

Chapter 7

Time at the Depth of the World

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1. The Depth of Time Reconfigures Philosophical Expression and Fissures Subjectivity

When in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty declares that 'there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself' (1962, p. xi) as the starting point for an analysis of embodiment and perception that will lead him to conclude by the last chapters that 'time is someone . . . the subject is time' (Ibid., p. 422) he has already taken the first steps toward an articulation of time that will lead him beyond Husserl. This is true despite the fact that Merleau-Ponty still clings to the Husserlian presentation of time even when right before this declaration, he presents as accurate Husserl's diagrammatic representation of time consciousness (Ibid., p. 417). However, what may not be noticed unless one looks closely at Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of depth throughout the *Phenomenology* is that in many ways the book has already undermined the Husserlian notion of time, since it is at odds with other core notions of the work. It is Merleau-Ponty's notion of depth that is at the heart of his notion of time and ultimately, when he overcomes the still dualistic language of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, at the heart of his notion of the flesh. The differing logic of the flesh and chiasm that ultimately leads to his rejection of that same Husserlian diagram and its notion of time in *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p. 231) is a logic of 'going together despite not going together logically' or of 'compossible impossibles' that was most fully described as the vital element of depth in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Already in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty shows not only that he will fundamentally rethink human being in terms of temporality and depth, but also demonstrates that the dynamism of time undermines the way that phenomenology might be taken to proceed. He begins with the declaration that 'the phenomenological world is not the

bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the expression of a pre-existing truth, but like art, the act of bringing truth into being' (1962, p. xx). His reason for declaring this shift in the sense of phenomenological articulation or the articulation in general of philosophy is our implication in time and time's much more radical sense of becoming that he will come to detail in looking at the perception. There is no seeing of essences as Husserl sought, since 'reflection does not withdraw from the world toward the unity of consciousness as the world's basis' (Ibid., p. xiii), but only comes back to itself from its interwovenness with the world as time itself, an ongoing transforming or movement of expression that makes resound a 'past that has never been' instead of a simply retained past (Ibid., p. 242) and also emerges from a depth of the world as both continuous and discontinuous, as will be further explained in this chapter.

In other words, there is no retrievable truth to be articulated, since time does not allow us to 'step outside' of its unfolding of which we are integral. There is only ongoing unfolding as displacement. Even in this declaration in the Preface, there are only evolving meanings to bring something forth as beyond ourselves. Although he has not yet developed it fully, this is the beginning of an insistence on a *philosophy of expression* that brings forward depths of sense, of a temporal unfolding and a spatial dispersal that must tirelessly gather itself together but never catches up to itself since it is always other to itself. The same sort of slippage and dispersal that he will make a central focus of the later writings and causes him to say at the beginning of *The Visible and the Invisible* that 'Nothing is more difficult than to know *what we see*' (Ibid., p. 58) is already at the heart of his reformulation of phenomenology in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. In this chapter, we will see how the original fissure of the perceiver is contained in Merleau-Ponty's description of depth, that this depth is fundamentally temporal, that time's depth is the dynamism of the flesh as time itself emerges chiasmatically and explosively, and that time emerges in the chiasm of perceiver and the world in such a way that the world's depth is itself a chiasm of time and space—a kind of being not nameable before in Western philosophy.

Although Merleau-Ponty's famous criticism of the *Phenomenology of Perception* in the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible* declares that the problems posed in that work 'are insoluble because I start there from the "consciousness"-object distinction' (1968a, p. 200) and the dualism expressed by those notions, Merleau-Ponty ends the same note by discussing how this new ontology must express the 'unity by transgression' within self, between self and world, and within 'time-being' that still hearkens back

to his original articulation of depth in the *Phenomenology*. Similarly, the more radicalized articulation afforded by the notion of the flesh of the later works seems especially marked by incorporating into its description the gaps within the perceiver and between perceiver and world, which is ultimately about the fissures within time as being at the depth of the world, especially when *The Visible and the Invisible* begins by Merleau-Ponty's insistence that once we become awakened to the world, it is as 'though the access to the world were but the other face of withdrawal' and 'even that which seems in the greatest proximity at the same time "becomes inexplicably, irremediable distance"' (Ibid., p. 8). This sense of being proximate as distant and distant as proximate is about a temporality of envelopment at the heart of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh that he describes as both distinctness and distance temporally and spatially, yet also the way 'they slip into one another' such that 'It is hence because of depth that things have a flesh' (Ibid., p. 219). When in 'Eye and Mind,' Merleau-Ponty declares that depth is the primary dimension of experience to be interrogated, the 'dimension of dimensions' (1964a, p. 185), he is still carrying out the work started in the *Phenomenology of Perception* to demonstrate depth is the key to seeing embodiment and perception in a new way, and that this can ultimately be understood as seeing time as the heart of depth. The published version of *The Visible and Invisible*, the appended 'Working Notes,' and his last published essay, 'Eye and Mind,' incessantly return to depth as held within the time of the world as primary sense of the ontology he is articulating.

This claim seems to contradict the reading of Merleau-Ponty's work offered by Renaud Barbaras in *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* when he correctly points out that in Merleau-Ponty's work 'what is at issue is to conceive a subject that has access to itself only by being other than itself, that possesses itself only by being dispossessed, a belonging of the subject to the world that is just as much a belonging of the world to the subject,' but also that for Barbaras 'the world remains in *Phenomenology of Perception*, a transcendence in immanence' (2004, p. 39). I agree that in many ways this is true of the *Phenomenology* insofar as Merleau-Ponty rightly says it does not get beyond myriad references to 'consciousness' and uses the term 'subject' throughout. Although there are moments that crop up which prefigure how Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment will move beyond subjectivity to the flesh of the world, as will be explored later in this chapter, the descriptions do not move us far enough into the world. As Barbaras adds in the next part of his statement, what is needed is an articulation of 'a transcendence that requires a depth of the world that the description of *Phenomenology of Perception* does not manage to restore' (Ibid.). Although

the major point made here is true, it is interesting that Barbaras points to *depth* as what is needed to be articulated to a greater degree in moving outside immanence. Merleau-Ponty's thought needs to progress further in this direction, but what I am hoping can be seen is that in his articulation of the notion of depth in the *Phenomenology*, he has already started to break from Husserl's transcendental approach, moving beyond subjectivity and a sense of time identified by Husserl's rational and positivist syntheses, notion of presence, and successively unfolding thrust. In this perspective, I agree more with Mauro Carbone's position in his *The Thinking of the Sensible: Merleau-Ponty's A-Philosophy*, when he states that 'subjectivity as "fissure" already appeared in the *Phenomenology of Perception* without being deepened' (Carbone, 2004, p. 11). Depth itself was to lead Merleau-Ponty into articulating the chiasmatic nature of time and the further displacement of the human into the world's play of becoming.

