



Current Continental Research
is co-published by
The Center for Advanced Research
in Phenomenology
and
University Press of America, Inc.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Lester Embree
Chairman
Duquesne University

Edward G. Ballard
Tulane University

David Carr
University of Ottawa

José Huertas-Jourda
Wilfred Laurier University

Joseph J. Kockelmans
The Pennsylvania State University

William McKenna
Miami University

Algis Mickunas
Ohio University

J. N. Mohanty
Temple University

Thomas M. Seebohm
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität,
Mainz

Richard M. Zaner
Vanderbilt University

CURRENT CONTINENTAL RESEARCH 553

MERLEAU-PONTY

Critical
Essays

Edited by
Henry Pietersma

1989



Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology
& University Press of America, Washington, D.C.

Merleau-Ponty, Inhabitation and the Emotions¹

Glen A. Mazis

Because we are in a world, we are condemned to meaning . . .

—preface, *Phenomenology of Perception*²

Say that the things are structures, frameworks, the stars of our life, not before us, laid out as perspective spectacles, but gravitating about us.

Such things do not presuppose man, who is made of their flesh. But yet their eminent being can be understood only by him who enters into perception, and with it keeps in distant-contact with them.

—*The Visible and the Invisible*³

In November 1959, Merleau-Ponty is struggling in his thinking with what he can only call “the passivity of our activity,” that strange happening in which one can only recognize the solicitation of the world in one’s ownmost taking to heart of the world. Husserl had foundered here, at this moment of what he was led to call “passive genesis,” as must all who can’t radicalize their thought to overflow the boundaries of all the key Western philosophical concepts and our inherited languages. Merleau-Ponty here is struggling in the region of our passions, in the region of one’s heart and the “heart of things,” in how one is *affected, and yet moves out* towards those solicitations, or in other words, how one is both active and passive at one and the same instant, but is really neither, for “to be” at all is to be “in” this special locus for which Western philosophy has never had a name. Merleau-Ponty has given a name to this

Henry Pietersma, ed., *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, Copyright [1989], The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Inc. and co-published by arrangement with the University Press of America, Inc., Washington, D.C.

happening, "the flesh" [*la chair*], and pointed towards the locus of this moment of being felt by the heart, of the person, and of the things, in the "intertwining" of the "chiasm," but these are names that can only speak by being kept alive through further encroachments, associations, interrelatings, with other names and occurrences, and with other concerns and happenings. Otherwise, Merleau-Ponty's speech will become just another sort of specialized "*langue*," just the sort of thing most likely to happen at "Merleau-Ponty meetings" where the temptation is to pass around the master's terms as sacred tokens not to be tarnished, and thereby to rob them of the power to be "originary speech" that deforms, evokes and displaces, the power Merleau-Ponty felt operates within true philosophical interrogation. I will try, therefore, to further encroach upon Merleau-Ponty's discourse about space and the "flesh," about this happening of "inhabitation," by bringing these sketchings into interplay with what can be said about the power of the e-motions, and with what Merleau-Ponty both stated and suggested in his mentioning of the emotions. At first, this may seem to be a misalignment of notions, but I will suggest otherwise.

I. Early Understandings of the Place of the Emotions: the *Phenomenology of Perception*

D. H. Lawrence, poet of the emotions, starts his poem "Space" with:

Space, of course, is alive
that's why it moves about;
and that's what makes it eternally spacious and unstuffy.
And somewhere it has a wild heart
that sends pulses even through me . . .⁴

For Lawrence, space and the pulsings of the heart are inseparable. For Merleau-Ponty, too, there is an original vision that space is "permeated" by "a 'lived' distance," which "binds me to the things which count and exist for me, and links them to each other" (p. 331 [286]). Of this space alive with "directions of significance," Merleau-Ponty sees that "it rises and falls with the existential tide running through it, or again it is the pulse of my existence, its systole and diastole" (p. 330 [285]). This notion of the intertwining of space and e-motion, a moving space, follows from Merleau-Ponty's original project to articulate human being as enmeshed in a natural, cultural, interpersonal world, as a being whose body is the locus of the unfolding of meaning, to undermine conceptions of the "acosmic subject" found both in empiricism and idealism. For Merleau-Ponty, it was essential to see that the body *is* space, and not *of* space. There is not a

difference in kind between human being and space: our freedom to project meaning arises from within an original pulsation which permeates the environment, which in some sense is the environment as a "surrounding," a locating sense. Expression as the other moment of this pulsation is found within the same locus, within the field, as a re-turning towards itself. The motion of e-motion is not a vector which arrives at translation into meaning within a hermetic sphere of Cartesian consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, the movement of the body and the movement of meaning arising and dispersing are currents within a field of circulation in which body and world are tides.

