

Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* and the Philosophy of Education

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The starting point of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophical project is Descartes's problematic of human subjectivity in its relationship to the body and to its world.¹ In the historical line of reflection on the Cartesian metaphysical split of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* and its dichotomous epistemological implication between subject and object that has dominated the modern philosophical tradition, Merleau-Ponty shares a comparable philosophical focus as his contemporaries, Jean-Paul Sartre's being-in-itself and being-for-itself (*Being and Nothingness*) and Paul Ricoeur's (*Freedom and Nature*).²

The purpose of this essay is to present, first, Merleau-Ponty's singular contribution to this central Cartesian concern of the Cogito; second, its implications for a philosophy of education; and third, some critical questions for further reflection.

THE PRIMACY OF PERCEPTION

Merleau-Ponty constitutes his philosophical project on the polemical boundary between the empirical tradition of psychological behaviorism and the Kantian-Husserlian intellectualism of the transcendental ego. The former reflects the empirical mechanism of cause-effect that is independent of the conscious subject; the latter, a conscious subject constitutive of the real that is independent of corporeal implications. Within the parameters of this polemical problematic, Merleau-Ponty constructs a dialectical phenomenological ontology of the human subject.

Merleau-Ponty begins with Descartes's provocative depiction of the soul as being "not merely in the body as a pilot in his ship," but "wholly intermingled" (*Primacy*, 5). His constructive mediation of the relation of the subject to his/her body centers upon the primacy of perception. Perception, for Merleau-Ponty, is opposed to empirical sensation as simply a reflexive response to a physical or chemical action of a stimulus on an organ as an objective event in the natural world without the complications of a conscious subject who perceives.

He succinctly states the substance of his position that perception is an original modality of consciousness:

we cannot apply the classical distinction of form and matter to perception, nor can we conceive the perceiving subject as a consciousness which "interprets," "deciphers," or "orders" a sensible matter according to an ideal law which it possesses. Matter is "pregnant" with its form, which is to say that in the final analysis every perception takes place within a certain horizon and ultimately in the "world." We experience a perception and its horizon "in action" [pratique] rather than "posing" them or explicitly "knowing" them. Finally the quasi-organic relation of the perceiving subject and the world involves, in principle, the contradiction of immanence and transcendence (*Primacy*, 2).

I will focus upon three themes in their ambiguous interaction from this provocative passage on the primacy of perception: first, the subject as being in the world; second, its rootedness in matter (immanence); and third, its emergence as form (transcendence).

The human subject as being in the world is first a lived body. Prior to the split between subject and object, the act of perceiving displays a phenomenal mode of preexistence. Neither passive as in empirical sensation nor active as in idealist construction, perception discloses one's own body as not simply an object, a thing in itself, but a way of being present to, and perceiving in, a world. Although body and soul are irreducibly distinct from, and ambiguously incongruent to, one another, nonetheless, they constitute a primordial dialectical unity. Unlike Sartre, for Merleau-Ponty the human subject is a strange mixture of being-in-itself and being-for-itself.

The lived body, conscious of itself, is reciprocally subject and object: The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is not a self through transparency, like thought, which only thinks its object by assimilating it, by constituting it, by transforming it into thought. It is a self through confusion, narcissism, through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees, and through inherence of sensing in the sensed — a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future (*Primacy*, 162f).

Touching one hand with another, a sensing subject becomes a sensed object. Touching and being touched, subject and object, in a reversible circularity, is an incendiary chiasm:

The body's animation is not the assemblage or juxtaposition of its parts. Nor is it a question of a mind or spirit coming down from somewhere else into an automaton; this would still suppose that the body itself is without an inside and without a "self." There is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place — when the spark is lit between sensing and the sensible, lighting the fire that will not stop burning until some accident of the body will undo what no accident would have sufficed to do (*Primacy*, 163f).

In the act of perception, furthermore, the perceiving subject is already intentionally related to a perceived world: "Our own body is in the world as a heart is in the organism."³ The body is my conscious insertion in the world, the presence of the world within me. The world, discovered through conscious reflection and its objectification, is always already the world I inhabit through my body with which I experience a profound communication and natural transaction.