2. The *Phenomenology's* Move beyond Traditional Spatial Depth to Time's Depth

In order to appreciate the originality of Merleau-Ponty's thinking through of depth as the 'dimension of dimensions' and as the heart of time, it is helpful to contrast it with traditional philosophical notions of depth— notions which ontologically discount depth as resulting from the subjective experience of space. Depth has been regarded throughout the Western cultural history as the 'third dimension,' as a derivative phenomenon resulting from the accidental location of the subject, and not as part of the 'real furniture' of existence. In other words, it is not an 'objective' feature of the world made of objects 'in themselves.' Depth is conceived of in this way if one believes that the real and the knowable are to be found through rational analysis, that is to say, by breaking things into their most simple constituents. From within this perspective, the most simple spatial given is the point, a location on a Cartesian grid of locations. When one connects two of these points, there is a line, the emergence of extension in space. Projecting a set of these lines to form a plane, there is a length and a width to an object, such as a piece of paper. However, it is only when there is another axis of extension put into relationship with the first two that depth is born or when there is a spanning of juxtaposition along another axis of extension. If this juxtaposition of planes could be seen from a vantage that was 'outside' of space as traditional notions of objectivity project and in order to occupy a vantage that is not in any particular relationship to these

locations, there could be seen to be a measurable distance that could be drawn among all points within space. This neutral array of spatial locations would lack any emotional and existential significance to space, which for Merleau-Ponty are its primary significance.

For the tradition, from this absolute 'vantage,' all points could be reduced to a network of linear relationships and depth would not appear. In his lengthy discussion in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty expresses the traditional attempt of objectively defining depth this way: 'What I call depth is in reality a juxtaposition of points, making it comparable to breadth. I am simply badly placed to see it' (1962, p. 255). Seen in this way, we are all 'badly placed' as being caught within space and also time. It is because of our facticity, our being embodied and located within a situation, within space, that there is depth. As rooted within the specific objects, people and events of my particular phenomenal field, I am always first 'here' and drawn into depths of that into which I plunge through perception: 'thus thought can't be understood as belonging to the thought of an acosmic subject, but as a possibility of a subject involved with a world' (Ibid., p. 232). If we were floating in a continuous aerial perspective, or actually in a non-perspective, as a ubiquitous presence, able to see all and coincide with all, located nowhere, outside the system of space-time, self-subsistent and un-formed by these relationships—in other words, if we were like God, or at least occupying a 'god's eye perspective'—depth would evanesce.

Merleau-Ponty recognizes that the traditional philosophical perspectives of intellectualism and empiricism in aspiring to this notion of objectivity as a God's eye perspective have no way to appreciate the primacy of depth:

In order to treat depth as breadth viewed in profile, in order to arrive at a uniform space, the subject must leave his place, abandon his point of view, and think himself into a sort of ubiquity. For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us an account of the human experience of the world, they tell us what God might think about it. (Ibid., p. 255)

God as eternal, self-transparent and omnipresent would not be a being of depth. He or She would be infinite, and for that reason would be shallow, infinitely shallow! To base a philosophical description of experience and the phenomenon of the world on what it might be like from the non-perspective of God, from the world as utterly objective in that sense, is not only to not achieve a phenomenology of perception, but also to mystify

vital dimensions of the way the world has significance. God's vision is simply inaccurate to the world that human beings inhabit, the one we are trying to fathom, certainly phenomenologically and otherwise. For example, God can't locate Himself or Herself at the window and strain to see that man emerging from the distance. He or She is that man walking and also all points of Creation. There is no straining, no coming to make something out in the distance, no reaching into the depths. This is the curse of coincidence and of the utter clarity of absolute knowing, such that the phenomenon of depth disappears.

Of course, the human being sitting at the window is also beyond itself in the expanse of creation, too, as Merleau-Ponty points out in the sentence after invalidating God's vision as relevant to describing our experience. This is the other aspect of depth. If I am that person at the window, then I am also that man in the distance in some way, too. I synaesthetically feel the dirt under his feet as I see his legs, feel the sweat trickling down his back as he climbs the hill in the bright sun, and smell the aroma of honeysuckle that I note he is passing. Not only that, but I am above his head from the perspective of the birds aloft, or the towering trees, or even the high-flying clouds, as well as seeing him from behind through the hill, its waving grasses, the stump behind him. This is the fabric of the 'phenomenal field' as Merleau-Ponty has articulated it in previous chapters in the *Phenomenology* before arriving at his extending discussion of depth, when after stating that to perceive an object is to plunge into it, he describes how this is also to inhabit the world from its perspective, and how 'every object is the mirror of all the others' (Ibid., p. 68). This means that although the perceiver is anchored 'here' from their particular vantage they are also 'there' and 'there' and 'there.' 'When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can "see": the back of the lamp is nothing but the face of which it "shows" to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world' (Ibid.). The inhabitation of the object is as well the inhabitation of all the objects, events, and dimensions which are knitted together within the fabric of the phenomenal field.

However, the phenomenal field *does not comprise the universe* but surrounds us with the objects with whom we have a history, that appear in the narratives of our culture, that are open to the dimensions of our perception, that have been conceptualized by our science and fall within the concern of our personal and collective interests and cares. Even though all these aspects are 'co-given' in the perspective that I occupy, there remains a greater and heavier weight to my position on this side of the lamp or at

the same level as the man approaching and not the bird's or clouds' or treetops' spatial plane of existence. Yet, even from this anchorage—our 'here'—we feel the uplift of the other movements, the tissue of the relatedness of that which comprises the context of perception even in the descriptions of the *Phenomenology of Perception* as a *dilation* of our being into the world around us that returns to us from all the reaches of the field as the sense we inhabit.¹

Even though in the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty had not yet the language of the 'flesh of the world,' depth, as he articulated it, opens up a tidal relation—that is, one that moves eccentrically between perceiver and world: 'It announces a certain indissoluble link between myself and things by which I am placed in front of them, whereas breadth can, at first sight, be taken, as a relationship between things themselves, in which the perceiving subject is not implied' (Ibid., p. 256). Depth is the dimension of 'the indissoluble link' between embodiment and world, perceiver and perceived and will move us from the plane of consciousness to another plane not identified in the traditional concepts of philosophy. Depth is that dimension of perception which announces that I exist as returning to myself from being embedded within my surroundings or as emerging from those vectors of motility inscribed within what Merleau-Ponty had called the phenomenal field. Although Barbaras states that it is only after the *Phenomenology* that Merleau-Ponty will face the 'need to understand sensibility as the very beginning of knowledge rather than as its other' (2004, p. 48), Merleau-Ponty has shifted away from consciousness as our basic knowing of the world toward a depth of being in the world—a depth that comes from embodiment's primordial 'understanding' of the world in perception, in sensibility. Depth is the dimension of becoming mirrored back to myself through an embodied interweaving with the thickness of materiality in perception within the vision of all things, people, creatures, and events that are mirrors of each other and any vision of them (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 68).

