

Introduction

This volume consists of a collection of essays that explore environmental questions in the context of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. From richly diverse perspectives the authors represented here attempt to flesh out Merleau-Ponty's vision in the direction of a coherent philosophical ecology.

In the "Preface" of his principal early work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) declares phenomenology to be, as Edmund Husserl had conceived it, a "study of essences," that is, the essential meanings of the phenomena, or what appears to us (PhP i/vii).¹ But it is likewise "a philosophy that puts essences in existence and does not think that one could understand man and the world otherwise than beginning from their 'facticity'" (ibid.). Phenomenology does aspire to be, in Husserl's words, "a strict science," but it also attempts "a direct description of our experience such as it is, and without regard to its psychological genesis and to the causal explications of it that the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist could provide" (ibid.). The task of phenomenology is "to describe, and not to explain or analyze" (PhP ii/viii); it is a method for describing all meaningful phenomena of the world of human life—the "life-world"—as they appear, in order to arrive at their essences.

Phenomenology is "a philosophy of consciousness" (S 225/178), but neither consciousness nor phenomena are to be understood in a radically subjective, idealist sense. As Husserl shows, consciousness is "intentional," and that intentionality means "the unique peculiarity of experiences 'to be the consciousness *of* something.'"² Therefore, to perceive is to perceive

something, to will is to will something, to love or hate is to love or hate something or someone, and so on. Consciousness and its object are given bilaterally and meant to be studied together. Hence, "phenomena" refers to both aspects of this concrete, unified subject-object structure.

On their objective side, phenomena are also to be understood in the widest sense possible as anything that can appear to us. It might be a perceptual object, a social movement, a public event, the *Zeitgeist* of a particular historical epoch, or any other meaningful appearance. Because of this enlarged scope, and because of the anticipations of the phenomenological method in previous philosophies, Merleau-Ponty holds that the method had actually been "en route for a long time," particularly "in Hegel and in Kierkegaard of course, but also in Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud" (PhP ii/viii.). It was thus "a movement before becoming a doctrine or a system" (PhP xvi/xxi), and this was no accident. Rather, like the work of "Balzac, Proust, Valéry, or of Cézanne," phenomenology is just as "painstaking" "by reason of the same kind of attention and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to grasp the meaning of the world or of history aborning. In this way it merges with effort of modern thought" (ibid.).

Merleau-Ponty himself made significant and original use of the phenomenological method. Through his studies of normal and pathological perception and behavior, speech and language, history, sexuality, and political life, he made major, lasting contributions to twentieth-century philosophy. In addition, despite his distinction of phenomenology from the enterprise of science, he never rejected or refused to believe in science *per se*. Indeed, of all the phenomenologists of his generation, he was the most open and sympathetic to the sciences. Their methods and research results were, after all, equally phenomena of the life-world that solicited and nourished reflection. Thus, he concluded, how could "any philosopher aware of the philosophical tradition seriously propose to forbid philosophy to have anything to do with science? . . . Science is a set of means of perceiving, imagining, and, in short, living which are oriented toward the same truth of which our first experiences establish in us the need" (S 127, 128/101, 102; translation altered).

As a result, Nature (usually capitalized) is almost always present in his works from the earliest writings on, in one context or another. Moreover, in discussing what he finds to be an inevitable tension in Edmund Husserl's last writings between pure, constituting consciousness and its idealized meanings, and the life-world and Nature on which that con-

sciousness and those meanings depend, Merleau-Ponty writes, ". . . the ultimate task of phenomenology as philosophy of consciousness is to understand its relationship to non-phenomenology. What resists phenomenology within us—natural being, the 'barbarous' source Schelling spoke of—cannot remain outside phenomenology and should have its place within it. The philosopher has his shadow, which is not simply the factual absence of future light" (S 225/178; translation altered).

For the greater part of his tragically short philosophical career, Merleau-Ponty stayed deliberately within the confines of "phenomenology as a philosophy of consciousness." And he more than once explicitly identified phenomenology with philosophy as such. Thus, although Nature was always there on the horizon to be understood, such comprehension was ineluctably shaped and limited by a philosophy of consciousness into which it was to be incorporated.