For Merleau-Ponty, the body enmeshed in meaning is the being located *within the landscape* of its existence: "the body is essentially an expressive space" (p. 171 [146]), and what Merleau-Ponty even at this early point in his career isolates in reference to the schizophrenic as having much wider implications for understanding the common destiny of perception is the notion of "the landscape space" of the schizophrenic (p. 332 [287]), quoting Erwin Straus. This is a space whose common properties have been displaced, left in question, "put into brackets" existentially, so that the swirl of affective forces gains an unrestrained urgency by losing its ground *within* the objects of the commonly perceived world, and once left anchorless the force of these affective currents becomes overpowering for the schizophrenic. Yet, it has not been appreciated how the notion of spatiality with which Merleau-Ponty is working includes a subtle recasting of the nature and status of the emotions. Even in the following passage from the second section of the Introduction of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, his criticism of the "acosmic" casting of the subject *focuses on the power of the emotional significance* of the landscape that empiricism cannot appreciate:

Now, for empiricism, 'cultural' objects and faces owe their distinctive form, their magic power, to transference and projection of memory, so that only by accident has the human world any meaning. There is nothing in the appearance of a landscape, an object or a body whereby it is predestined to look 'gay' or 'sad,' 'lively' or 'dreary,' 'elegant' or 'coarse.' (*PP*, pp. 31-2 [23])

These enveloping strands of heartfelt investment and expression, the recognizable mood, the overarching attunement permeating the landscape, yield a "location" or identify an object. These strands, both a style of directedness towards and that towards which one is directed, are not seen by empiricism to have an immediate pulsation, a welling up of interconnection, but can only be fabricated from the habits of the past, which finally

have no "magic power," being mere calcifications to support the calculations of utility. For Merleau-Ponty, however, it is obvious that gaiety and sadness are part of a larger fabric of emotional significance, of vectors and powers which pulsate with welcome and repulsion, and which by the end of his writing are specifically identified as essential to the advent of truth and being:

Our experience of the true, when it is not immediately reducible to that of the thing we see, is at first not distinct from the tensions that arise between others and ourselves, and from their resolution. As the thing, as the other, the true dawns through an emotional and carnal experience, where the 'ideas'—the other's and our own—are rather traits of his physiognomy and of our own, are less understood than welcomed or spurned in love or hatred (VI, pp. 28–9 [12]).

From the beginning of his work, from the first chapter of the *Phenomenology*, one can see that for Merleau-Ponty it is inexcusable that the empiricist casts the human being as mere receptor of stimuli to the exclusion of emotional significance: ". . . empiricism excludes from perception the anger or the pain which I nevertheless read in a face, the religion whose essence I seize in some hesitation or reticence, the city whose temper I recognize in the attitude of a policeman or the style of a public building" (PP, p. 32 [24]). These are not cognitions, they are pushes and pulls within the body as landscape, as power of inhabitation. Even for the Merleau-Ponty of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, space was a dynamic of forces, of intertwinings, interconnectings, and clashing which went together in their very impossibility. Indeed, it was this "being simultaneously present in experiences which are nevertheless exclusive, this implication of one in the other," that constitutes "the originality of depth" in space and otherwise (p. 306 [264]). These vectors of connection, of direction, of juxtaposition, which can later be mapped onto Euclidean and Cartesian space as they are rationalized, isolated, and categorized, first appear as through a movement out, an e-motion, of the landscape which envelopes, and a movement out, an e-motion, of the body finding its "way about" its world. Actually, there is only one intertwining or "movement out," e-motion, which can neither be attributed to a subject or an object, but is the landscape itself as it emerges, not as an object of cognition, but as a dwelling, a place "of the heart" and the body.⁵

The dynamic space in which one dwells, the space of movement and of meanings unfolding, is the space of differentiation that is crisscrossed with image, myth, dream, and other forms of emblematic value inherent in the body as landscape and as emotional. As Merleau-Ponty states, "between

our emotions, desires and bodily attitudes, there is not only a contingent or even an analogical relationship," but rather the "movement upwards as a direction in physical space, and that of desire towards its objective are mutually symbolical, because they both express the same essential structure of our being, being situated in relation to an environment, of which we have already stated that this structure alone gives significance to the directions up and down in the physical world" (p. 329 [284]). One is directed not as a self-overflowing generation of propulsion and penetration, nor as a passive registrant of a distant configuration interpretable as having utility, but as woven into a space which unfolds among things as moving, touching the heart here and there, because the heart itself is part of a larger circulation of meaning which flows through a landscape of habitations. It is this same level of inhabitation and movement of meaning in interchange, e-motion, that D. H. Lawrence attempts to describe and contrast with our Western second-order reconstruction of experience pursued in alienation in his poem, "Two Ways of Living and Dying," part of which states:

While people live the life
they are open to restless skies, and streams flow in and out
darkly from the fecund cosmos, from the angry red sun, from the
moon
up from the bounding earth, strange pregnant streams, in and out
of the flesh,
and man is an iridescent fountain . . .
But when people are only self-conscious and self-willed
they cannot die, their corpus still runs on,
while nothing comes from the open heaven, from earth, from the
sun and moon
to them, nothing, nothing;
only the mechanical power of self-directed energy
drives them on and on, like machines,
on and on, with the triumphant sense of power, like machines,
on, and on, and their triumph in mere motion
full friction, full of grinding, full of danger to the gentle
passengers
of growing life,
but on and on, on and on, till the friction wears them out
and the machine begins to wobble
and with the hideous shrieks of steely rage and frustration
the worn-out machine at last breaks down:
it is finished, its race is over.

