

BR.MERL/500-1 FHW

CHIASMI INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION TRILINGUE AUTOUR DE LA PENSÉE DE MERLEAU-PONTY
TRILINGUAL STUDIES CONCERNING THE THOUGHT OF MERLEAU-PONTY
PUBBLICAZIONE TRILINGUE INTORNO AL PENSIERO DI MERLEAU-PONTY

DIRECTEURS / EDITORS / DIRETTORI:

Renaud Barbaras (Université de Paris-Sorbonne), barbaras@heraclite.ens.fr;
Mauro Carbone (Università degli Studi di Milano), mauro.carbone@unimi.it;
Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis), lrlawlor@memphis.edu.

COMITÉ SCIENTIFIQUE / EDITORIAL BOARD / COMITATO SCIENTIFICO:

Rudolf Bernet (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Patrick Burke (Seattle University), Wanderley Cardoso de Oliveira (Universidade de São João del Rei, Minas Gerais), Edward S. Casey (SUNY at Stony Brook), Jean-François Courtine (Université de Paris-Sorbonne), Simon Critchley (Essex University), Pierre Dalla Vigna (Milano), Françoise Dastur (Université de Nice), Fred Evans (Duquesne University), Elio Franzini (Università degli Studi di Milano), Paolo Gambazzi (Università degli Studi di Verona), Jacques Garelli (Université d'Amiens), Theodore Geraets (University of Ottawa), Koji Hirose (Université de Tsukuba), Giovanni Invitto (Università degli Studi di Lecce), Dominique Janicaud (Université de Nice), Enrica Lisciani-Petrini (Università degli Studi di Salerno), Sandro Mancini (Università degli Studi di Palermo), Isabel Matos Dias (Universidade de Lisboa), Shōichi Matsubara (Université de Kobeshi-kango), Mario Teodoro Ramírez Cobián (Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo), Carlo Sini (Università degli Studi di Milano), Hugh J. Silverman (SUNY at Stony Brook), Anthony J. Steinbock (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale), Jacques Taminaux (Université Catholique de Louvain), Bernhard Waldenfels (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Gail Weiss (George Washington University).

EN COLLABORATION AVEC / IN COLLABORATION WITH / IN COLLABORAZIONE CON:
"Società italiana di studi su Maurice Merleau-Ponty", fondata da Angela Ales Bello, Mauro Carbone, Pierre Dalla Vigna, Giovanni Invitto, Sandro Mancini (presidente).

NUMÉRO COORDONNÉ PAR / VOLUME COORDINATED BY / NUMERO COORDINATO DA MAURO CARBONE.

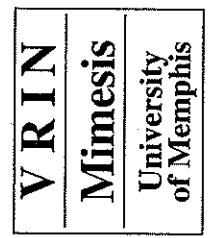
CHIASMI INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION TRILINGUE AUTOUR
DE LA PENSÉE DE MERLEAU-PONTY

TRILINGUAL STUDIES CONCERNING
MERLEAU-PONTY'S THOUGHT

PUBBLICAZIONE TRILINGUE INTORNO
AL PENSIERO DI MERLEAU-PONTY

MERLEAU-PONTY L'HÉRITAGE CONTEMPORAIN THE CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE L'EREDITÀ CONTEMPORANEA



- Koji Hirose (Université de Tsukuba, Japon)
Merleau-Ponty aux limites de la modernité. La situation actuelle des études sur Merleau-Ponty au Japon
 Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Modernity. The Current Situation Concerning Studies on Merleau-Ponty in Japan (abstract)
 p. 45
- Merleau-Ponty ai limiti della modernità. L'attuale situazione degli studi su Merleau-Ponty in Giappone (riassunto)
 p. 52
- II**
LES ACTUALITÉS DE MERLEAU-PONTY
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN MERLEAU-PONTY
LE ATTUALITÀ DI MERLEAU-PONTY
- Bernhard Waldenfels (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Deutschland)
Faire voir par les mots. Merleau-Ponty et le tournant linguistique
 Showing by Words: Merleau-Ponty and the Linguistic Turn (abstract)
 p. 57
- Far vedere attraverso le parole. Merleau-Ponty e la svolta linguistica (riassunto)
 p. 63
- David Michael Levin (Northwestern University, U.S.A.)
A Responsive Voice: Language without the Modern Subject
 p. 63
- *Une voix qui répond. Le langage sans le sujet moderne* (résumé)
 Una voce in risposta. Il linguaggio senza il soggetto moderno (riassunto)
 p. 65
- Rudolf Bernet (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, België) and Lacan
The Phenomenon of the Gaze in Merleau-Ponty and Lacan
 Le phénomène du regard chez Merleau-Ponty et Lacan (résumé)
 Il fenomeno dello sguardo in Merleau-Ponty e Lacan (riassunto)
 p. 102
- Maurizio Ferraris (Università degli Studi di Torino, Italia)
“Uno psichico che non è quello della psicologia”
 Il dubbio di Merleau
 “Un psychique qui n'est pas celui de la psychologie”. Le doute de Merleau (résumé)
 “A Psychic which is not the One of Psychology”: Merleau's Doubt (abstract)
 p. 102
- Patrick Burke (Seattle University, U.S.A.)
Il potere morale del volto del bambino
 Le pouvoir moral du visage de l'enfant (résumé)
 The Moral Power of the Face of the Child (abstract)
 p. 137
- Daniela Calabrò (Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italia)
Maurice Merleau-Ponty e il “labirinto dell'ontologia”
 Maurice Merleau-Ponty et le “labyrinthe de l'ontologie” (résumé)
 Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the “Labyrinth of Ontology” (abstract)
 p. 151
- Enrica Lisciani-Petrini (Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italia)
Attività/Passività: l'invisibile di Merleau-Ponty
 Activité/passivité: l'invisible de Merleau-Ponty (résumé)
 Activity/Passivity: the Invisible of Merleau-Ponty (abstract)
 p. 152
- Elio Franzini (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia)
La pittura e la differenza
 La peinture et la différence (résumé)
 Painting and Difference (abstract)
 p. 166
- Renaud Barbaras (Université de Paris IV - Sorbonne, France)
Merleau-Ponty aux limites de la phénoménologie
 Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Phenomenology (abstract)
 Merleau-Ponty ai limiti della fenomenologia (riassunto)
 p. 167
- Mauro Carbone (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia)
Il tempo mitico delle idee. Merleau-Ponty e Deleuze lettori di Proust
 Le temps mythique des idées. Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze lecteurs de Proust (résumé)
 The Mythical Time of Ideas: Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze as Readers of Proust (abstract)
 p. 184
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 185
- Renaud Barbaras (Université de Paris IV - Sorbonne, France)
Merleau-Ponty aux limites de la phénoménologie
 Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Phenomenology (abstract)
 Merleau-Ponty ai limiti della fenomenologia (riassunto)
 p. 199
- Mauro Carbone (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia)
Il tempo mitico delle idee. Merleau-Ponty e Deleuze lettori di Proust
 Le temps mythique des idées. Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze lecteurs de Proust (résumé)
 The Mythical Time of Ideas: Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze as Readers of Proust (abstract)
 p. 210
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 211
- Mauro Carbone (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia)
Il tempo mitico delle idee. Merleau-Ponty e Deleuze lettori di Proust
 Le temps mythique des idées. Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze lecteurs de Proust (résumé)
 The Mythical Time of Ideas: Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze as Readers of Proust (abstract)
 p. 213
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 230
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 231
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 233
- Leonard Lawlor (University of Memphis, U.S.A.)
The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze
 La fin de l'ontologie: l'interrogation chez Merleau-Ponty et Deleuze (résumé)
 p. 252