Perception reveals my primordial coexistence of being in the world through my body to things. Knowledge as *connaisance* is a co-nascence, a co-birthing. The foundation of knowing is an original being begotten together. The body is the medium of things. My body as my presence to the world makes it be that there are things. The perceived world is a projection of the perceiving subject as correlative to it.

The supreme perception is perception of the other, the mutual presence of embodied subjects to one another. One's own body and that of the other, not being objects, open out dialectically to one another. Each, not being pure subjective interiority, but being embodied and borne beyond oneself, relates to the embodied

other, like unto oneself, in reciprocal corporeal encounter. Mutual perception is not of two autonomous Cogitos who infer one another, but two incarnate minds that dialectically couple and diametrically feel one another. As each incarnate subject is reflective of its own bodiliness, each reflects the bodiliness of the other as semblables, as one's own likeness (*Primacy*, 10). There is fullness of life in the resonant reflection of mutual beholding and saluting, two gazes which light and mirror each other, and which coexist, one in the other.⁴ There are no longer two independent consciousnesses, with their own different teleologies and distinctive destinies, but two mutually enfolding glances (*Signs*, 17). One's own body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as the substance of one's own being passes into the other. In the act of shaking hands, just as "my two hands 'coexist' and are 'compresent' because they are one single body's hands," so "the other person (shaking my hand) appears through an extension of that compresence; he and I are like the organs of one intercorporeality" (*Signs*, 168). The ground of this communion of embodied subjects is the primordial We (*On*), that continues to uphold the profound passions of adult life and that is wondrously experienced ever anew in each perception (*Signs*, 175).

This communion of body-subjects is not, however, an anonymous interaction, a total undifferentiation between self and other. Each embodied self is open to the other as not simply itself and experiences the other, albeit like one's self, as other than itself. The self and the other are grounded in a primordial unity in which each Cogito is not an assertive self-positing, but given to itself and to one another in an original bestowal of being:

The central phenomenon, at the root of both my subjectivity and my transcendence toward others, consists in my being given to myself. I am given, that is, I find myself already situated and involved in a physical and social world — I am given to myself, which means that this situation is never hidden from me, is never round about me as an alien necessity, and I am never in effect enclosed in it like an object in a box. My freedom, the fundamental power which I enjoy in being the subject of all my experiences, is not distinct from my insertion into the world (*Phenomenology*, 360).

The Ego discovers the One as essential to its being, and as always already having been there. Being in the world as body-subject essentially entails being with others as with oneself. As the parts of my body together comprise an organic system, so my body and the body of the other are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, mutually implicated in an organic unity, "collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity" (*Phenomenology*, 354).

Integral to Merleau-Ponty's project is the foundation of the Cogito:

The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind. I have tried, first of all, to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. These philosophies commonly forget — in favor of a pure exteriority or of a pure interiority — the insertion of the mind in corporeality, the ambiguous relation which we entertain with our body and, correlatively, with perceived things (*Primacy*, 3f).

The body-subject as inserted in the world with others among things and is radicalized in obscure depths, an abyss into which bodily being recedes and out of which bodily

being arises. It is, as it were, an umbilical cord that connects it with the bowels of the earth. This visceral rootedness of the incarnate self, the dark, dense well-springs of its being, is the organic link with nature that binds the thinking subject and its body, and that bonds the conscious self to others and the world.

One's own lived body is a natural subject. Meaning for the subject does not exist in nature as an object in itself, but as perceived. Nor does meaning come to be as an act of signification by the subject, but is bestowed, as it were, from below, founded upon its original collusion, hidden yet revealed, with the earth and from a bodily cohabitation with the world that plunges into chthonic depths (*Phenomenology*, 429).

The body is the condition of the possibility of all expression of, and perspective on, the world. There is an intractable rootedness of one's being in the body-world, in which prior mystery, a silent Logos dwells in emergent expectation. The corporeal estate in which the Cogito inheres is pregnant with the possibility of a luminous birth.

Being present as a lived body-subject to the world in perception, one experiences, simultaneously, the world as wholly within oneself and oneself as being wholly with-out of the world, as being *ex-stasis*. The dialectical interaction of lived body and perceived world is an internal relation constitutive of transcendent possibilities. From the perspective of the embodied subject as cohabitative with the world, it is a relation of expressivity, in which an internal dialogue of body and world articulate and delineate themselves. The "natal pact" between one's body and the world, between one's self and the body, emerges in the light of reason (*Primacy*, 6).