So self-willed, self-centered, self-conscious people die
the death of nothingness, worn-out machines, kaput! . . .⁶

Fortunately, this second manner of existing space can never fully obliterate the underlying space of affective pulls and landscape, or suddenly one would have no space, no body, only a life of nothingness, of sudden irredeemable blackness, loss of meaning and orientation, but one can attempt to exist the body according to a Cartesian map of experience and pay the price of the empty motion engendered by the lack of taking up the e-motion of space. As Merleau-Ponty continues, "There is a mythical space in which directions and positions are determined by the residence in it of great affective entities" (p. 330 [285]). In other words, one gets "one's way about," one's distinctive, although possibly shared, kind of directedness, from the emotional apprehension of one's world, a response to various pullings, repulsions, curiosities, indifferences, loves, hates, and other affective currents.

Directedness, connectedness, meaningfulness, distantiarity, the distinctness of various *topoi*, and the mutual reverberation of self and world are all constitutive factors of inhabitation, of "dwelling in," being immersed in, having arranged around and within one, a space that is situated, that is of one, that is one's body. All these facets of "inter-instantiation" are to be found in the primary upsurge of the affective, the e-motional, coalescence of space. Places echo with joy remembered, forbid with fear of failure or rejection, sadden with betrayal or loss, become spots of hope or possible peace, repulse with hostility or danger in a way that is part of their distance, their possibility for meaning, their ability to be recognized in varying ways, to even have a place at all within our world. For Merleau-Ponty, there remains as an abiding acquisition, the emergence of the world as it appears to the child or to the inhabitant of nontechnological cultures or to the person of altered, so-called "psychotic" consciousness, a common fundamental experience which adult, Western, Cartesian consciousness misguidedly disowns as alien. He states, "For primitive man, knowing the whereabouts of the tribal encampment does not consist in locating it in relation to some object serving as a landmark: for it is the landmark of landmarks—it is to tend towards the natural abode of a certain peace or a certain joyfulness . . ." (p. 330 [285]). The *topos*, the directedness, the lived connection are emotional pulsations and tides which draw me here or there, give the rational geometry of measured distance a place in which to be laid down as an attempt to order and regulate, and seep into my presence with an immediate curiosity or repulsion or love or some

other current of how I am moved that will then be resisted or elaborated by one's interpretation of the situation.

Merleau-Ponty states that as in a dream, so in waking life, "we learn *where* the phenomenon is to be found, by feeling that towards which our desire goes out, what our heart dreads, on what our life depends" (p. 330 [285]). Merleau-Ponty even goes further to state that "our body and our perception always summon us to take as the center of the world that environment with which they present us. But this environment is not necessarily that of our own life. I can 'be somewhere else' while staying here, and if I am kept far away from what I love, I feel out of touch with real life" (p. 330 [286]). It is the pull of my love that sets down my location, determines where there is a closer distance, turns the directedness of the body and concern, entangles the locale of the beloved with my viscerality to make that place my *own* situation of the moment. In being stationed somewhere or when traveling, if I am in no immediate danger, I may watch a battle rage across the town in which I am physically located yet with no sense of connection, with an unreality that is literally dislocating, and hear that the small town in which my beloved or my family is located has been bombed and suffered massive damage and suddenly not only feel a terror and a horror, but also concomitantly feel that I am actually there, that I am suddenly sick, nauseous and dizzy, that my whole being is directed, connected, even riveted to this faraway and literally absent spot. Of course, this is the extreme example of the emotionally primary inhabitational pull, for usually I am inhabiting the place in which I am located physically, but it demonstrates that one does so, not through physical positioning, but through the pulsings of the affective life.

This is not to say that somehow, e-motional life creates space irrespective of the existence of what we call the "single objective space," as Merleau-Ponty points out (p. 333 [288]). Rather the e-motion as a current of some object and of one's body open perceptually to that object in "objective space" is anchored, radiates, has the recalcitrance that does then have the weight, the brute resistance, to truly push and pull one's heart. The affective meaning, however, is that e-motion, that pulsing and dynamism, those lines of force, which make space an alive space, a "lived space," a space of dwelling or inhabiting. For example, the horror and sorrow that I feel about the war dead has an insistence, a resistance, an overwhelming power, that continues to weigh upon me as I look out at the blasted landscape, the buildings reduced to rubble, the craters in the street, the shattered windows, or smell the still smoldering fires or the released sewage or the sulphurous residues. The horror is in the "objective

space," the perceived landscape and its objects. These objects call me, however, through the lines of e-motion that are the streaming horror and sadness, that make this the "place of destruction," the scene of war. This affective registration of perception makes palpable a place, whereas to see "with the eyes of a machine"⁷ and be unable to feel "that towards which our desire goes out, what our heart dreads, on what our life depends," if truly accomplished would render life situationless and space would be obliterated.