If depth only emerges with appreciating 'that being is synonymous with being situated' (Ibid., p. 252), then as Merleau-Ponty states in describing space, 'space always precedes itself,' in the sense that it is inscribed *already* in trajectories and vantages points from a prior experiencing that betokens further unfolding. The spatial attributes of depth are references to the temporality of existence. This is not to say that time is derived from our sense of space, but rather that time itself is lodged within the landscape and its resounding within space is a primordial depth. The locatedness of the perceiver is to be understood by realizing that 'we must understand

time as the subject and the subject as time' (Ibid., p. 422). In this decentered sense of subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty declares 'I am myself time' and 'this primordial temporality is not a juxtaposition of external events' (Ibid., pp. 421–2). Humans cannot be 'in' time, in the sense that we cannot be in a succession of moments that would need something then to synthesize them, such as the Kantian mental apparatus, but rather 'time's synthesis is a transitional synthesis, the action of a life which unfolds, and there is no way of bringing it about other than by living that life' (Ibid., p. 423). Perception occurs within an unfolding of the world as manifest where there is no time beneath, behind or ahead of it, but rather 'temporal dimensions, insofar as they perpetually overlap and bear each other out and confine themselves to making explicit what was implicit in each, being collectively expressive of that one single explosion [*un seul éclatement*] or thrust [*ou une seule poussée*] which is subjectivity itself' (Ibid., p. 422). Merleau-Ponty, in this late passage of the *Phenomenology*, has put in the place of subjectivity a description of the 'explosion' from whose depths the world emerges continually. The term used here in this passage of the *Phenomenology of Perception* in focusing on time and depth is one of those *precursors* we can find if we look very carefully of Merleau-Ponty's last writings, when in 'Eye and Mind' he turns to the word 'deflagration' in place of any possible sense of a self-subsistent subjectivity in describing depth as the 'dimension of dimensions.' Similarly to how he describes in this last published essay how the painter and what he paints both emerge from the deflagration lit when each person comes into the world, so here in the culminating pages of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty also casts what is experienced within the world as an ongoing *explosion*. At this point in the work, 'the subject' has been volatilized as well as 'states of consciousness' denied. This 'explosion' in the site where what had been taken as subjectivity is now articulated as another face of time, which we are able to recognize when we have arrived at 'recognizing that time and significance are but one thing' (Ibid., p. 426). The trajectory from the end of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is moving beyond subjectivity toward a becoming or process view of embodying as the unfolding within time at the depths of the world.

3. Depth as Temporal Unfolding and Fracturing, Placing and Displacing

We could say that for Merleau-Ponty, depth is temporal and not primarily spatial. In a very real way, depth is more about the temporal unfolding of

the phenomena than about the relationships among the array of beings in space. Once we have abandoned the idea of an objective world, what we have really abandoned is the sense of an atemporal world. The Cartesian world of subjects and objects is a world of time 'instants,' abstracted away from their being as the temporally unfolding of the world. Given this distortion of the world as lived, within any such clip of abstracted time, the boundaries between subjects and objects, between persons, between humans and animals, and all sorts of divisions and certainties seem more plausible. Yet, as the correlate of what we said previously about Absolute Consciousness having no sense of depth or access to the texture of reality as experienced by humans, so, too, Merleau-Ponty states the *world itself would evaporate* if it were really to be given in this fashion:

[I]f the thing and the world could be defined once and for all, if the spatio-temporal horizons could even theoretically, be made explicit and the world conceived from such a point of view, then nothing would exist; I should hover above the world, so that all times and places, far from being simultaneously real would become unreal, because I should live in none of them and would be involved nowhere. (1962, p. 332)

The spatio-temporal horizons are not accessible in a bounded, arrayed side-by-side, or in a discretely successive manner, but are primarily given in the labyrinthine ways of discovery so well articulated by Proust in the *Recherche de Temps Perdu* and used by Merleau-Ponty as an ongoing instantiation of temporal depth in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. In the *Phenomenology*, the longest quote from a literary work is the quotation of Proust's passage describing how within the momentary sense of any one time and place are a myriad of other times and incidents packed within the moment, but unnoticed until the strands of sense are slackened within the labile moments between sleep and waking, between night and day (Ibid., p. 181).

Within experience, the envelopment of the things of the field in each other's vantages, the way in which the perceiver only perceives from within the phenomenal field, the way in which we are only intersubjectively able to grasp ourselves and other beings is from within the unfolding of time's depth:

The synthesis of horizons is essentially a temporal process, which means, not that it is not subject to time, nor that it is passive in relation to time, nor that it has to prevail over time, but that it merges with the very movement whereby time passes. Through my perceptual field, with its

spatial horizons, I am present to my surroundings, I co-exist with all the other landscapes which stretch out beyond it, and all the perspectives together form a single temporal wave, one of the world's instants. (Ibid., pp. 330-1)

Each aspect of the world about us is part of that depth of time which stretches back and forward indefinitely with many eddies and vortices: 'Through my perceptual field with its temporal horizons I am present to my present, to all the preceding past and to a future' (Ibid., p. 331). Yet, Merleau-Ponty qualifies, this 'ubiquity is not strictly real' for it is my personal history, my cultural legacy, my desires, my particular involvements, and so on, that give this temporal depth its shape and the zones of greater meaning that then slide off into obscure zones. This 'involvement in a field of presence' means that 'my life is slipping away from me on all sides and is circumscribed by impersonal zones' (Ibid., p. 331). This 'contradiction' between being placed and displaced within time and space is the depth of the world from which our lives emerge.