This culminates in language, the act of human speech, the vocalization of an otherwise hitherto fore mute world (*Primacy*, 10). The poet Rilke most eloquently celebrates this event:

Perhaps we are here in order to say: house,
 bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree, window —
 at most: column, tower....But to say them, you must understand,
 oh to say them more intensely than the Things themselves
 ever dreamed of existing. Isn't the secret intent
 of this taciturn earth, when it forces lovers together,
 that inside their boundless emotion all things may shudder with joy? (*Duino Elegies*, IX).⁵

For Merleau-Ponty, speech is the power of the lived body, reflecting and experiencing itself. I celebrate myself, and sing myself. I sing the body electric. This primordial process of signification, the primal poetic, is grounded in the expressive function of the body and its extension. Existence is an act of human self-transcendence.

Speech, by revealing the world in its truth as indicative of an infinite Telos, is founded upon a surplus of Being at the core of human existence: "Being is nothing; it is nothing but explosion, radiance, and opening — never fully is" (*Primacy*, 190). It is an opening in which the invisible world becomes visible for "every visual something...gives itself as a result of a dehiscence of Being," of a "deflagration of Being" (*Primacy*, 187, 180).

For Merleau-Ponty, being human is ultimately a movement of transcendence. Human being is a transcendental being in whom a universal natural light appears through the movement of history. The Logos bestows upon human being the task of articulating a preexistent mute universe (*Primacy*, 10). From within the deep of being, in the opaque reservoir of the unconscious and involuntary, emerges a presentiment of light, an intimation of Logos, as human being creatively expresses itself, a miracle without cause and a marvel without explanation — a primal act and the primitive fact. That there is something — *il y a* — is reflected in the incarnate existence of the subject by coming to expression in him/her. Human being is in the world as an internal transcendence of the subject toward it and simultaneously as the very transcendence of the world into him/her.

For Merleau-Ponty human being is both rooted and transcendent. The dialectic of archeology and teleology, of the chthonic realms below and the starry heavens above, distend the narrative drama of human existence. The archeological exploration of the abysmal chiaroscuro of origins and the teleological projection of anticipated destinies reciprocally implicate one another in the constitutive ambiguity of life.

The being of the world is in correlation to the subject; the being of the subject, in projection of the world. The project of the subject and the logic of the world are dialectically interrelated, not in perfect integration, but in an ever on-going, always unfinished determination. In the phenomenon of experience, human being in the dialectic of the lived body and the perceived world is at once rooted and transcendent, simultaneously a *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, always at the same time given and invented, an inheritor and a creator.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The implications of these fundamental themes of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology for education would be many. I shall focus on three: aesthetics, communication and ecology.

The ultimate justification of life is neither in the scientific nor in the ethical, but in the aesthetic vision (*Primacy*, 159). For Merleau-Ponty, art is revelatory of the truth of being. Being conceals itself in its disclosure: "The proper essence of the visible is to have a lining (*doublure*) of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence" (*Primacy*, 187). There is an inner dialectic within the work of art between the hidden and revealed, the unseen in what is seen, the unfinished in what is done. "Being is nothing; it is nothing but explosion, radiance and opening — that which it never fully is" (*Primacy*, 190).

Creative expressiveness is not, furthermore, prose, an exact reproduction of a world already sufficient to itself, but poetry, the evocation and sublation of a world in the process of being born (*Signs*, 52). Art does not merely re-produce the visible; it makes visible. The "oneiric universe of carnal essences, of effective likenesses, mute meanings" comes to presence and appearance in art (*Primacy*, 169).

Being displays itself in the work of art, whose primary and privileged form for Merleau-Ponty is painting (*Primacy*, 178). Painting celebrates no other enigma but

that of visibility. Painting is the genesis of the visible, the coming to itself of the Invisible (*Primacy*, 168). It hails and hearkens to the always renewed fact that there is something — *il y a* — wondrous to behold. Painting as “a Logos of lines, of lighting, of colors, of reliefs, of masses” is “a conceptless presentation of universal Being...mute Being which itself comes to show forth its own meaning” (*Primacy*, 182, 188). As the mind is in the eye of the painter, so the mind is in the eye of the beholder. Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to oneself. It is the means given to one for being absent from oneself, for being present at the fusion of being from inside. For every visual something gives itself, as a result of a dehiscence of Being, of a deflagration of Being. (*Primacy*, 186-87, 180).