RUDOLF BERNET
(Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, België)

THE PHENOMENON OF THE GAZE IN MERLEAU-PONTY AND LACAN

My "gaze" is one of those givens of the "sensible", of the brute and primordial world, that defies the analysis into being and nothingness, into existence as consciousness and existence as a thing, and requires a complete reconstruction of philosophy.¹

The phenomenology of Husserl has as its aim to disencumber the phenomenon from all metaphysics of a world behind appearances. This approach, however, carries with it the danger of flattening out the phenomenon into a pure given. This given may be incomplete or it may even be "canceled out" for the sake of another given, but the imperfection of its givenness is without mystery and without depth. Similarly, there is the danger that the subject, which holds out such a phenomenon as its correlate, will receive this givenness as what is rightfully due to it since it is the subject which is the source of its appearing. The appearance of the phenomenon neither surprises nor disconcerts the subject, who sees only what it has foreseen and receives the given armed with all its categories and doxic modalities. The flat phenomenon and the subject to which nothing ever happens form a pair.

It goes without saying that the work of Husserl contains resources other than this phenomenology of a flat and symmetric correlation between noesis and noema. Our intention, however, is neither to criticize nor defend Husserl but to direct our attention to the phenomena for which a static phenomenology and a phenomenological reduction of the epistemological kind are unable to account. These phenomena, rather than being given instantaneously in the harsh light of evidence, contain their share of obscurity, and have already traveled far before reaching the subject, whom — for the most part — they only pass over in order to continue further on their way by themselves. These phenomena require a genetic phenomenology which has the task of articulating their silent genesis, maturation, and decline. These phenomena engender their own mode of appearance and give birth to the subject whom they address. And it is by their very manifestation that they distinguish

themselves from the facts of the world and accomplish a phenomenological reduction to which they alone hold the secret. The suspension of the economy of natural life is thus due to a radiance of the phenomenon itself and not to a subjective decision, and thus this phenomenological reduction amounts to an abolition of the power of the subject over the phenomenon.

There are many phenomena endowed with such a revelatory power, phenomena which suspend or destroy the correlation between the subject and the world. It is enough to think of the phenomena of the unconscious which, while directing their manifestation to the consciousness of a reflexive subject, simultaneously assert their incompatibility with the laws of that consciousness and so upset the power of the conscious subject over its own life. The unconscious is not, therefore, a noumenal substance existing in itself and manifesting itself under the form of a phenomenon of pure semblance (*Schein*), but rather it is a phenomenon *sui generis* which, while manifesting its irreducibility to consciousness in the midst of that consciousness, asserts its difference and suspends the dogmatism of so-called "normal" consciousness.² Without a doubt, the same applies also to the theological phenomenon of the revelation of God in the Law, in the testimony of the prophets, and in the incarnation of his Son. One could therefore say that man's conversion to a new life through the effect of the Word of God, also has the value of a phenomenological reduction.

If we have chosen to illustrate this revelatory power of a phenomenon wending its way between obscurity and light, between truth and semblance, by an analysis of the gaze, it is principally for the two following reasons: Firstly, to demonstrate that those phenomena which upset the order of worldly appearance and our usual mode of being, are not confined to experiences of the extraordinary, but rather arise everywhere, even in visual perception, which we tend to consider as the standard example of a flat phenomenon. The second reason is that we would like to demonstrate the central place the analysis of the gaze occupies in French phenomenology and psychoanalysis, passing from Sartre to Lévinas and Lacan via Merleau-Ponty and Freud. This will allow us not only to define more precisely our conception of the movement of the deep phenomenon, but equally to comprehend better the circular path of the scopical drive, which runs from the eye to the gaze and back again to the eye. A more attentive examination will be reserved for the gaze in the consideration of anamorphic painting and psychoanalysis, and this will afford us a better estimation of the effect of the deep phenomenon of the appearance of the invisible upon the emergence or abolition of the subject.