This temporal topography is the deeper sense of the indeterminacy of the spatial horizons around us and is announced through these concrete things we encounter, as when we walk through a field but are continually given the sense that 'hidden behind that hill . . . there are meadows and perhaps over there woods' (Ibid., p. 331) as like other places we have been in the recent or remote past or perhaps have actually been in this particular case or could be in the future if we walked in that direction. In this way Merleau-Ponty explains 'though I may state that I am enclosed in my present,' everything around me and within me, the prospect over there, the ease of my step given my history of hiking, for example, my calm at rejoining the countryside, are all ways 'the transcendence of remote experiences encroach upon my present' (Ibid., p. 331).

For Merleau-Ponty, we can never merely coincide with a present, as Bergson seemed to indicate, despite his articulation of duration, nor is there a point of presence or a circumscribed present as Husserl seems to still believe despite the duration of retention-protection. It is this temporal depth that opens up space such that we can never be just at a point, because 'Though I am here and now, yet I am not here and now' (Ibid., p. 331). In all these differing temporal ecstases within the unfolding now of time, there are differing places embedded within what surrounds and layers our current emplacement. However, as part of that 'single temporal wave,' our dispersal in the many times that are unfolding within this time is manifest as an irreconcilable tension within our temporal and spatial being. This

sense of temporal and spatial 'wave' is also an interesting precursor to the chiasmatic relationship of time and space in the late writings.

As time, the perceiver is 'caught up' in the 'immanent meaning which is not clear to itself,' and is the motive for moving ahead into greater apprehension. We are beckoned by the world such that 'the result of attention is not to be found in its beginning' (Ibid., p. 31) but only as the emergence of a present sense that we have been seeking as the *haunting meaning* of the past. Merleau-Ponty states that in my perceiving the table, I enter 'the thickness of duration which has elapsed while I have been looking at it' and as its perceptual sense emerges 'I therefore bring together in one operation concordant but discrete experiences which occupy several points of time and several temporalities' (Ibid., p. 40). There may at first seem to be aspects of what is to be perceived that are at odds in time or space in such that there is a jostling among them that summons us to resolve what it is that might be in process of coming to be perceived: 'depth is born beneath my gaze because the latter tries to *see something*' (Ibid., p. 262). The perceiver seeks to solve the initially muddled perceptual situation through that motivated push ahead in what Merleau-Ponty called 'perceptual faith,' which here might be deemed as the movement into the depths of time.

The move in perception to enter an unfolding of time is often a shift into rhythms of unfolding at odds with those I have been inhabiting. So, as I try to see the man approaching me, I enter the rhythm of the steps he has taken to come over the hill and that are carrying him toward me, that is, I enter the transitions of the temporal unfolding of his walk, which would not be *a walk* without a temporal being 'spanned' from the past through the anticipated future. However, to focus on the spanned quality of the temporal unfolding is to peruse the surface of the temporal depth of what we perceive, for it is not just the momentary unfolding whose meaning we enter, but rather as with entering a spatial locality that is also the co-givenness of all these other vantage points, there are so many other temporal unfoldings that are part of this depth of what is to be perceived. The man can only be grasped as a being who once was a child and is moving toward the future time when he will only be able to hobble over that hill, as well as the perceiver who saw such things in era long ago that is also still part of the upsurge of time. However, even these aspects of the thickness of temporal experience, its long expansiveness, do not take us to the true depth of the temporal unity of the field. There are also all the temporalities lodged within each aspect of the phenomenal field he traverses, whether the prehistoric past of the rocks he climbed in molten eras or ice ages or the lives of differing creatures of different ages now part of the dirt upon which he walk and so on indefinitely about him. All these temporalities are

impacted into the coming to be of the unfolding of time and become more of a focus for Merleau-Ponty in the late lectures on nature.

Yet, even so, what is here brought to attention is the layering in the depths of the span of the existence of the perceiver, the community of perceivers, and the history of the perceived—all three within a lived unity. There is also to be explored within the ambiguity of time's unfolding, the disunity of time in the displacements of the perceiver and the abysses of the perceived within the night of time. This disunity is the other side of time's unity as the night is 'the other side' of day. In order to highlight the disunity and the non-being of the unfolding of time at the heart of its appearing, let's again imagine how the Absolute Mind of objectivity or the God's eye experience would experience time differently. For an Absolute Mind, the man moving over the hill, past the brush, toward the perceiver in the shade after the hot plain would move in a Zenoian universe of fully occupied points in time. Their unity would be that of instantaneous and complete coincidence and identity within omniscience. For the human perceiver watching the man walk forward in space, in time, there may well be echoes of myriad sorts in observing him cut his hand on the brambles as he passes them by waving his arms and in noticing a trickle of blood down his palm. For the human observer, this present moment might become displaced and yet incorporated into a scene of pain and torment and possible redemption thousands of years ago at Calvary, or for a certain other person, in a more personal way it may be a gap or hole in time containing the time at the seaside when their spouse cut a hand. God in the sense of Absolute Mind, however, can't be 'pulled outside' Himself by the depth of time to Calvary or displaced in a jumbled mosaic with gaps and flashings within time, since he is fully and equally in all times. When this absolute gaze would focus upon any time, it would be the pure present as absolutely effulgent there in itself. By contrast, to use the word 'displacement' for the human sense of time is not quite correct, since this being pulled back and forth, this being at the future, in the past, at the future, at another time in the past, and so on, *is the now* that is a human time. Our being absent from ourselves pulled within the vortices of time is the human sense of the present. Events and objects teeter on the abyss of what they are not in the unfolding of time, since they are continually undermined in their selfsameness. This spinning around a void is their way of being present, something Merleau-Ponty will come to describe in the latest writings, yet implied by his notion of depth. The presence of the world in the present is the continual flashing forth of myriad times and even temporalities within the ongoing 'explosion' of time. As having depth, time is layered, fractured, a kaleidoscope of jostling interwoven moments that are eddies in the never-ending temporal flow that pushes ahead only as

slipping continually into myriad reversals, echoes, burstings, bending back upon itself, ephemeral offshoots, and lateral conjoinings.