We can see that for Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the significance of the situation, the aliveness of space is lost, when the dimension of emotional being is not appreciated, even though the significance of the emotions in perception is only a barely stated sub-theme in his overall phenomenological description. However, even with his sparse references to the emotions, it is clear that in his analysis we are given a sense of the situation in which without the affective swirling of significance, it seems impossible for such a denuded landscape to "matter" to the perceiver, to be the locus of one's directedness, or to intertwine in such a way as to be of the "element" which Merleau-Ponty was to eventually articulate as "the flesh." Certainly, among other themes, recognizing the pull of the e-motions allows Merleau-Ponty to correct the mistakes of empiricism and intellectualism, and describe how "the 'human world' ceases to be a metaphor and becomes once more what it really is, the seat and as it were the *homeland* of our thoughts" [p. 24]: his announced project in the *Phenomenology*.

II. Last Understandings of the Emotions:

The Visible and the Invisible

The emotions remain unknown and undescribed, as D. H. Lawrence comments in "The Heart of Man":

There is the other universe, of the heart of man
that we know nothing of, that we dare not explore.
A strange grey distance separates
our pale mind still from the pulsing continent
of the heart of man . . .⁸

The poet, Lawrence, understands as Merleau-Ponty came to understand, that this ignorance is part of an ignorance of "vast realms" of experience in which perception, imagination, emotion, the co-being of others, being and non-being, palpitate and intertwine, as his poem, "Terra Incognita" attests:

There are vast realms of consciousness still undreamed of
vast ranges of experience, like the humming of unseen harps,
we know nothing of, within us.
Oh when man has escaped from the barbed-wire entanglement
of his own ideas and his own mechanical devices
there is a marvellous rich world of contact and sheer fluid
beauty
and fearless face-to-face awareness of now-naked life
and me, and you, and other men and women
and grapes, and ghouls, and ghosts and green moonlight
and ruddy-orange limbs stirring the limbo
of the unknown air, and eyes so soft
softer than the space between the stars,
and all things, and nothing, and being and non-being
alternately palpitant,
when at last we escape the barbed wire enclosure
of *Know Thyself*, knowing that we can never know,
we can but touch, and wonder, and ponder, and make our effort
and dangle in a last fastidious fine delight
as the fuchsia does, dangling her reckless drop
of purple after so much putting forth
and slow mounting marvel of a little tree.⁹

In this poem, there is sketched a locus of becoming which has always been outside the Western tradition of intellection or its various counter-ing reactions. The poem points to that which can only be comprehended laterally in the locus of palpitation among qualities which are recognized not as mere characteristics of objects [defined by a predetermined schema] but are appreciated as inaugurating dimensions among a non-hierarchized thickness of becoming. This thickness has shoots of the imagined, the emotional, the interpersonal, the natural, and other modes which find a perceptual visibility that never obliterates the invisibility of such inter-growth. Finally, these differences are played out among alternatingly palpitant flashes of intertwined being and non-being. This description has these and other similarities to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "flesh," and leads to similar revaluations of understanding.

In May 1959, Merleau-Ponty, thinking through the problem of access, of understanding, writes in his notes, "Everything comes down to this: form a theory of perception that shows that to comprehend is not to constitute in intellectual immanence, that to comprehend is to apprehend by coexistence, laterally, *by the style* . . ." (p. 242 [188]). In other words, as Merleau-Ponty had written in his notes at the beginning of the year, if the

becoming in which the philosopher is intertwined is to be understood, it is not only the primitive, nor the average person in one's average experience who hearkens back to the primitive, who understands by inhabiting a mythical space of great affective entities, but also the philosopher: for a truer consideration of perception and for ontology to "be deepened" a philosophy of nature must be written in which "the mythical time [is] reintroduced" (p. 222 [168]). Apprehension is not a "laying out" in front of the indifferent thinker, as a dead carcass of becoming: rather within the everyday and also within the philosophical, apprehension is a deepened "coming to inhabit."

At the end of 1960, another note further clarifies the type of centrality of the e-motional life to the intertwining of the flesh:

The whole architecture of the notions of the psycho-logy (perception, idea,—affection, pleasure, desire, love Eros) all that, all this bric-a-brac, is suddenly clarified when one ceases to think all these terms as *positive* . . . in order to think them not as negative or negentivities (for that brings back the same difficulties), but as *differentiations* of one sole and *massive* adhesion to Being which is the flesh (eventually as 'lace-works')—Then the problems such as those of Scheler (how to understand the relation of the intentional with the affective which it crosses transversally, a love being transversal to the oscillations of pleasure and pain personalism) disappear: for there is no *hierarchy* of orders or layers or planes (always founded on the individual-essence distinction), there is dimensionality of every fact and facticity of every dimension . . . (p. 324 [270]).