1. *The Invisible Gaze of the Other (Sartre and Lévinas)*

The analysis of the gaze in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*,³ well known as it is, deserves a close re-reading. It is first of all a decisive contribution to the phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity, bringing out the fact that the presence of the other already dwells within my most secret feelings well before appearing under a recognizable form in the phenomenal world, or lending itself to a transcendental constitution. If one can still speak of a constitution with reference to this experience of shame before the gaze of the other, then the primary subject constituting it is the other and not me, and the other's power of constitution is so strong as to deprive me of mine. The other, by negating my freedom, alienates me from myself, forces me to accept as mine something alien, something in which I cannot recognize myself. Even more remarkable and more significant for our purposes, is the fact that in the midst of this experience we encounter at the same time both notions of the phenomenon that we distinguished at the beginning. The manner in which I appear to myself under the gaze of the other is undoubtedly a "flat" phenomenon, since I am nothing other than the correlate, the end point, the object-in-itself of his gaze. But this gaze which flattens me and negates me in its turn a phenomenon, even if it does not belong to me and I do not exercise any power over it. I apprehend this gaze as a "deep" phenomenon, the secret and disconcerting power of which I am unable to fathom. Sartre says explicitly that this apprehension of the gaze as phenomenon implies "the phenomenological reduction prescribed by Husserl" (BN, p. 258), that is to say, the bracketing of the eyes of the other as a worldly object of my perception: "if I apprehend the gaze, I cease to perceive the eyes" (*ibid.*).

Accepting these premises, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the gaze of the other is an *invisible phenomenon*. The gaze is, moreover, *invisible* not only for me but also for the other himself. That does not mean that he is blind; he is quite on the contrary seeing, but is a seer affected by a blind spot. The gaze that sees me is attributed by me to the other, but that does not mean that it really belongs to the other. Not seeing his own gaze, the other is like myself incapable of appropriating it. It is thus more correct to say that the gaze is, or rather moves, between us. The gaze is thus really an invisible phenomenon *en route*, its manifestation is in movement, as it travels a path. A phenomenon in movement, the gaze does not always appear in the same manner at each point along its way.

But it must be admitted that we are still completely ignorant of the way in which the invisibility of the gaze is nevertheless able to phenomenally

itself, as well as of the path traveled by this phenomenalisation. We know only that this appearance of the gaze is to the detriment of the eye and of its manner of seeing or of representing worldly objects.

How can we learn more about the appearance of the gaze and the manner in which it disqualifies ordinary vision and flat phenomena? French phenomenology and psychoanalysis of the last fifty years offer us at least three different approaches which bring out phenomena which transcend the objectifying or representational power of the vision proper to the eyes: 1) the Levinasian description of the manner in which the Face of the Other – irreducible to its visible form – appeals to my ethical responsibility; 2) the Merleau-Pontian analysis of the interrogative gaze of things and of the manner in which, for example, the painter responds to this gaze in creating a work of art; 3) the approach common to Sartre and Lacan which situates the gaze in the path of the scopic drive, especially as it manifests itself in voyeurism. In what follows we will draw freely from these three sources with the sole aim of better defining the deep phenomenon of the gaze and without being too greatly concerned to do justice to the detailed analyses of the authors mentioned.

It could be shown in more detail how much Lévinas's thought concerning the appearance of the Other (as an untouchable Face and not as a recognizable form or figure, as a traumatizing command, as an event outside the economy of the world, as a source of an infinite desire, etc.) owes to Sartre's analysis of the gaze and of its irreducibility to the eye.⁴ But then it would also be necessary to demonstrate what it is that differentiates the subject according to Sartre, a "for-itself" animated by a *conatus essendi*, from the subject according to Lévinas, a receptivity and a response originating in the Other with whom it maintains a "relation without relation". But this is not our purpose here. All we wish to retain from these descriptions is simply the fundamental incapacity of representational, intentional and objectifying consciousness to account for the appearance of the Other. It can be said that no-one has more relentlessly denounced the pretensions of intentional consciousness than Lévinas, but it would be more just to say that no one has worked harder to give a positive sense to the appearance of the Other as "mystery", "height", "trace", "infinity", "appeal", etc. It is not Lévinas, but the epiphany of the Face of the Other which destroys and negates intentional consciousness, and its way of perceiving things and of transforming them into controllable objects. It is the rising up of the Other which creates at once the conditions of its own appearance and those of the subject capable of responding to its commandments.

Accepting that the Face of the Other is, just like his gaze, a deep phenomenon, that which must most of all be kept in mind about its mode of appearance is the circular path in which activity and passivity are intimately intertwined. In effect, one cannot separate the response aroused by the appearance of the Other from the appearance itself, and in this response the passivity of the submission to a commandment necessarily prolongs itself in the activity of giving oneself to the Other. Rather than speaking, as Sartre does, of an objectifying and petrifying negation of the subject by the gaze of the other, Lévinas makes us attentive to the profound transformation of the subject by the appearance of the Other. The response to the gaze of the Other thus cannot consist in paying him back in like kind, that is to say, in negating him in his turn; the response, for Lévinas, is not symmetrical to the appeal. Similarly, the "vulnerability" of the subject with regard to the gaze of the other does not at all have the same sense for Sartre and Lévinas, since for Lévinas the trauma of the violent intrusion of the Other into the secret of my intimacy gives birth to a new sensibility which is the expression of my "essence" for the Other. In the deep phenomena, the appearance of the Other comes from the Other and returns to the Other, altering everything as it passes by. That which, on the other hand, Lévinas takes over from Sartre and which reveals itself to be of the highest importance, is that the gaze of the Other, as unfathomable and invisible as it is, is not the sign of any interior richness nor of an overflowing glory. If the gaze of the Other takes hold of me in so poignant a manner, it is because it testifies to a lack and a destitution, it commands by supplication, it is more worried than dominating, and is never self-sufficient.