4. Depth as the Temporal Transformation of Impossibility

To fathom the 'piling up' of moments inside each other requires a reexamination of Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the details of the phenomenon of depth, first introduced in explicating how the vision of the sides of the road as they sweep before me toward the horizon are given to me as neither parallel nor as convergent. In the next sentences, Merleau-Ponty describes how the sides of a cube are neither given to me as six equal squares facing each other at six equal right angles nor as obliquely skewed parallelograms trailing off from the side directly facing me. In each case, to see the road or the cube in the manner of either of these two alternative representations is not to capture the phenomenon of depth. To switch back and forth between the two alternatives would also mean that the perceiver would lose the phenomenon of depth. Instead what is the case within perception is that both possible distinct moments are 'enjambé,' piled into each other as one moment. They are distinctly registered but only within the seemingly logically impossible 'co-givenness' of a single percept which is not one or the other but rather *is* the manifestation of depth. Each conflicting aspect of the phenomenon lacks the sense of the overall experience which can emerge only by the temporal unfolding of the sensed *unity in disunity* within the tension of what can't go logically together but does. Far from being successive and rationally progressive as the traditional notion builds up depth, this notion embraces a logic in which space and time are enfolding, transgressing into themselves as their very way of being themselves:

This being simultaneously present in experiences which are nevertheless mutually exclusive, this implication of one in the other, this contraction in one perceptual act of a whole possible process, constitutes the originality of depth. It is the dimension in which things or elements of things envelop each other, whereas breadth and height are dimensions in which they are juxtaposed. (Ibid., p. 265)

As manifesting depth, the fact is that the sides of the square are neither equal nor unequal and the sides of the road are neither parallel nor convergent. They are *both at once* as having depth. Depth is this phenomenon of experiencing the going together of what should otherwise be

impossible, whether right angled squares as also being parallelograms or non-convergent lines also being convergent lines. It seems that rationally, within the traditional sense of temporal unfolding, these things should be successive as logically discrete moments, yet they are 'contracted' in the depth of temporality.

However, this is not just the case in the more straightforward sense of what is perceived of basic geometrical shapes, but is also the case for complex significances. So, for example, the moment of seeing the man's hand bleed should be past, as should be what happened at Calvary thousands of years ago, as well as the shock of seeing one's buddies' blood suddenly leaking onto the ground after a grenade exploded decades ago. These moments are now in the sense that what is present would not be what it is without their 'flashing' conjoining; and, they are still now, too, as becoming what they were to be but couldn't have been in the same way as now. These events enjamb in a depth of what is now here *and* now not here. The truth is that the moment is not one or the other, and it is not both either as 'added up.' A time and a place does not become non-sensical because it has more impossible meanings identifying it, but rather it gains depth. Not any two impossibles can be brought together, but within these cultural or historical or personal contexts, sometimes there is an exigency of greater meaning that emerges within their enjambment. Time is not the successive laying out of moments, but is rather the enveloping of enjambé senses of time as manifest within the human world (as it is for other creatures in their own ways, as we will see later). From these lines of force and reverberation emerge the timeful sense of things. The world in this temporal and spatial depth takes us into a labyrinth whose deeper passages we glance away from in our daily need to get done with things. The whole may speak to us in an overall sense, but yet within it are myriad elements with temporal depths that might be further fathomed, and in doing so, alter and enrich the sense of everything to which they are related.

The body dispersed in the depths of perception is the body called to dispersal in time: 'to sum up, the ambiguity of being in the world is translated by that of the body, and this is understood through that of time' (Ibid., p. 45). This dispersal within time, this body of the past with its innumerable futures called forth from the phenomenal field to be further enfolded in the depth of time is what Merleau-Ponty called the 'memory of the World' into which we are inserted in perception:

And that again is the essence of time: there would be no present, that is to say, no sensible world with its thickness and inexhaustible richness,

if perception . . . did not retain a past in the depth of the present, and did not contract that past into that depth. (Ibid., p. 240)

Contraction, juxtaposition, and displacement are of the depth of time. The continuity of time-consciousness detailed by Husserl is found in perception as presumptive: it is a trajectory of perceptual faith as a pathway within a horizon that is besieged by conflicting claims, splinters, discontinuities, and gaps which form a whole within their disarray.

5. The Flesh of Time

Merleau-Ponty's earlier sense of depth as the 'going together' of incompossibles in mutual envelopment despite differences in time and space still informs his later notions of the flesh of the world. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty has come to see the perceiver as perceiving 'by dehiscence or fission of its own mass' (1968a, p. 146) and the perceived 'is not a chunk of absolutely hard, indivisible being . . . but is rather a sort of straits between exterior horizons and interior horizons ever gaping open' (Ibid., p. 132). The perceiver and perceived are 'two vortexes . . . the one slightly decentered with respect to the other' (Ibid., p. 138). Rather than being destructive to sense, this dispersion of perceiver and perceived as open and enveloping is sense's depth as reversible and chiasmatic. Like the strands of a chromosome that constitute its being in their encircling chiasm, their folding over one another, the decentering of the perceiver within the world and the world within the perceiver leaves both as a 'turning about one another' (Ibid., p. 264). This depth of perception in which perceiver and perceived are both gaping open, not totalizable, means one is seen in seeing and the seen comes to see. Depth, for Merleau-Ponty, arises within dehiscence, contralogically across gaps, and these jostlings are primordially temporal.

In Merleau-Ponty's notes of the fall of 1960, where he understands 'time as chiasm' (Ibid., p. 267), he comes to see time as having a depth in which it 'leaps' gaps in order to be one flow: 'a point of time can be transmitted to the others without "continuity" without "conservation"' (Ibid., p. 267). These flashings of time in which one moment comes to others 'without continuity' suggests how moments of time can transform a past across gaps, as 'sudden reversibilities.' In addition to a temporality of reversibility in which the past keeps becoming itself through unfoldings which transform it, the temporal flow takes on an even greater depth in its own chiasmatic

reversals, foldings back, which are of a more wild or brute sort. Husserl's sense of a flow of time consciousness that unfolds in its unity of protentional and retentional syntheses is rejected for a time more chiasmatic, more brute, more 'tufted.' When time is seen to be found within the unfolding of the body's perceptual explorations, one sees the ways in which held within the landscapes are depths which cause the perceiver's time to burst, to reverse, to be released into the 'straits gaping open' within things, landscapes, that hold us in holding them. Merleau-Ponty has moved from Husserl's analysis of progressive time to one 'without fictitious "support" in the psyche' (Ibid., p. 267), to a time lodged within the world in its savage or brute being.