This note is enormously helpful not only for redefining emotions as not being "added on" occurrences of some sort, but rather as primordial differentiations in the upsurge of Being, for its avoidance of thinking of affect or e-motion in a mistaken way either as a definitive state or as a lack or denigration thereof, for its placing emotion as a transversal current in the multidimensional birth of meaning which is fact, but also for its acute contrast with Scheler's understanding of emotional life, to which we will return momentarily.

Merleau-Ponty had already noted:

. . . one does not get out of the rationalism-irrationalism dilemma as long as one thinks 'consciousness' and 'acts'—The decisive step is to recognize that in fact a consciousness is intentionality without acts, *fungierende*, that the 'objects' of consciousness are not something positive *in front of* us, but nuclei of signification about which the transcendental life pivots, specified voids . . . (pp. 292 [238–9]).

In this recognition that there is no core of self-collected cognition nor a definitive, impermeable resistance to the movement of apprehension, but

rather a being dispersed at odds with varying resonances and interplays of meaning, many of them streaked through with the searing heat of love or desire or many with the black, cold, red-bursting defiance of hate, or with the restless, kaleidoscopic shadings of curiosity, or the dampened, pulling gloom of remorse, Merleau-Ponty had arrived at an understanding of existence which transcended not only the traditional notions of subject and object, but even the notion of "field." For even the openness of the notion of "phenomenal field" as described in the *Phenomenology of Perception* implied a center of disclosedness and expression that Merleau-Ponty abandons now in denying that there could be any "hierarchized system of structures opened by an inaugural *there is*." The allowance for the decenteredness of apprehension leads to the recognition on Merleau-Ponty's part that: "As a result of this reform of the 'consciousness,' immediately the non-objectifying intentionalities are no longer in the alternative of being *subordinate* or *dominant*, the structures of the affectivity are constitutive with the same right as the others . . ." (p. 292 [239]). In other words, going back to Merleau-Ponty's original statement at the opening of the *Phenomenology* as an example, the gaiety of a landscape, which we will take here as a particular Paris street scene, is neither less privileged nor more privileged than the particular bright colors of the chemises of those at the art fair given to perception, nor their elongation into the airiness of the birds of the same color one remembers soaring above a lush undergrowth, nor the public celebration of the unexpected good turn of events in the political crisis that had been brewing, nor the warm, dry weather atypical for this season (duly measured by the weather bureau), nor the certain inherited class structure and ways of experiencing leisure, nor the indeterminable other intertwining of meaning here emerging; but, neither is this gaiety a quality separate from any of these other strands of the event, nor could they any more possibly emerge without this particular affective pungency. If the intertwining of these pivotings was different, it would be a different scene with a different *sens*.

The contrast with Scheler is helpful here, as it has not been widely recognized how radical was Scheler's description of the emergence of the phenomenon, with e-motion as its focus, nor how he also began to describe what Merleau-Ponty named as the "flesh." Scheler, in his remarkable last chapter of the *Nature of Sympathy*, finally gives part of what he has called "an ontology of mental reality" in which the body is to be recognized as a "field of expression" and things as emerging "integral wholes" given in tensions of expressivity. There is in particular one passage in which Scheler identifies "an immediate flow of experiences" in

which there is as yet no differentiation between "mine and thine." Scheler states, "Within this flow there is a gradual formation of ever more stable vortices, which slowly attract other elements of the stream into their orbits and thereby become successively and very gradually identified with distinct individuals."¹⁰ Scheler, here, is rightly pointing to the emergence of meaning as shifting, intermingling, played out among apparent centers, which in themselves are actually vortices or movements from the larger intertwining which become enfolded back into it.

Merleau-Ponty is correct, however, that despite such rare flashes, Scheler holds that such emergent meaning is transcended in the formation of a more stable basis for experience and in the integrity of a "self," whose boundaries are instituted by a reason and virtue whose "oneness" echoes that of the Divine Person. Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, came to see that a person is not the source of his or her intentions, that intentions are not just a movement *towards* things but are equally *lateral* interwindings and *transverse* currents, that the "person" was not a unit, a "one," but a many, of many depths and pulls. For Scheler, the e-motional life came to be another intentionality to be cultivated, refined, and directed—ultimately a virtue to be possessed. For Merleau-Ponty, the e-motions remained a gift of the "indirect voices of silence": for instance, the "rays" or interwindings of Mont Sainte-Victoire that unfold in the movements of the hand and brush of Paul Cézanne across his canvas. Unlike Scheler's conception, there is not a "personalism," a realm of ego development which loosens its tie with the landscape in order to find its proper expression in a realm of autonomy. For Merleau-Ponty, as he states in *Eye and Mind*, "creations are not possessions." In painting a painting, I do not merely possess the scene painted through the painting, but I am possessed by it, taken into its flesh. As Van Gogh painted the hot, brilliantly colored fields around Arles, they not only became burned into his being, but he was possessed by those fields, taken away from himself, outside himself, taken up into the hot frenzied play of color and light, in which it was difficult to still be himself as he had been. The same reversal is true of creations of all sorts, whether of a sentence or a mode of conduct or a lecture written, because I am moved, as much as moving, a vortex of e-motion, written as much as writing, behaved as much as behaving: the flow of the lecture takes me to an insight or expression that I had never previously imagined, the behaviour that I initiated now catches me in its web and I make startling responses, feel unprecedented feelings, express different fears or hopes than those I thought I possessed. Unlike Scheler, Merleau-Ponty came to appreciate that the autonomous "person" does not exist: I am being at