What is peculiar and even paradoxical about the manifestation of the Other is that it imposes its own mode of appearance, which puts an end to the egoic power of apprehension and even to the subjective openness to a phenomenon, and yet, for all that, is not satisfied by this appearance, but looks for something in return and demands a response. The gaze of the Other is invisible in the sense that it is measureless, that is to say without a stable measure by which my response could regulate itself. That which is invisible to the eyes is thus visible in its own way; the gaze of the Other gives birth to a gaze which is other than that of thematising contemplation. The gaze of the Other thus truly accomplishes a phenomenological reduction of vision since it leads the perception of worldly objects back to the invisible gaze which dwells in the Other and perhaps even in things.

2. *The Gaze of Things and the Invisible Flesh of the World (Merleau-Ponty)*

The analysis of the gaze and of the Face of the Other in Sartre and Lévinas leads us logically to the analysis of the invisible gaze of things which never ceased to haunt the thought of *Merleau-Ponty*.⁵ One can perhaps say that for Merleau-Ponty the exchange of gazes between subjects is but a particular case of the exchange of gazes between things and the subject or even between the things themselves. However, claiming that this approach leads to an attribution of subjectivity to things would be to mistake totally the intention of Merleau-Ponty, since he is concerned, quite on the contrary, with a primitive and anonymous intercorporeity which precedes the division between subject and object, between the gaze and the visible. That which interests Merleau-Ponty is a perception without subject or, more precisely, the genesis or emergence of vision among things, of a vision which sees "according to" (*selon*) wild essences" (*essences sauvages*) or according to the "invisible flesh" (*chair invisible*) of things, and not according to the subjective categories of the understanding, or the existentials of Dasein. Thus the Sartrean opposition between the gaze of the other and my perception, by which Lévinas was still greatly inspired, disappears in favor of one single gaze, which in a universal "narcissism" of vision circulates tirelessly between the body and things, their common essence being that both are at once seeing and seen. Contrary to Lévinas, who proscribed all relations of symmetry or of reciprocity between subjects, Merleau-Ponty celebrates a universal sensible reversibility which takes hold of all bodies and binds them together.

Does this mean that the Levinasian notion of separation finds itself abolished in favor of a notion of fusion and ontological in-difference? Not at all. According to Merleau-Ponty sensible reflexivity is, in effect, a reflexivity that is always incomplete, a unity of "impossibles". As for Lévinas, the proximity of which Merleau-Ponty speaks does not do away with either difference or distance. Merleau-Ponty even radicalizes the Levinasian idea that the appearance of that which appears always addresses itself to the other rather than to itself, by insisting upon the fact that what appears does not appear from itself but from a common ground which it shares with that to which it appears. This common ground of appearance, which escapes the visibility of representational consciousness, is precisely that which Merleau-Ponty calls "the invisible" or, more exactly, the invisible "flesh of the world": This invisible flesh of the world is inhabited by an incarnate logic of the sensible, which unites the multiple dimensions of sensing, yet

does not recognize the principles of identity and non-contradiction. Before being expressed in the language of literature or philosophy, before offering itself to the gaze in painting, this invisible flesh of the world makes itself felt in the silent experience of a "perceptual faith" (*foi perceptive*) which, questioning itself about its gaps and lacks, sets about a search for an equilibrium or order while completely rejecting any pre-established order.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the invisible thus inhabits every body and even every part of the body; it nestles itself in the interstices between that which is seeing in that body, and that which is visible. It is that empty space and that absent time which prevent the body totally curling up into itself. But the invisible is also the abysmal emptiness, straddled, but not filled-in, by the vision which passes from one body to another. Insofar as it is the invisible source of the visible, this invisible is unable, in principle, to make itself visible, and insofar as it is at any time a particular invisible it adheres to the surface of the visible as the reverse side of something adheres to the facing side. It is thus not simply the gaze which is invisible (to the gaze of another as well as to itself) but also the being in its entirety from which this invisible gaze arises. Thus the gaze is an invisible *in actu* or, more precisely, in movement, which, wandering about in the midst of visible bodies on an endless quest, takes on different forms, all the while remaining immersed in the elemental matter of the invisible flesh of the world.

It is without a doubt the phenomenon of *painting* which provides this philosophy of the invisible gaze with its clearest illustration.⁶ Painting has in effect the "magic" power to make the invisible visible (EM, p. 166). It puts itself at the service of being in order to make to appear its "dehiscence", its multiple and "impossible" "dimensions". It assembles these dimensions and establishes between them "systems of equivalencies", it confers on a flat and immobile image, the power to let the "depth" of things and the "movement" of bodies be seen. Manipulating light and shadow, color and line, juxtaposing brushstrokes in order to reveal the thickness of things, making bodies "encroach" upon one another in a tremendous "deflagration of Being", painting makes visible the invisible as invisible, that is, while preserving all of its "enigma". It unfolds a space which is neither the focal space of thematising consciousness, nor the space of perspective such as geometry understands it, but the "vibrant" space with which the thing surrounds itself in order to join up with another thing while "eclipsing it".