In concurrence with Merleau-Ponty, it seems to me, first, that the aesthetic, so often deemed of peripheral import to the core of disciplines and relegated in the curriculum to the margins of significance, should constitute its refulgent center.

It seems to me, secondly, that painting need not be privileged as primary among the arts. Merleau-Ponty enables me to appreciate the difficult value of modern painting, especially Cezanne, van Gogh and Klee. The significance of modern art in its depiction of the beauty of form seems to be in its arrangement of color, unlike to classical, in its arrangement of lines; the former, more explosive in its uneven containment, the latter, more pacific in its geometric proportion. In its depiction of the sublime, I understand the modern to be more visceral, as it were, in its density and intensity; the classical, more cerebral in its clarity and harmony. The modern, moreover, seems to intimate the sublime in the play of colors; the classical renaissance, as in Rembrandt and Vermeer, in the play of light, shadow and darkness. With respect to the romantic, the modern seems more expressively transgressive in its extending limits to the breaking point, less finesse and more aggressive.

Unlike Merleau-Ponty, however, I do not understand poetry, sculpture, music, or dancing as being less revelatory of Being than painting. Painting may communicate to us the appearance of Being and convey to us its mute meanings, but Speech is Being coming to expressive self-possession, the disclosure of the truth as Being reflective of itself. Language speaks Being, but the voices of painting are the voices of its silence (*Signs*, 80-81). Is there any greater depiction of the poignant, yet radiant, revelation of Being than Rilke's *Duino Elegies*? Is the pursuit of likeness in sculpture, as in the craft of a Giacometti, any less an intimate intensity of seeing than painting in making visible the invisible in structuring figures across distance and space, at once receding and engulfing?

I do understand Merleau-Ponty's description of music as “too far beyond the world and the designatable to be anything but certain outlines of Being — its ebb and flow, its growth, its upheavals, its turbulence” (*Primacy*, 161). However, rather than thereby denigrating its significance in comparison to painting, I reckon it decisive as to its insurpassable importance. The aural manifests deeper possibilities of Being resonant in sympathetic accord. The visual communicates by an exterior “objectivity,” in which understanding is in looking, thinking as seeing; the aural, by an interior “subjectivity,” in which understanding is in feeling, intimating the ever elusive

presence of Being in the vibration of the music. And the dance, is it not the consummate revelatory magic of bodily vitality in which Being comes to glorious presence?

For Merleau-Ponty, perception discloses a solidarity of enveloping beings in Being in and through their bodily being. There is a profound desire to share perception, not simply subsequently as mediated through language, a third thing, as it were, between individual subjects, but by the object perceived in its demand upon the respective subjects to be perceived. This bodily communication, moreover, grounds the possibility of a shared understanding as the goal of universal communication. This primordial communication constitutes one's relationship with others "open to the same truths as I am" (*Primacy*, 17).

Given this corporeal context of Merleau-Ponty for all communication, I would offer three comments. First, this original intercorporeal solidarity of persons, often neglected but nonetheless important, resonates in and reinforces the undeniable significance of non-verbal communication, preeminently in sexual interaction, dance, and mime. The nascent logic inherent in bodily interaction, albeit ambiguous in its density and intensity, is nevertheless luminous in its import, perhaps because it is fuller, richer, deeper, darker in its dense texture.

Second, there is an inextricable bodily reference in all conceptualizations contributive to a fundamental corporeal metaphoricity in all utterance. The body is the natural symbol of society, the ontological reference of all human organization and our unconscious transference of it.⁶In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, an anal economics and an excremental vision characterizes the social world of the Afro-American community: "A joke. A nigger joke...Not the town, of course, but that part of town where the negroes lived, that part they called the Bottom in spite of the fact that it was up in the hills. Just a nigger joke."⁷

Language itself, moreover, is indicative of being physical gesture in words: "Did you grasp the idea?" "Your words touched me." "You are rubbing me the wrong way!" Abstraction ultimately manifests an inerradicable material foundation. An etymological analysis of language discloses a profound corporeal ground.

