructive, since it shows that war and politics have nothing to do with handling the friend/enemy dialectical opposition Carl Schmitt situated at the center of his philosophy. Rather, they have to do with handling an adialectical field in which that opposition is not yet delineated and perceptible, but is rather evolving in a continuity and ambiguity that constitute the real (and in this sense immoral) matter of politics and war.

La guerre avait lieu. Merleau-Ponty, l'immoraliste

L'article de Merleau-Ponty, « La guerre a eu lieu », contient, comme cela a été souvent souligné, une espèce de nouvelle phénoménologie de la perception. La question directrice de cette nouvelle phénoménologie de la perception pourrait être formulée ainsi : qu'est-ce que qui a longtemps empêché la France occupée par les Allemands de percevoir l'ennemi en tant qu'ennemi ? La drôle de guerre serait, entre autre, lié à cette impasse perceptuelle singulière. Impasse dramatique mais instructive, puisqu'elle montre que la guerre et la politique n'ont rien à voir avec l'utilisation de l'opposition dialectique ami/ennemi, au contraire de ce qu'affirme une thèse célèbre du XX^e siècle. Ces champs concernent plutôt le champ adialectique dans laquelle cette opposition n'est pas encore définie et perceptible, dans laquelle elle se construit dans une continuité et une ambiguïté inéliminable, qui constituent la matière réelle (et en ce sens immorale) de la politique et de la guerre.

La guerra aveva luogo. Merleau-Ponty, l'immoralista

L'articolo di Merleau-Ponty, "La guerre a eu lieu", conterrebbe, com'è stato detto, una sorta di nuova fenomenologia della percezione. La domanda di ricerca di questa nuova fenomenologia della percezione potrebbe essere formulata come segue. Che cosa ha impedito per lungo tempo alla Francia occupata dai tedeschi di percepire il nemico in quanto nemico? La drôle de guerre sarebbe tra l'altro legata a questa singolare impasse percettiva. Impasse drammatica quanto istruttiva, dato che mostra che la guerra e la politica non abbiano in alcun modo a che fare col maneggiare, come vorrebbe una celebre tesi novecentesca, l'opposizione dialettica amico/nemico. Bensì col maneggiare un campo adialettico in cui quell'opposizione non è ancora delineata e percettibile, anzi va costruendosi in una continuità e in una ambiguità inevitabili, che costituiscono la reale (e in questo senso immorale) materia della politica e della guerra.