Keeping to our intention, we want to pay special attention to the part played by the gaze in this Merleau-Pontian understanding of painting as the

sensible phenomenon of the essence of the flesh of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the appearance of the thing, to the degree that this appearance testifies to the invisible of the thing, is quite equivalent to a gaze (EM, pp. 166, 167). The mountain of Sainte-Victoire "looks" at Cézanne in showing itself to him in its unfathomable mystery, its startling visual incoherence, in the texture of its mass composed of motley elements. This gaze of the thing is thus at once an interrogation and an invitation directed at the painter and more precisely at his body, at his hand. It gives "birth" to the painter (EM, p. 181) who "restores to the visible through the offices of an agile hand" that which has moved him (EM, p. 165). The appearance of the thing under the form of a deflagration, sets on fire the hand which, in the act of painting, restores to the visible world the invisible by which it has been touched. Or to say the same thing with a phrase of Klee's that Merleau-Ponty liked to cite:

"[A] Certain fire pretends to be alive; it awakens. Working its way along the hand as its conductor, it reaches the support and engulfs it; then a leaping spark closes the circle it was to trace, coming back to the eye, and beyond." (EM, p. 188)

The appearance of the thing under the form of an invisible and dazzling gaze thus follows a circular path: the gaze of the thing invests the body of the painter with its interrogative force and arouses in him that which Merleau-Ponty, in Proustian language, calls an "internal equivalent" (EM, p. 164), something which, expressed in the form of painting, restores to the thing its enigmatic gaze. It is unnecessary to add that this circle, traveled by the appearance or the deep phenomenon of the thing, never quite closes, and that no painting of Cézanne is identical to the gaze of the mountain of Sainte-Victoire.

It is necessary, on the other hand, to emphasize the fact that here the subject or, more precisely, the eye and the hand of the painter, play the secondary but nevertheless essential role of a relay-station or mediator in the circuit of appearance which runs from the thing to the painting. The thing appears "in the midst" of the things of the world and reverberates in those things; its invisible, instead of holding the thing captive to itself, on the contrary, relates it to the other things of the world in the form of a "encroachment" (*empiètement*) or of a chiasmatic "interweaving" (*entrelacs*). The painting magnifies this mode of appearance of the thing, it is a "visible of the second power" (EM, p. 164) because in it the gaze of the thing addresses itself to a body capable not only of reflecting and sensing, but also of expressing the invisible "wild essence" of the thing. One could as well say that the thing itself cannot apprehend its own gaze, and that the painting allows this gaze to be seen only in the form of an equivalent, which is,

however, never to be confused with the invisible of the thing. This does not exclude that the picture is a true equivalent of the thing, since the picture, in its turn, interrogates the gaze of the spectator. The gaze or, more exactly, the multiple gazes of the picture arouse and conduct the gaze of the spectator who, displaced from his central point of view and his frontal and thematizing vision, from now on sees "according to the picture" (EM, p. 164). What we have said concerning the relation between the thing and the picture, thus applies as well to the relation between the spectator and the picture: the gaze of the spectator which replies to the gaze of the picture is invisible in and to itself; only within the picture, and transformed by the picture, can the gaze recover itself. But this return to itself is at the same time an exile, since the gaze of the spectator always bears with it the trace of the gaze of the picture. In contrast with the gaze of the other which, according to the description of Sartre, negates the subject, the gaze of the picture (like the gaze of the thing) reverses the subject like a glove pulled inside out, exposing the inside while at the same time internalizing the exterior of the picture (or of the thing).

3. *The Gaze of the Picture and the Circuit of the Scopio Drive (Freud and Lacan)*

A most striking illustration of this transformation of the spectator by the gaze of the picture is provided by the canvas by Holbein entitled "The Ambassadors". Taking his inspiration to large extent from Baltrusaitis⁷ famous work, and having just completed reading Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* and *Eye and Mind*, Lacan pauses at length before this canvas in his seminar of 1964⁸. This picture by Holbein is in reality a double picture, the expression of two different gazes which impose upon the spectator two incompatible modes of vision. First, there is the gaze of the picture viewed from the front representing two persons richly attired and surrounded by objects, the refined symbolism of which evokes the different forms of human vanity. But there is also in the foreground of the painting the gaze of the anamorphic object which only strikes the spectator at the moment he turns away from the picture. Only then does the distortion of the perspective correct itself, such that the unusual object becomes upright and shows itself to be a Death's Head. If the first gaze of the picture confirms the good conscience of the spectator, the second shakes him to the foundations of his being since it reveals his own being-towards-death. This makes one think of a phrase in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*⁹ that can be read as a commentary on this gaze of death which strikes the spectator

at the very moment he turns away from the contemplation of the picture:

"But just as he who flees in the face of death is pursued by it even as he evades it, and just as in turning away from it he must see it none the less..."

There is no need to go into a detailed analysis of this picture overloaded with symbolic meanings, in order to understand the phenomenological reduction that its double gaze effects. This reduction is in the first place directed to the subject and consists in displacing the distant and impartial spectator from his position in order to force him to enter into the picture and to allow himself be contaminated by what is seen. The gaze of the picture comes up on the subject from behind, it takes him by surprise and leads him back to his authentic mode of being as a finite *Dasein*. But one could also say that through its double gaze the picture exhibits the phenomenological reduction itself: indeed it shows how a thematic vision gives way to a vision which allows the invisible face of the world to be seen. It is remarkable to note that in the anamorphosis, which is the result of clever geometric calculation, the laws of perspective turn against their own pretension to represent faithfully the reality of the visible world. In the anamorphosis one witnesses the self-destruction of the flat phenomenon of subjective perspective in favor of the deep phenomenon of the invisible gaze of the picture and the thing.