Third, although communication is universal in its intentional projection of comprehensibility, it is particular in its concrete, practical realization. Although communication presupposes an horizon of universal intelligibility in the corporeal transcendence of the Logos, actually, the radical bodiliness of its expression constitutes the zero point of one's individual origination of discourse, conditions all knowing as perspectival and delimits all communicative competencies by an incurable wound of ambiguity. All communication is from a body somewhere — and ultimately opaque in its elusive significations. Communication is grounded ultimately in a radical incommunicability, not only because we have — and are — our own bodies, bodies that are gendered, bodies of different races, but also each one's own unique complex compartment of flesh, forever permeates an evasive ideal of perfect communication. Although "the thing imposes itself not as true for every intellect, but as real for every subject who is standing where I am," "I will never know how you see red, and you will never know how I see it" (*Primacy*, 17).

One is confronted by Merleau-Ponty with the indefferable demand for communication as an inner Telos of Being, that what I see be seen by the other and shared with one another, and the impossibility of its consummate realization, that it cannot, despite all innate yearning to the contrary, become a *fait accompli*.

A respect for the unspeakable in the pregnant silence of our bodily being bespeaks a reverence for the incarnate mystery of life: the Invisible. The eye and ear of the heart has its reasons that the mind can never know.

The ecological crisis is evident: the spoliation of pristine wilderness, the wanton violation of animal habitats, the profligate depletion of natural resources, and the abject pollution of the earth's environment. The cause of the environmental ravagement is ultimately charged to the Cartesian metaphysics of split reality, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, from which modern science, in its objectification of nature, and technology, in its manipulation of nature, came to dominate Western consciousness and practice.

Merleau-Ponty's critique of the Cartesian metaphysics projects the possibility of a new ontology that reflects the inextricable intertwining of the human body-subject with the world it inhabits.⁸ Mind is not impervious to a *plenum* of dead matter, but rooted in the body and the world, (*Primacy*, 10) constituting, as it were, a universal sensorium (*Phenomenology*, 235). The primordial commonality, prior to the subject-object and fact-value dichotomy, is in being Flesh, that is, the concrete emblem of a general manner of being.⁹ In a manner reminiscent of the *chora* of Plato's *Timaeus*, Merleau-Ponty states: "The flesh of the lived body and the world is not inert matter, but perpetual pregnancy, perpetual parturition, generativity and generality, brute essence and brute existence."¹⁰ Flesh is already symbol and metamorphosis of life. The Flesh entails an ontology of the lived body as the visibility of the Invisible.

The constitutive reversibility in being, itself perceiving and itself perceived, the chiasm, grounds intuition and reflection in an original wonder of the subject before the face of Being to which it intrinsically belongs: "In a forest I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt the trees were looking at me" (*Primacy*, 167).¹¹ The implication here is not, I believe, the elusive notion of trees as having conscious vision, but of human being as coming to itself *vis-a-vis* the tree. The "gaze of the tree" is one's own recognition as self-possession from the depth of Being.

Merleau-Ponty constructs his philosophical project by re-rooting his thinking in the Flesh of Being, by returning to the "there is" (*il y a*)... "to the soil of the sensible and opened world such as it is in our life and for our body" (*Primacy*, 160). What ultimately is implied in Merleau-Ponty's corporeal ontology, in its significance for a philosophy of education, is a post-Cartesian reconstruction of an integral anthropology of the embodied person in a final exorcism of the ghost of Descartes that has haunted the history of modern thought.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

First, Merleau-Ponty constitutes the ground of communication and communion with the other as oneself, the recognition of the similarity of the other, an identity

in/despite difference. *Ipseity* in relation to *alterity* is grounded in a dialectical identity that reflects symmetry, reciprocity and substitutability. The question arises as to what extent Merleau-Ponty recognizes the other in its inalienable and incommunicable otherness, an asymmetrical relation that honors the other in its absolute otherness, in its non-reciprocal difference, and in the non-substitutability of one for another as depicted by Levinas.¹² Is it possible to construct a dialectical reversibility with difference in Merleau-Ponty's play of mirrors?

