

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

DUANE H. DAVIS



BIOGRAPHY

DUANE H. DAVIS is Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. He was Distinguished Scholar in Residence in Curitiba, Brazil in 2011, and the Ruth and Leon Feldman Research Scholar in 2013-14. He has published numerous articles in recent French thought, is co-editor (with William Hamrick) of *Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception* (SUNY Press, 2016) and is editor of *Merleau-Ponty's Later Works and Their Practical Implications: The Dehiscence of Responsibility* (Humanity Books, 2001). He served as Assistant Director of the annual meeting of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle in 1990, and Director in 2001 and 2010, and co-directed (with Ivan Kolev) a conference marking the hundredth anniversary of Merleau-Ponty's birth in Sophia, Bulgaria in 2008.

THE ART OF REVOLUTIONARY *PRAxis*: GHOSTING A HISTORY WITHOUT SHADOWS

Merleau-Ponty, in *Humanism and Terror* (1947), addresses the spectrum of problems related to revolutionary action. It is generally regarded as an exposition on the problems of historicism and revisionism in the immediate post-war political context. His essay, *Eye and Mind* (1960), is best known as a contribution to aesthetics. This work includes an appreciation for the unique value of abstract painting and a remarkable account of depth in lived space. I propose that there exists a common structure in these apparently disparate works that involves a critique of objective scientific knowledge as well as a critique of subjective knowledge. We must reject the illusion of subjective clairvoyance (the genius artist or the world-historical figure) as a standard of revolutionary praxis; but also we must reject any idealized light of reason that illuminates all, that purports to make sense of everything – that promises a history without shadows.

The revolutionary nature of an act must be established as such through praxis. The creative praxes of the political revolutionary or the revolutionary artist are recognized *ex post facto*; yet each involves the creation of its own new aesthetic wherein the value of that praxis is to be understood spontaneously and all at once.

Thursday, April 11 • 3:45 PM • YMCA 401