Lacan pursues these reflections on the phenomenological reduction carried out by the painting, even if he does not himself employ the term "reduction". In describing how the "gesture" of the painter lets a rain of touches of color fall from his brush, he does however use the word "suspension". Painting, just like the gestures of the dancers in Chinese ballet, also mentioned by Lacan, is a movement made up of "suspended" acts, that is to say, of acts which rather than being directed to worldly things with the intention of transforming them, want only to "allow something to be seen" (*donner à voir*). This is why Lacan repeatedly says that a suspended act is something other than an interrupted act (S XI, pp. 114-116). What is it, then, that the picture allows to be seen? The response of Lacan is perhaps surprising: it lets the drive or the desire to see be seen. But then, by what sleight of hand or short-circuit can Lacan end up identifying the manifestation of the invisible "flesh of the world" according to Merleau-Ponty with the appearance of the scopophilic drive according to Freud?

The Lacanian theory of the drive such as it is laid out in Seminar XI¹⁰ is presented as a long commentary on Freud's text *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*¹¹. As is well known, this difficult and dense text by Freud deals with,

among other things, the essential characteristics of drive – the "pressure", the "aim", the "object", and the "source" of the drive, as well as those vicissitudes of the drive that Freud terms "reversal into the contrary", "turning back against one's own person", "repression" and "sublimation". Besides this, Freud also deals with the "pleasure principle", "love" and "autoeroticism", as well as the opposition between subject and object, between pleasure and displeasure, between activity and passivity. Freud especially emphasizes the fact that the reversal into the contrary and the turning against one's own person, rather than excluding each other, are vicissitudes which can occur at the same time within one and the same drive. This is why the study of such multifaceted phenomena as sado/masochism and voyeurism/exhibitionism takes up such a large part of the text. The result of this is that a drive such as the "drive to see" (*Schaultrieb*) combines at once an active form (seeing), a passive form (being seen), and an intermediary form (letting oneself be seen). Similarly, its object can be either a "foreign object" as in voyeurism, or "one's own object" as in exhibitionism, or even both at once, as in primitive auto-eroticism which precedes the differentiation between voyeurism and exhibitionism. In insisting, firstly, upon the fact that these forms of voyeurism and exhibitionism ought not to be confused with the sexual perversions bearing the same name and, secondly, upon the fact that "seeing", "being seen" and "letting oneself be seen" are vicissitudes of one and the same drive, Freud thus confirms Merleau-Ponty's intuition that vision travels in an open "circle" which brings into play different bodies and gazes. For Freud, as for Merleau-Ponty, it is the case that to see is to move and that this movement is the movement of a "drive" (Freud) or of a "desire" (Merleau-Ponty) which precedes and destabilizes the subject of intentional consciousness.

What we have called Lacan's "short-circuit" is thus not as arbitrary as it first seems and is, very precisely, the development of a theory of the "circuit" of the drive which draws its inspiration conjointly from Freud and Merleau-Ponty. Without going into the details of this theory, one can retain from it at least the idea that the drive travels in a circular path which has its source in an erogenous zone of one's own body, turns about an irremediably lost object (called the *objet a*) and – unable to find satisfaction in this elusive object which moreover depends on the other – turns back on itself and passes through the surface of the body whence it came. The inaccessible object around which the circuit of the scopophilic drive turns is none other than the gaze. Seeking to see that which cannot be seen, namely the invisible gaze of the other, the scopophilic drive retraces its steps, but without ever completely catching up with itself. Thus the exhibitionist is not content

with the fright of his victim, but he derives pleasure from the victim insofar as he or she is given over to his gaze, he enjoys his own gaze such as it manifests itself in the being-gazed-at of his victim (S XI, p. 182). It is only at the moment in which the gaze, set in motion by the drive to see (that is, to see the gaze of the other) returns to its bodily source, thus to the eye as an erogenous zone, that the scopophilic drive gives birth to a subject Lacan calls "the acephalic subject... of the drive" (S XI, p. 181). Under the pretext of a commentary on Freud, Lacan actually places himself in the wake of the Merleau-Pontian conception of a pre-subjective narcissism of vision to which the invisible flesh of the world holds the secret. And there is nothing to prevent us from going a step further and understanding the circuit of the scopophilic drive as the path of the appearance of the invisible gaze; something we have described as a "way" in which the "deep" phenomenon comes to appearance.

Is there thus nothing to be learnt from Lacan that we do not already know? In order to persuade us of the contrary, it is enough to mention the manner in which Lacan, in another of those astounding shortcuts with which he is familiar, ties the sort of phenomenological reduction performed by the painting to the sublimation of the scopophilic drive. In making the invisible gaze appear, the picture at once forces the desire to see "to lay down its weapons" (S XI, p. 101). This is explained, above all, by the fact that for Lacan the picture manifests the gaze as a "lure" (*leurre*) or as a nothing which owes all its power of fascination to the imaginary or symbolic veil which covers it. For Lacan this veil is torn as soon as the picture allows itself to be seen as the *trompe-l'oeil* that it is; that is to say, as a veil which represents nothing other than a veil, such as the celebrated painting of Parrhasios (S XI, p. 103 and p. 111-112). The phenomenological reduction, allowing the appearance to appear "as appearance", and thus depriving the scopophilic drive of all, even illusory, satisfaction, then turns this drive towards another aim, i.e., to that aesthetic pleasure which Lacan terms "Apollinian" (S XI, p. 101). This sublimation which "pacifies" the desire to see by revealing to it, through the (indispensable!) mediation of the picture, its illusory support, is thus a phenomenological reduction which puts desire out of play while bringing to appearance its secret mechanism. The gaze of the picture unmasked as a *trompe-l'oeil* and yet preserved in a sublimated pleasure is, moreover, for Lacan the very model of the position of the psychoanalyst in therapy.