Second, Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics of the Flesh in its implications for an ontological ecotology depicts a natural mysticism or mystical naturalism. Could one not engage Merleau-Ponty's corporeal ontology with Luce Irigaray's ontological retrieve of a pre-discursive Empedoclean elemental vision of the universe in its constitutive primordially of earth, air, water, and fire?¹³

Third, Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger move/turn from a philosophy centered on the human subject to a philosophy centered on Being, that is, from *Dasein* to *Sein* in Heidegger, and from the lived-body to the Invisible in Merleau-Ponty.¹⁴ How may one compare Merleau-Ponty with Heidegger's indirect ontology via an aesthetic whose privileged access for Merleau-Ponty is painting and for Heidegger, poetry?

Fourth, although Merleau-Ponty did not develop a formal ethic, does not his corporeal grounding of philosophical reflection support a Marxist project responsive to the material conditions of life and human needs? Does not his bodily sense of communication sustain a compassionate tenderness resonant with a feminist ethic of original relation and responsible caring? Would not the starting point, furthermore, of an ethic in the light of Merleau-Ponty's thinking be Being in its disclosure and demand as World upon human being, rather than as in Kant with an autonomous human subject constituting and constructing an ethic?¹⁵

Fifth, can Merleau-Ponty's construction of an ontology that is profoundly physical and in which perception is primary, be critically and creatively related, despite the apparently radically different language worlds, to Whitehead's metaphysics whose dialectical polarity of the physical and the mental deploys the significant distinction between causal efficacy and presentational immediacy?¹⁶

Finally, Merleau-Ponty's basic insights entail the anticipatory articulation of postmodern themes: the relinquishment of metanarratives, the rejection of a purely objective realm and the decentering of the master subject. His phenomenological philosophy may be depicted as a celebration of radical contingency, the recognition of irreducible ambiguity and the givenness of the subject to itself rather than its self-positing self-assertion. To what extent may one regard Merleau-Ponty as an actual, if not simply a precursory, postmodern thinker?

In other words, to what extent is Merleau-Ponty's sense of Being in its dehiscence and deflagration more indicative of Jacques Derrida's difference and dissemination than Plotinus' fragmentation of and reintegration into, the One?¹⁷

Merleau-Ponty does philosophy as interrogation. Unlike Deconstruction he does not, it seems to me, aver the death of man nor the end of philosophy, but affirms

human being and the world in all its questionableness, and philosophy as its intelligible reflection, a quest which is as inescapable and irreducible as it is inexhaustible.

For me, Merleau-Ponty's abiding contribution is his ontology of the Flesh. He is, as it were, a poet through whose heart and mind does move the otherwise unfelt joy and pain of the universe, that reflects in his lived body the cosmic travail of birthing and the tears of a freshness deep down within all things — a tender sympathy for all being resonant with the grace of hope: "Underneath the clamors a silence is growing, an expectation. Why could it not be a hope?" In words, testimonial of Bergson, but indicative I think of himself, Merleau-Ponty reflects:

For everything happens as if man encountered at the roots of his constituted being a generosity which is not a compromise with the adversity of the world and is on his side against it.¹⁹

Thus spake humbly the Young Blackbird on the Bridge.

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 3f. This book will be cited as *Primacy* with page numbers in the text for all subsequent references.

2. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956) and Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), 203. This book will be cited as *Phenomenology* with page numbers in the text for all subsequent references.

4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 15f. This book will be cited as *Signs* with page numbers in the text for all subsequent references.

5. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Selected Poetry*, Ed. and trans. by Stephen Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1982 p. 199-201).

6. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

7. Toni Morrison, *Sula* (New York: Knopf, 1973, p. 4); Kathryn Bond Stockton, "Heaven's Bottom: Anal Economics and the Critical Debasement of Freud in Toni Morrison's *Sula*," *Cultural Critique* 24 (1993) pp. 81-118.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 130ff.

9. *Ibid.*, 140.

10. *Ibid.*, 115.

11. Klee, cited by Merleau-Ponty.

12. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Dusquesne University Press, 1969), *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

13. Luce Iriqaray, *Marine Lover* (New York: Columbia, 1991); Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Urwin, 1989, pp. 168-172).

14. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

15. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954).

16. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978, esp. Part III, pp. 219-280).

17. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); *Plotinus, Enneads* (London: Penquin, 1991).

18. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: The Modern Library, 1944) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 26f.