depths never reaching final resolution, never reaching a "oneness."

As we have seen, e-motions are currents with pulls, pushes, and eddies that infuse space. Within space, one feels the pull of love, or the squeezing repulsion of harried pressures, or the disconnection of indifference, or the slow draw of comforts,—and localities emerge. One is touched by things, people, environments, and the impetus from these contacts is felt in what it means to be moved e-motionally: the extension of an emerging meaning *into* one's rhythm, body and personal significance. As Virginia Woolf stated, through emotion one *feels* "the space around the heart of things,"¹¹ the developed sensitivity to which was Mrs. Ramsey's genius in *To the Lighthouse*. During Mrs. Ramsey's most acute moment of apprehension, her being becomes an enlarged lacework of tendrils registering the gentleness of the night outside the windows as it laps against the lighted window panes of the dinner by the sea, but also registering the depths of night's darkness as it spreads out into the gaps of fear in each person's missed connections in life to the fear and horror of the blinded passages of Western culture's staggering through the blows of the first World War. In this compelling moment of emotion at the end of the first part of the book, Mrs. Ramsey floats outside the circle of the warmly lit dinner conversation into the affective currents of the surrounding night, and so becomes a vehicle for the expression of vast powers and movements that mutely permeate our existence. This being touched while touching part of one's world is the heart of what Merleau-Ponty meant by the "reversibility" of "the flesh of the world"—a notion often misunderstood in a purely physicalistically reductive manner. If one reduces objects to units of extension, they do not touch us, nor see us, and to say that perception is reversible with such entities makes no sense. The night not only sees Mrs. Ramsey that evening in her kindness and her doomed human frailty, but it caresses her, touches her, takes her measure and all the dinner assembly's measure through her feelings of tranquility, her feelings of expansion, and her feelings of insignificance, and in those feelings it also reveals its own meaning of flowing support and menacing power of dissolution. In this moment, Mrs. Ramsey sees the night, but she is also seen by it, and it sees itself in her eyes, and she sees herself in its eyes. Not through the registration of meaningless units of sensation nor through the apprehension of categorically schematized percepts are such reversible interwindings set up within perception, but rather only within the many currented significance of the true encounter with the other does the reversal constantly occur—a reversal which is an emotion strewn tide. Through emotion, my connectivity within space emerges cogently, palpably, intensely, as well as its

intertwining dynamism.

Merleau-Ponty realized that "topological space" was to be his "model of Being," and not the Euclidean space upon which traditional Western philosophy had based itself:

The topological space, on the contrary, a milieu in which are circumscribed relations of proximity, of envelopment, etc. is the image of a being, like Klee's touches of color, is at the same time older than everything and 'of the first day' (Hegel) . . . and finally it founds the wild principle of *Logos* (p. 264 [210-1]).

Topological space is a space of places: it is varied, a patchwork of pulls and repulsions, of significances. It is not homogeneous, not an indifferent medium to be arbitrarily designated by Cartesian coordinates. We tend to think of place, of affective meanings, as mere additions to a more primary Cartesian space. Yet Merleau-Ponty states that like Klee's touches of color, the blue or green or red patches, being more primordial than a colorless ground, the place where we go to play or to pray, or the house whose hostility I seek to avoid, or the forest as distinguished from the plains, are more primordial than a homogeneous space. This patchwork is enveloping, the outer pattern within the landscape of my loves and hates, my preferences and my indifferences. It is in this entwining of oneself and the world, in which the emotions are played out, and play a vital role, that things matter, that a conflicting, cohering, flowing, and always pulsating locus emerges. This is the proper sense of "worldhood." A world that merely confronted the mind in its subsistence would be a world screened, arrayed before one, as a display, a print-out, a cipher, but would not be that which encroaches upon one's being, that which is at one's heart, as existence is. In a working note, Merleau-Ponty writes,

The *Weltlichkeit* of minds is ensured by the roots they push forth, not in the Cartesian space, to be sure, but in the aesthetic world. The aesthetic world to be described as a space of transcendence, a space of impossibilities, of explosion, of dehiscence, and not as an objective immanent space (pp. 269-70 [216]).

