In the last year of his life, Merleau-Ponty taught a course at the College de France entitled "Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Hegel." These reflections, which have recently been published, offer interpretations of Hegel and Marx. The first part of the study focuses on the celebrated "Introduction" to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*. Curiously, however, Merleau-Ponty did not turn directly to the Hegelian text itself. Rather he worked out of Heidegger's essay "Hegel's Concept of Experience" which is collected in *Holzwege* but published for English-speaking readers as a separate volume. Heidegger divides Hegel's "Introduction" into sixteen numbered paragraphs and comments upon each one in turn. According to Heidegger, the 1807 title of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, i.e., "Science of the "Experience of Consciousness," represents "experience" as the fundamental concern of

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3In the German original of *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, the full text of Hegel's
the phenomenological enterprise. Indeed, the discussion of Hegel's "Introduction" develops an understanding of that very notion of "experience." Since Merleau-Ponty comments upon Hegel through Heidegger's text, it is not at all surprising that the concept of experience is also central to Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Hegel. The confrontation of these two philosophers with Hegel is also their confrontation with each other and this encounter will be the subject of our study.

INTRODUCTION

Merleau-Ponty provides little direct commentary on Heidegger's interpretations of Hegel. Much of the dialogue is internal to Merleau-Ponty's own presentation of the Hegelian position. The absence of direct reference to Heidegger is not unusual. In fact, Merleau-Ponty rarely discusses the work of his German post-Husserlian counterpart. One of the few exceptions to this silence occurs in Merleau-Ponty's course outline for 1959 ("Philosophy as Interrogation"). He notes that through an inquiry into Being, Heidegger seeks

to integrate truth with our capacity for error, to relate the incontestable presence of the world to its inexhaustible richness and consequent absence which it recuperates, to consider the evidence of Being in the light of an interrogation which is the only mode of expressing this eternal elusion.4

The passage is significant in that it embodies precisely the interchange and dialogical structure which is present throughout the two-pronged response to Hegel. By distinguishing the specific understanding which Heidegger holds toward Hegel and by contrasting that response with

"Introduction" is given prior to Heidegger's sixteen part paragraph by paragraph commentary. In the English version, we find not only the complete text at the beginning, but also the reproduction of each paragraph prior to Heidegger's discussion of it. Thus, in the original, one could study Hegel's text in its entirety and a reexamination of each passage would necessitate a return to the beginning. In the English version, one can readily compare Hegel's assertions with Heidegger's comments.