But what becomes of the subject in this reduction-sublimation performed by the gaze of the picture? It seems that Lacan would agree with Sartre in saying that, outside of the picture (or outside of the situation of psycho-

analytic therapy), the gaze of the other can only annihilate the subject. In order to better understand what it means for the subject to be seen not directly by the other as a voyeur, but by the gaze which comes from a picture, Lacan employs the example of mimetism, which amounts to the "subject being inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it" (S XI, p. 100). From this he concludes that the picture takes hold of the subject and that under its gaze, the subject in its turn becomes a picture. It is enough to think of the example of the anamorphosis and to remember what Merleau-Ponty called a seeing "according to the picture", for the Lacanian definition of the picture as "the function in which the subject has to map himself as such" (S XI, p. 100) to lose some of its obscurity. Mapping itself in the lure of the picture as being nothing, the subject comes the closest to the truth of its being, and this is in any case something other than allowing itself to be negated by the other (Sartre) or sacrificing itself for the other (Lévinas). But it is true that in this Lacanian conception of the invisible gaze of the picture, the path of the gaze is blocked as it is brought to a halt before the manifestation of the authentic non-being or of the "lack" of the desiring subject. For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, this gaze only passes through the subject, it rushes into its constitutive divergence (*écart*), only in order to rebound far away from the subject. In such a conception, the invisible gaze is not susceptible to being brought to a rest or being suspended, since it straddles the gaps, and circulates in a universe where, despite all the incompatibilities or "impossibilities", everything holds together. For Lacan, on the other hand, nothing holds together with anything else except by the arbitrary and conventional force of the law of the signifier.

Coming to a close and closing the circuit of our own reflections, we can say that the power of the deep phenomenon is commensurate with the phenomenological reduction which brings it to appearance, and is commensurate also with the destruction of the power of a subject who behaves as the master of phenomena. We have also come to realize that it is not only philosophy that is concerned with the phenomenological reduction, and that painting — rather than limiting itself to the accomplishment of the phenomenological reduction — even has the power to make it appear as such. It is true, however, that the painting does not say what the phenomenon is, nor what the phenomenological reduction is. Our elucidation of the deep phenomenon in the light of the invisible gaze, as well as our borrowings from Sartre, Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, Freud and Lacan, have also allowed us to better understand that the deep phenomenon is continually in movement and lacks any specific content. The gaze of the other, the Face of the Other, the appearance of the thing on its invisible ground, and the scopophilic drive as

the search for an inaccessible, and illusory gaze, all deserve to be called deep phenomena. Finally, we have also at least glimpsed how the deep phenomenon brings about a subject while taking away from it any stable and complete hold it has upon the phenomenon and upon itself. This genesis of the subject by the deep phenomenon has revealed itself to be a radical transformation of the egoic subject of intentional consciousness and a sublimation of its desire to see.

Rudolf Bernet
(translated from the French by Paul Crowe and the author)

NOTES

- 1 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1968, p. 193, trans. mod.
- 2 Cfr. R. Bernet, "Husserl's Begriff des Phantasiebewusstseins als Fundierung von Freuds Begriff des Unbewusstes", in Ch. Jamme (Hrsg.), *Grundlinien der Verunftkritik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1997, pp. 277-306.
- 3 J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Routledge, London, 1958, pp. 252-303. (hereafter BN)
- 4 Cfr. E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1969; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1981.
- 5 Cfr. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, Routledge, London, 1962, pp. 81-86, 213-215, 317-327; and above all "The Eye and the Mind", trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1964, pp. 159-190; as well as *The Visible and the Invisible*; op. cit.
- 6 Cfr. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Eye and the Mind*; op. cit. (hereafter EM) also "The Doubt of Cézanne", in *Sense and Nonsense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1964, pp. 9-25.
- 7 J. Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphoses ou Thaumaturgus opticus*, Flammarion (coll. "Champs"), Paris, 1996, pp. 125-160.
- 8 J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, (Seminar XI) trans. Alan Sheridan, Norton, New York and London, 1981, pp. 79-90. (hereafter S XI)
- 9 M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York, Harper and Row, 1962, p. 477.
- 10 J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, op. cit., pp. 65-200.
- 11 S. Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, S.E. 14, ed. James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1957, pp. 105-140. Cfr. also the helpful commentary by J. Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, Flammarion, Paris, 1970, pp. 150-160.

Le phénomène du regard chez Merleau-Ponty et Lacan

Le regard est un phénomène *sui generis* que nous appelons "phénomène profond". En tant qu'apparaître de l'invisible, il met en oeuvre une réduction phénoménologique d'un type nouveau qui détruit le pouvoir constitutif du sujet sur le phénomène. Voir "selon le regard" est un phénomène "en mouvement" dont une conscience intentionnelle statique et de type représentationnel ne peut rendre compte.

Sartre et Lévinas ont bien mis en valeur le caractère invisible du regard et son origine dans l'autre. Mais ce n'est qu'avec Merleau-Ponty que l'analyse de cette altérité invisible du regard s'émanche hors du cadre d'une philosophie du sujet. Emanant d'une intercorporeité primitive appelée "chair du monde" qui fait de tout corps en même temps un voyant et un vu, le regard abolit l'opposition entre le sujet et l'objet, entre la conscience et la chose. Dire que les choses me regardent, ce n'est donc pas leur attribuer une subjectivité occulte, mais c'est rendre compte du fait que choses et corps humains sont taillés dans la même étoffe et sont pareillement traversés par le mouvement narcissique d'une vision qui s'engouffre dans leurs "écarts".