To be drawn to this place in love, repelled from that spot in hatred, to be overwhelmed with this place of horror, to even find a space rocked by opposing and alternating currents of love, hatred, fear, curiosity and repulsion, is to find oneself within a space into which one is sunk, at odds, at depths, at flickering continuities of inhabitation. As the state of e-motions, the world is beyond me, a clashing of currents, a depth in which I always feel threatened with possible drowning, and in which I am drawn by a common *force* of passage with others from shared landmark to landmark through twistings, through eddies, around vortices. It is an

aesthetic world, since it is a world of beauties and horrors, of harmonies and dissonances, and harmonies within dissonances, in which my body is thrown into rapture or terror, or tickled by curiosity or apprehensiveness, first and foremost, and only then finds the equanimity, the dry stable land, to judge, whether in moral or conceptual terms. For Mrs. Ramsey, the dining room is a place of comfort and security, in which she is in control of the menu and the assemblage of people she loves, but it is also a place of strife with her husband, as well as locus of competition with Lily Briscoe, as well as a beleaguered outpost against the menacing tides of history and war that are approaching, as well as vantage point for the thrilling sight of faraway lights with their mystery, as well as the place of many other motions of her feeling. Even this one simple moment in this one room is a clashing site of loves, fears, thrills, tensions, joys, depressions, curiosities that lead into differing and often contradictory depths, some overpoweringly present, some betrayed only by renting holes of something withheld or missing, some wispy interminglings. Merleau-Ponty realized that these dehiscences and these contradictions that infuse the swirl of a space that is perceptual and affective, not logically regimented, gives to space a depth in which we can become rooted, as tangled, as held within an interplay of forces.

By the time of these notes, in 1959, Merleau-Ponty has recognized that even his most basic concept, that of the gestalt, central to his earliest work, has to be seen now within this more charged, dehiscence, and affective flow: "Every Psychology that places the *Gestalt* back into the framework of 'cognition' or 'cognition' or 'consciousness' misses the meaning of *Gestalt*" (p. 259 [206]). The coming together of things, whether in the unfolding of perception or in moments of threatened, apparent breakdown of sense or within the confusing turmoil of dream or of delirium, which all finally emerge as wholes and rejoin the fabric of the world, are all equally *vital* matters, that is, matters or matterings of the heart, from whose locus the material world emerges. A "purely cognitive" gestalt is not possible: of the connective entwining, the e-motional currents are central to that bindingness of meaningful whole.

Western philosophy has consistently avoided the challenge of the emotions, by seeing these currents of understanding and inhabitation as somehow hopelessly circular: as indicating merely the subjective precursors to experience that one could now read within experience but would not provide access to new dimensions learned through that experience. Even worse, not only have emotions been seen as incapable of leading us beyond the subject to discover new facets about the world, but the information

gleaned even about the subject by looking at emotion was itself considered degraded by being somehow evanescent, dynamic, unique to each situation, part of the mad swirl of never-to-be-grasped appearances. The names given to the various aspects of the e-motions betray the tensions within the dynamic of emotion that have been so devalued by our tradition: the term, "feeling" harkens back to the Icelandic "falma," which means "to grope," and yet the term, "passion," harkens back to its root meaning of "suffering" or "submitting to." To grope is to *reach out* from oneself towards the world, to be *active*, and yet another aspect of the emotional life is to *submit to* the world, to be *passive*. The Western tradition has devalued emotion as either mere projection or mere passive disturbance. The truth is one that can be seen to be neither of these cases or perhaps both of these cases at once, as the word "emotion" indicates. I have hyphenated "e-motion" at times in this essay to highlight this aspect of the notion. The e-motion, as in the sense of its root *e-movere*, means to move outward into the world, away from oneself; and yet, one could equally well say that it is the world moving out and away from itself. E-motion is the movement out from oneself, and allowing oneself to be taken up by the world, in such a way that I am struck to my depths, return to who I am, am led within the circle back to myself. E-motion is also the solicitation of the world that moves me in such a way that I am directed out towards a place within the world with a riveted attention, a bond of the body in which the world is led through its circle back to itself. The notion of emotion is circular, but not in a vicious way as one-sided viewpoints would have it, but rather in the inexhaustibility of coming to be.