Merleau-Ponty, in opening the depth dimension of time, points to part of the phenomenon of time in which its overall flow is transfixed and transformed, irradiated from within by leaps and lateralizing flashes of *sens* which emerge at that moment in a manner different than the development which emerges from the conserved retentional significance in its continual unfolding. This jolting point of institution of a new meaning is one which transforms the entire previous developmental unfolding until this point is a chiasmatic one, in which time not only leaps up in transformation, but also reverses its flow. This is the temporality that Merleau-Ponty has sought throughout his work, inspired by Bergson but surpassing him, a temporality that functions according to what he now calls the 'barbaric Principle':

It is a question of finding in the present, the flesh of the world (and not in the past) an 'ever new' and an 'always the same'—A sort of time of sleep (which is Bergson's nascent duration, ever new and always the same). The sensible, Nature, transcend the past present distinction, realize from within a passage from one into the other. (Ibid., p. 267)

At this point in his thought, Merleau-Ponty realized that there were differing dimensionalities within the upsurge of time. Time, itself, was not unitary in its internal structurations, but rather its unity was seen to be the presumptive unity of 'perceptual faith.' This is the 'unity in depth' of incompossibles which nevertheless 'go together.' The past is itself present, not just through the latter's (i.e., the present's) retentional reverberations or the former's (the past's) protentional reach, but also as a bursting of the world in tufts (*en touffe*) outside the realm of intentionalities and acts. The present itself could be seen to be located within a past of lateralizing, flashing reversals that are part of the verticality of Being, the 'passages from

one into the other' between temporal ecstases that are leaps, 'barbaric,' and aside from the eidetic laws of unfolding phenomena.

For Merleau-Ponty, part of the understanding of how the seeing-seen, touching-touched, perceiving-perceived, dichotomies had to be overcome in an autochthony in which 'activity = passivity' (Ibid., p. 265) is to see that the reversibility of the flesh is the reversibility of past and present: 'Then past and present are *Ineinander*, each enveloping-enveloped—and that itself is the flesh' (Ibid., p. 268). Although the sequential unfolding and resonating of time as articulated by earlier phenomenologies expressed *part of the sense of the perceptual world* as temporal, these characteristics were not exhaustive. Time, as the unfolding within one another of the perceiver-perceived, itself folds back across itself, both in sudden enfoldings, conflagrating 'reversals,' and within larger temporal rhythms of the becoming of becoming.

It is not surprising that Merleau-Ponty abandoned the Husserlian analysis of temporality for several reasons central to his notion of flesh and its reversibility. Merleau-Ponty noted that 'Husserl's error is to have described the [temporal] interlocking starting from a *Prasensfeld* considered without thickness, as immanent consciousness' (Ibid., p. 173). Husserl failed to articulate the 'time of the body.' For Merleau-Ponty, the missing 'thickness' of Husserl's understanding of time is inseparable from his retreat into immanence and his sense of the 'interlocking' nature of time-consciousness. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'Mythology of a self-consciousness to which the word "consciousness" would refer—There are only differences between significations' (Ibid., p. 171). We will not get beyond the traditional dichotomies, nor articulate the worldly character of the phenomena until we cease to think of consciousness and its 'acts,' reject the notion of subject, and think the 'promiscuity with Being and the world' (Ibid., p. 239). For Merleau-Ponty, humans are decentered in the emergence of significance within a fluctuating world and the correlative notion of time is equally abyssal.

Within the world seen in its verticality, there is not an exhaustive space or a time that is spread out before us and behind us, but rather we find things which speak to us, which touch us, which strain to become visible just as we are seen within an interplay of divergences and dehiscences, joinings and couplings, which always pulls us into the depths of what the things in our world have come to mean. The recognition of the perceptual field, as this jostling, bustling summons to see, touch, perceive the *sens* of one's life, as the voices of these many things, seducing one's body into their vortices of significances, coming together in the midst of their difference, is itself

the becoming of the play of time, and leads Merleau-Ponty to replace Husserl's diagram of temporality:

The structure of the visual field, with its near-bys, its far-offs, its horizon, is indispensable for there to be transcendence, the model of every transcendence. Apply to the perception of space what I said about the perception of time (in Husserl): Husserl's diagram as a positivist projection of the vortex of temporal differentiation. And the intentional analysis that tries to compose the field with intentional threads does not see that the threads are emanations and idealizations of one fabric differentiations of the fabric. (Ibid., p. 231)

We are in the world in which both myself and world are at depths, at interplays, which come together in their impossibility in the enlacement of time. I come back to myself from the world, whether from the river outside my window, the blue sofa, the Bach violin concerto filling the space of the room: 'That is, that the things have us, and that it is not we who have the things' (Ibid., p. 194). As held within the depths of things, one finds one's past in jolts and foldings, weavings and tears, that render time a tufted, chiasmatic implosion and interlacing, as well as an unfolding.

It is in thinking of how radically one is within the field of Being 'dotted with lacunae and the imaginary' instead of within a flux of unfolding experiences that Merleau-Ponty takes up Husserl's notion of 'rays of time and of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p. 240) and expands upon it. Merleau-Ponty states, 'The ray of the world does not admit of a noema-noesis analysis' (Ibid., p. 242). As it is that moment of the passivity of our activity, that way in which the world inserts new vectors into our sense of the world that are also vortices. We are toward a world of things that can shift and jostle, explode or implode dehiscently, yet still be fated to burrow into the marrow of their sense. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no present in time, as we have commonly represented it.

[T]he new present is itself transcendent: one knows that it is not there, that it was just there, one never coincides with it—It is not a segment of time with defined contours that would come and set itself in place. It is a cycle defined by a central and dominant region and with indecisive contours. (Ibid., p. 184)

Despite the sense of the present in which we are enmeshed, there are cycles, circularities turning toward themselves in the rhythm of perception within

time. My body is in things, at their depths and ultimately at the depth of the world. Things do not rend themselves open as unfurling announcements of sense. They do not transform themselves as frictionless, weightless, diaphanous meanings. They hold me, haunt me, hunt me, as the one who may slowly yield parts of their meaning always heard in echo and endlessly improvising on their origins and futures. For this reason, Merleau-Ponty must recast Husserl's sense of the present:

[T]he present, also is ungraspable from close-up, in the forceps of attention, it is an encompassing. Study exactly the *Erfüllung* of the present: the danger of the metaphor: it makes me think that there is a certain void that has its own dimensions and that is filled by a defined quantity of the present. (Ibid., pp. 196–7)

The present never fills what was somehow 'missing' but impending in time. The past was always there as itself indeterminable, as cyclic, and as a haunting of what might become. The present isn't necessarily held to a debt of time; it is not enslaved to past promises; it renders not the past's due, but gives the past the present of itself, allowing the past to become itself, in new depths.