Cette nouvelle phénoménologie de la vision est mise à l'épreuve par une analyse de la peinture telle qu'elle fut élaborée par Merleau-Ponty et reprise par Lacan. Le phénomène paradoxal de l'*anamorphose* picturale nous sert de guide pour mieux comprendre comment le regard d'une chose peut détruire le pouvoir de la conscience intentionnelle tout en donnant naissance à un voyant qui, désormais, voit "selon le tableau". La surprenante proximité entre les analyses de Merleau-Ponty et de Lacan nous conduit aussi à nous interroger sur la nature du voir comme "désir" ou "pulsion". La vision selon Merleau-Ponty et la pulsion scopique selon Freud et Lacan sont en effet caractérisées par un même mouvement circulaire d'essence charnelle. Ainsi Merleau-Ponty nous permet-il de mieux comprendre la conception lacanienne du "circuit" de la pulsion, et Lacan nous aide-t-il à mieux saisir pourquoi la vision est pour Merleau-Ponty l'articulation d'un "désir" qui précède le sujet.

Il fenomeno dello sguardo in Merleau-Ponty e Lacan

Lo sguardo è un fenomeno *sui generis* che chiamiamo "fenomeno profondo". In quanto apparire dell'invisibile, esso mette in opera una riduzione fenomenologica di tipo nuovo che demolisce il potere costitutivo del soggetto sul fenomeno. Vedere "secondo lo sguardo" è un fenomeno "in movimento" di cui una coscienza intenzionale statica e di tipo rappresentazionale non può rendere conto.

Sartre e Lévinas hanno ben sottolineato il carattere invisibile dello sguardo e la sua origine nell'altro. Ma è solo con Merleau-Ponty che l'analisi di questa alterità invisibile dello sguardo si emancipa dallo schema di una filosofia del soggetto. Derivando da una intercorporeità primitiva chiamata "carne del mondo" che fa di ogni corpo nello stesso tempo un vedente e un visto, lo sguardo abolisce l'opposizione tra il soggetto e l'oggetto, tra la coscienza e la cosa. Dire che le cose mi guardano, non significa dunque attribuire loro una soggettività occulta, ma rendere conto del fatto che cose e corpi umani sono ritagliati in una medesima stoffa e sono ugualmente attraversati dal movimento narcisistico di una visione che si riversa nei loro "scarti".

Questa nuova fenomenologia della visione è messa alla prova da un'analisi della pittura quale fu elaborata da Merleau-Ponty e ripresa da Lacan. Il fenomeno paradossale dell'*anamorfosi* in pittura ci serve da guida per meglio comprendere come lo sguardo di una cosa possa distruggere il potere della coscienza intenzionale facendo nello stesso tempo nascere un vedente che, d'ora in avanti, "vede secondo il quadro".

La sorprendente vicinanza tra le analisi di Merleau-Ponty e di Lacan ci conduce anche a interrogarci sulla natura del vedere inteso come "desiderio" o "pulsione". La visione secondo Merleau-Ponty e la pulsione scopica secondo Freud e Lacan sono in effetti caratterizzate da uno stesso movimento circolare di assenza carnale. Così Merleau-Ponty ci permette di capire meglio la concezione lacaniana del "circuitto" della pulsione, mentre Lacan ci aiuta a capire meglio perché per Merleau-Ponty la visione sia l'articolazione di un "desiderio" che precede il soggetto.

MAURIZIO FERRARIS
(Università degli Studi di Torino, Italia)

"UNO PSICHICO CHE NON È QUELLO DELLA PSICOLOGIA" Il dubbio di Merleau

In *Il visibile e l'invisibile*, Merleau-Ponty muove un rimprovero a Kant, quello di far dipendere da una costituzione trascendentale ciò che d'altra parte è già lì, sotto i nostri occhi, ossia il mondo. "Quando giustifica ogni operazione della sua Analitica con il famoso: 'se un mondo deve essere possibile', Kant sottolinea che il suo filo conduttore è fornito dall'immagine irreflessa del mondo, che la necessità delle operazioni riflessive dipende dall'ipotesi 'mondo' e che il pensiero del mondo che l'Analitica ha il compito di svelare non è tanto il fondamento quanto l'espressione seconda del fatto che per me c'è stata esperienza di un mondo; e ciò equivale a dire che la possibilità intrinseca del mondo come pensiero riposa sul fatto che io posso vedere il mondo, ossia su una possibilità di ben altro tipo, la quale [...] confina con l'impossibile [...]. Tutta l'analisi riflessiva non è falsa, bensì ingenua, finché nasconde a se stessa il proprio movente e il fatto che, per costituire il mondo, è necessario avere nozione del mondo in quanto precostituito, ragion per cui il procedimento è per principio in ritardo su se stesso" (p. 59).

I problemi, se vedo bene, sono essenzialmente due. Il primo è di gran lunga più tradizionale: c'è una strana pretesa, in Kant, quella di determinare le condizioni di una esperienza possibile, quando è ovvio che l'esperienza è possibile, basti dire che è reale, ossia l'abbiamo già sperimentata e la presupponiamo nel momento stesso in cui avviamo la nostra indagine. Insomma, la parola "esperienza" presuppone una esperienza. Non si tratterebbe tanto di pretendere di insegnare a nuotare prima di buttarsi in acqua, quanto piuttosto di buttarsi in acqua, di nuotare, e poi di pretendere di determinare le condizioni trascendentali senza cui questa operazione, che abbiamo appena svolto, non avrebbe potuto essere possibile; a farla breve, si è sempre in ritardo sull'esperienza, il tempo è già incominciato quando prendiamo a interrogarci sul tempo ecc. A questo rimprovero rivolto alla filosofia della riflessione si potrebbe ovviamente rispondere che Kant non si sta chiedendo in che modo io conosca tavoli e sedie, quanto piuttosto in che modo io possa essere certo della mia conoscenza, senza cioè affidarla a criteri meramente probabilistici (e per farlo devo necessariamente, almeno nella sua prospettiva, far dipendere la possibilità dell'esperienza all'applicazione di concetti puri dell'intelletto che non risultano dall'esperienza, ma