It would be more precise to say that the permeability that is the motion of e-motion is not circular, but rather twisting, deepening, winding, a coming into continued reversal as unfolding and enfolding. It is more precise, because the metaphor of the circular correlates to a notion of static "states" which "interrelate." The language of "states" betrays a covert priority of Cartesian space. However, Merleau-Ponty is a philosopher of depth, as I have discussed elsewhere, in the sense that for him, there is a "space of impossibilities, of explosion, of dehiscence" that indicates that he understood space from the priority of seeing the temporal flow. The emotional currents examined in this essay are the packings and breakings, the abiding acquisitions and trailing gaps, of an ongoing becoming, of a duration, that is emplaced in the landscape, and in the body enlaced within the landscape. This means that Merleau-Ponty appreciates the flow, the temporal becoming, as informing, as lodging [inhabiting-forging] a topological space. Bergson had taught that content [meaning] and duration

are one and the same. It is in the flow of intertwining that the body "extends to the stars," an image Merleau-Ponty took from Bergson, and Merleau-Ponty understood well Bergson's admonition that "It is not the 'states,' simple snapshots we have taken once along the course of change, that are real; on the contrary, it is flux, the continuity of transition, it is change itself that is real."¹² In the coming to be of the moment, such as in the emotional currents enveloping Mrs. Ramsey at dinner, is the depth of the reversibility that Merleau-Ponty came to see as that mobility, that criss-crossing, that leakage, that makes of my body and the world's body the same body, and which is the motive power made visible in understanding. The e-motions are perhaps the exemplar of what Merleau-Ponty points to at the heart of the "flesh," when he states that passivity and activity are the same in this intertwining, and when he comes to appreciate Being as a play of vortices, a swirling, or what he calls the "winding" [*serpement*]. With these affective currents in mind, one can understand that Merleau-Ponty was able to come to his final "indirect ontology" only with a more sensitive characterization of the emotions than traditional conceptions had allowed. This aspect of Merleau-Ponty's work needs to be recognized. Appreciating the role of e-motion, we can see further depths when Merleau-Ponty writes: "being as winding. . . . That is, the things have us, and it is not we who have the things" (p. 247 [194]).

NOTES

- 1 This paper was originally delivered at the Eleventh Annual Merleau-Ponty Circle meeting at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, in September, 1986.
- 2 After this note, all references to this work will be in the body of the text in parentheses which will indicate the page number of the citation in the French text [*Phenomenologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), here cited, p. xiv.] to be then followed by a page number within brackets that will indicate the page number of the English translation [*Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), here cited, p. xix.]. In cases in which the text being cited is not obvious by the context, the reference in brackets will include the page number and the identification, "PP."
- 3 After this note, all references to this work will be included in the body of the text in parentheses which will indicate the page number of the citation in the French text [*Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), here cited, p. 273] to be then followed by a page number within brackets that will indicate the page number of the English translation [*The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), here cited, p. 220]. In cases in which the text being cited is not obvious by the context,

the reference in brackets will include the page number and the identification, "VI."

- 4 D. H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Vivian de Sola and F. Warren Roberts (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p. 525.
- 5 We can see here not only the theme of "inhabiting" or "dwelling" that Merleau-Ponty articulates in common with Heidegger, but also that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the relationship of body and landscape as a "standing away from itself as the way of standing within itself," as I would call it, has resonances of Heidegger's notion of ecstatic Dasein as developed in *Sein und Zeit*.
- 6 Lawrence, pp. 675-6.
- 7 John Fowles, *The Magus* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. 464.
- 8 Lawrence, pp. 606-7.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 666-7.
- 10 Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 246.
- 11 Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Harvest Edition) p. 158: "Here, she felt, putting the spoon down, was the still space that lies about the heart of things, where one could move or rest . . ."
- 12 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. by Mabelle Addison (Totawa: Littlefield, Adams, & Co., 1965), p. 16.

Selective Bibliography

The following bibliography is selective both with respect to Merleau-Ponty's own works as well as the secondary literature. For a complete list of the publications of Merleau-Ponty see the bibliography compiled by François Lapointe and Claire Lapointe: *Maurice Merleau-Ponty and His Critics: An International Bibliography 1942-1976* (Garland Publishing Inc. New York and London 1976) and Kerry Whiteside's "The Merleau-Ponty Bibliography: Additions and Corrections" in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 21 pp. 195-201 1983. Alongside the work by Lapointe Richard L. Lanigan's bibliography remains useful. It was first published in *Man and World* vol. 3 pp. 289-319 1970 but subsequently republished in the author's work *Speaking and Semiology: Merleau-Ponty's Theory of Existential Communication* (Mouton and Co. The Hague 1972).

The bibliography offered here is divided into four sections. In the first section I list in chronological order the principal works of Merleau-Ponty which a student or scholar is most likely to want to consult. The English translation is usually listed alongside the original French text. The second section is devoted to books; the third to previous anthologies, and the fourth to articles. As to the secondary literature I list only items which appeared after 1976, the cut-off date of Lapointe. The list of books, I might add, is complete as far as the literature in the English language is concerned.

I: Works By Merleau-Ponty:

- 1942 *La Structure du Comportement*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; *The Structure of Behavior* (trans. Alden L. Fisher). Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.
- 1945 *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. Paris: Gallimard; *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. Colin Smith). New York: Humanities Press, 1962.
- 1947 *Humanisme et Terreur. Essai sur le problème communiste*. Paris: Gallimard; *Humanism and Terror. An Essay on the Communist Problem* (trans. John