6. The Depth of the World's Memory in the Late Notes and Nature Lectures

Merleau-Ponty is seeking an 'architectonic' of the past in April, 1960, in his working note in *The Visible and Invisible* in seeking another sort of time within time that is 'the past as "indestructible," as "intemporal"' as he seeks the 'elimination of the common idea of time as a series of "*Erlebnisse*"' (Ibid., p. 243). This 'common idea of time' as a series of experiences, the propulsive movement of 'inner time-consciousness' had been both the common sense of Western culture of how time is straightforwardly lived and the basis of phenomenology's sense of the flow of the unfolding of being-in-the-world, especially as laid out in Husserl's *Phenomenology of Inner Time-Consciousness*.

In this 1960 note, Merleau-Ponty is exploring the generativity of sense outside the life of the ego, but also outside the structurings of 'interiority,' in a way that 'the intentional analytic cannot grasp' (Ibid., p. 243). There is a fissure, or actually fissures, within time itself in its massiveness, such that there is an 'intemporality within temporality itself,' since the depth of the world as the depth of time has layerings and encompasses rhythms

and acquisitions at odds with the cultural round of projects; fissures that go beyond, or rather subtend the life of the individual. Merleau-Ponty right after discussing how 'the ray of the world doesn't admit of a noema-noesis analysis' explains that the bursting forth of vectors and assemblages of sense cannot be traced to a generation in consciousness or even to a bodily intentionality. At this moment Merleau-Ponty says, we need a 'philosophy of transcendence' (Ibid., p. 244). There are senses within time that adhere to each other not through our consciousness or through intentionality, but are borne within the time of the world into which we are enfolded. We might say, there are moments when we are 'timed' by the world. Since we are reversibly within the world as flesh, there is a 'spatializing-temporalizing vortex (which is flesh and not a consciousness facing a noema)' (Ibid.). Merleau-Ponty calls for philosophy to 'restore this life without *Erlebnisse*' (Ibid., p. 243), where generativity is not solely of an interiority and sense is grounded in a dimension within time which is not about our specific individual life and history, but is deeper, is of a 'time before time, to the prior life' which is akin to 'a mythical time' (Ibid., p. 242).

Merleau-Ponty states that time akin to mythical time goes beyond the sense of phenomenology as looking at intended meanings, as describing that successive horizon or thrust of unfolding that Husserl has articulated where the present draws upon the past in projecting a future. This other time is outside the unity of lived time, the time of significations. There is this other time within the time of rock and sky, of rhythms in differing animals' blood, and within shifting continents, which is another order of time in which there is a 'past-present "simultaneity"' (Ibid., p. 243). This simultaneity is not one of a depth of experiences which might pile upon each other, which as we have seen already introduces a disjunctive element and indicates a kind of a depth of time within the living through of experiences. Here is a 'vertical' time, which is the way in some real sense *we are intended by the world, as much as we intend it* (Ibid., p. 244). The world as it encroaches upon us has a much wider horizon than that of personal or even collective experience. Here, Merleau-Ponty says, we have entered a philosophy of transcendence by way of an indirect ontology.

For Merleau-Ponty, this is to enter a time of vortices, a level of sense of embodiment's life within flesh of the 'spatializing-temporalizing vortex' that Barbaras calls 'neither present nor past but passage itself, vertical being, dimensionality' (Barbaras, 2004, p. 225) and 'a height of time itself, [that] while not spatial, is not strictly temporal' (Ibid., p. 227). Certainly, with these articulations of a time within the depth of the world, Merleau-Ponty is not returning to some sort of naturalistic ontology, but rather to the full implications, as he says here, of the *Ineinander*, that there is no 'inside'

of humanity nor 'outside' of the world, but only a vortex in which inside and outside revolve or wind about each other—are both and yet disjunct. Human being temporalizes itself as within the history of its unfolding toward its projects' possible realizations in a way that its being of the earth, of the history of the natural world and even aspects of the cultural world, exerts a countervailing pull into the past impacted within the world's surround.

The formulation of 'winding' (*serpement*) as 'a common nucleus' which is 'beyond the "point of view of the object" and "the point of view of the subject"' (Ibid., p. 195) had arisen in Merleau-Ponty's note of May 20, 1959, when he was criticizing Husserl's notion of time as not radical enough to approach the 'night of forgetting' (Ibid., p. 197). Here, Merleau-Ponty writes the declaration that 'the things have us and that it is not we who have the things' (Ibid., p. 194) in a formulation which is not just another statement of the 'reversibility' within perception, but is specifically evoked in an attempt to 'make clear what it means' that within time there is a dimension of retentions that are 'of the rhythm of the event of the world' (Ibid., p. 196). It is also here that Merleau-Ponty uses once again, decades later, the formulation that seemed to have undertones even as they were written at that time that went beyond the context of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Decades later, Merleau-Ponty again declares that what he seeks in this note is of the 'Memory of the World' (Ibid., p. 194). We are held by the world in such a way that its time enlaces our own as differing and the same, and is voiced indirectly in our way about the world. So, to offer a brief example, one may intend that mountain as a being that resists one's effort to climb it and as an obstacle to be surmounted, as in Sartre's example in *Being and Nothingness* of how intentionality shapes the world as it appears to us through our actions in our projects. However, whatever sense it may have for me within this context of desires, the mountain, too, 'intends' me as a fellow being engaged in a dialogue of muscles and bones with rocks whose legs reverberate to the stone that gives the mountain its massive solidity and gives my legs their own stability and power to surmount the climb with their inner mineral core. The climber leans into the mountain with a body that burns with its own inner heat that can't help but be an echo and reverberation of the eons of molten flow present at the birth of the mountain that cooled and shifted within the earth that still burns mightily at its core. There is a longer time frame than human drama, exhaled by the perdurance of the mountain, by the splashing flow of the rivers, and the angling of the sun lowering in the afternoon. Science may give us more details through a dialogue with these beings about the details of these pasts, but their weight, age, density, and long rhythms were always felt

by humans as unfathomable whisperings and resonances on this planet echoing within time—a deeper time that Merleau-Ponty calls 'geological' in the nature lectures (2003a, pp. 262–3).

Merleau-Ponty ends this note of May 1959 by reminding us that the structure of perception takes in figures against a background, but some backgrounds are too vast, they outstrip human being, and have disappeared within a disarticulation that is 'the night of forgetting' (1968a, p. 197). There is a discontinuity in this time (Ibid., p. 196) that is not directly available. One might think to locate in this night of time the gaps between what has been articulated, but the vertical dimension of time is not about articulation, being deeper than what can be articulated. Rather, the vertical dimension of time and being is accessible only within perception, by entering into the depth of perception (Ibid., p. 236). In the 'Chiasm' chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty's unpacking of the percept of 'the red' of a dress has demonstrated how differing times are impacted within perception, and are part of the invisibility of the visible, differing times which as a whole are within the unfolding of historical time, but also other times of the imaginal, the geological, the impersonal anonymous time from 'the first day' of a life and our shared life of perception, dreams, and so on. This 'intemporality' within temporality, this dimension of a 'past-present "simultaneity"' (Ibid., p. 243) is not a simultaneity of experiences that have become enjambed within each other, but rather is the sense of "Nature is at the first day": it is there today' (Ibid., p. 267). Again, returning to this theme of the natural world and time in the notes of November 1960, Merleau-Ponty uses a metaphor of the night in referring to this time within time as 'a sort of time of sleep' (Ibid.), that which is an "ever new" and an "always the same" (Ibid.). The time of the first day and other past times that will never be directly accessible are nevertheless within time and within the inexhaustibility of perception as much as night is part of our days even if it is not visible or present in the same way.

The planet has a long unfolding in time and materiality as it is within the flesh of the world that holds time, exhales time within the perceptual layerings of our becoming enlaced with the world in 'lateral relations'—where one thing is inseparable from its being bound up with the other being. As creatures like other creatures emergent from the surroundings, we find ourselves claimed and located within this depth of time:

In what sense the visible landscape under my eyes is not exterior to, and bound synthetically to . . . other moments of time and past, but has

them really behind itself in simultaneity, inside itself and not it and they side by side 'in' time. (Ibid.)

When Merleau-Ponty lectured at the Sorbonne on nature in 1956–1958 and 1959–1960, unlike most thinkers of that time or of the past few decades, he told his students that there was a unique sense or meaning beyond cultural constructs to nature that could be interrogated. There was a primordially to nature that outstrips its institution in language and thought, a primordially, although enigmatic, because we are of it, instead of before it, and that can be expressed, although indirectly (Merleau-Ponty, 2003a, pp. 19–20). In this note of November 1960 he juxtaposes, our sensible insertion in the surroundings of the natural world and how part of this intertwining is of a different temporal order, 'The sensible, Nature, transcend the past present distinction, realize from within a passage from one into the other . . . Existential eternity. The indestructible, the barbaric Principle [*le Principe barbare*]' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p. 267, n. 321). Merleau-Ponty is at the edge of language here, in trying to express, to almost gesture forth, the way in which the advent of events within the natural world is still occurring and yet also has at the same time the sense of being at a fundament or at a stasis of that which is the heart of the world. It is 'outside the bounds' or barbaric and is of an order that is existentially eternal, like the mountains which predate and postdate humanity and its cultures.

These notes in the *Visible and the Invisible* echo the thoughts offered near the end of the lectures on nature, in which Merleau-Ponty is circling around similar considerations of the sense of time lodged within the natural world in terms of its differing levels which both outstrip human beings and yet hold us. In a passage that proceeds from a consideration of 'worked over time' (Merleau-Ponty, 2003a, p. 262),² Merleau-Ponty is exploring how the differing dimensionalities of time in evolution and personal existence, or the pace of change genetically and in the lives of creatures are of differing orders that cannot be synthesized. The properties of each time are not deducible from the other (Ibid., p. 263). Similarly, there are geological shifts and transformations, which are on a differing temporal order than that of these objects in daily life. Merleau-Ponty says that we need to think of 'temporal spatial levels' that are within time and space as its vertical dimensionality, but cannot be assimilated to each other. These times 'complement' one another, but there is no 'simultaneous fixing on the micro and the macro' (Ibid.). All of the living beings within this temporal field can be seen to be a 'sum of instabilities' (Ibid.). There is in one's breath the first gasp of creatures up from the water into air, a gasp repeated by

each human not only at birth but in some sense with each intake of the world's atmosphere. Like the night, first characterized by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology* as 'pure depth' (1962, p. 283), these depths of time engulf us in another sort of pure depth which is not accessible, but is a larger theater to the small drama of our personal or historically collective lives.

We creatures have running through us and beneath our own time differing times on other levels of who we are that reverberate within our perceptions of the world, often unnoticed. This has a spiritual significance in that the depths of the meaning of our existence are found at the depths of the time of the planet as a shared life sense. Merleau-Ponty's thought leads us toward a spirituality that is an affirmation of the space/time depth of the Earth—an 'ecospirituality'—and not from a spirituality of a transcendence of the planet in a realm of detached spirit. This deepest 'phenomenological stratum' of the temporal which is wound into human time as we are wound around the natural world and its past as within a chiasm or helix. As Merleau-Ponty states, 'we cannot understand the human organism without its external circuit, its planetarization' (2003a, p. 265). I think it is particularly on this global level that Merleau-Ponty is reflecting, when in the notes of November 1960 in *The Visible and the Invisible*, he writes that the institution (*Stiftung*) 'of a point of time can be transmitted to the others without "continuity" without "conservation," without fictitious "support" in the psyche the moment one understands time as chiasm' (1968a, p. 267). It is not in the psyche, but in the depth of the mountain, in the path of the sun across the sky, the rhythms of tides, the blue of the sky, that transmit temporal senses of events that can surface for moments or instants from the depths of time like strange creatures from the sea, but are always felt on the fringes to be living there. I think in this articulation of time culminating in a vertical time emergent from the interwoven human and world, Merleau-Ponty has retrieved humanity from a more superficial and practically driven sense of time to a time that takes us to the depths of the world and ourselves as interlocutors and potential co-celebrants.

Notes

¹ This inscription in the surroundings of our embodiment and the tracing of its motility and its reverberations with the motility of other beings renders to humans a sense of a trajectory that takes us far beyond my position as an object located on a Cartesian grid of discrete locations. We live in that tension. This dilation can easily carry us in our fantasies to the presumption that we might conceive and occupy as the birthright of a truer reality the place from which we could see

everything from everywhere. This presumption to a God's eye perspective follows the inherent trajectory of embodied perception to its absolute culmination, a tug that pulls at us from within the sense of perception itself, even though it would undermine the ways of perception if it ever were to be achieved. The strength of Merleau-Ponty's descriptions are that they allow us to see the way in which other philosophies of existence—here, the equation of reality with pure objectivity—have also a ground in perceptual experience.

² A phrase that seems to reverberate with the phrase that was the last one included by the editors of Merleau-Ponty's notes (a note from March, 1961) in *The Visible and the Invisible*, that of 'worked-over-matter—men = chiasm.'

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Part IV

Limits of Faith and Sacramentality