Thus, it came as a surprise to many when Merleau-Ponty chose "The Concept of Nature" as the subject of his 1956–1957 and 1957–1958 courses at the Collège de France and that he eventually came to reflect on Nature with a very different conception of philosophical method. For, during the last five or six years of his life, he turned from phenomenology, no longer identified *tout court* with philosophy, to ontology. He did not repudiate the validity of his phenomenological descriptions of the body, perception, language, and other phenomena of the life-world, but he did become convinced of the inadequacy of phenomenology as a method for doing philosophy. On his revised view, the earlier phenomenology could not provide a philosophically adequate alternative to a Cartesian mind-body dualism and, in general, a convincing account of the relation of body and consciousness, perception and intellect: "The problems posed in *Ph.P.* [*Phenomenology of Perception*] are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'-'object' distinction. . . . Starting from this distinction, one will never understand that a given fact of the 'objective' order (a given cerebral lesion) could entail a given disturbance of the relation with the world—a massive disturbance, which seems to prove that the whole 'consciousness' is a function of the objective body" (VI 253/200).

Because of this shift, Merleau-Ponty abandons the contrasts in the early works between the lived-body with the objective body as described by science, and a body-consciousness with a Cartesian cogito. In the later writings, particularly in *Eye and Mind* and the incomplete, posthumously published manuscript of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty begins to develop an ontology of "flesh" (*la chair*), something for which traditional

philosophy has no name. Flesh is not matter, in the sense of collections of corpuscles, and it is not “some ‘psychic’ material.” Generally speaking, it is not a material or spiritual fact or collection of facts. Nor is it a mental representation. “The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term ‘element,’ in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea. . . . The flesh is in this sense an ‘element’ of Being” (VI 183–84/139).

Flesh includes my “self-sensing” flesh and the “sensible and not sentient” flesh of the world, and it is by means of the latter that the lived-body can be understood. The “flesh of the world” is “the Being-seen, i.e., a Being that is *eminently percipi*,” and it is in and through that “being seen” that the seeing, the *percipere* of the lived-body, can become intelligible. It is “my body applying itself to the rest of the perceived,” and this relationship in turn becomes both possible and comprehensible “because *there is Being*” (VI 304/250; italics in the original). Moreover, and this is a signal change from his earlier phenomenology, because flesh now explains the lived-body, the latter is an object in nature alongside other objects, made of the “same stuff”: “Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things. . . . Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body” (OE 19/163).

How are we to understand the relationship between our flesh and the flesh of the world? Jean-Paul Sartre once claimed that the “cardinal principle” of Merleau-Ponty’s last writings was the notion of “envelopment” (1984, 132).³ Merleau-Ponty articulates that envelopment in terms of what he terms an “intertwining” and “chiasm.” That is, flesh has a reversibility such that to see is also to be seen, to touch is equally to be touched, and so on: “The chiasm, reversibility, is the idea that every perception doubled with a counter-perception . . . is an act with two faces, one no longer knows who speaks and who listens. Speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived. . . . *Activity = passivity*” (VI 318/264–265).

There is also a “double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible” (VI 177/134). Likewise, self and other cross over into each other’s existence. “The experience of my own body and the experience of the other,” Merleau-Ponty writes, “are themselves the two sides of one same Being” (VI 278/225). Soul and body similarly intertwine because “[t]here is a body of the mind, and a mind of the

body and a chiasm between them” (VI 313/259). There is also a chiasm between thought and its object and equally an intertwining between the objective body and the lived-body—now called “the two ‘sides’ of our body, the body as sensible and the body as sentient” (VI 180/136)—just as there is between the thing perceived and the perceiving, the flesh of the world and the body’s flesh. We exist, in short, at the intersection of these various reversibilities.

Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of flesh has generated a heightened awareness of, and appreciation for, what his later texts say and imply about Nature and our place within it. This research has produced several illuminating contributions to environmental and ecological issues.⁴ This is particularly true of those aspects of deep ecology that concern the intertwining and mutual well-being of all life forms, questions about the meaning of being human, and the refusal to value Nature solely in terms of its potential for human use. Indeed, apart from the process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, it is difficult to imagine another philosophy that so completely supports environmental well-being and prepares for a coherent philosophical ecology.⁵

The essays collected here link Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of Nature to contemporary environmental and ecological themes in richly varied ways. The volume is conceptually divided into two parts. Part I focuses on relations within the natural world. Part II connects aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy to issues in environmental ethics.

Ecology studies relationships of organisms to each other and to their environment. Contributors understand ecology in a broad sense to include studies of these interrelations from the biological, physical, and social sciences. While Merleau-Ponty does not use the expression ‘ecology,’ much in his philosophy bears on it: for example, the centrality of relations in his work, his concept of the bond between humanity and nature; his thinking in terms of ‘elements’ and through expressions like ‘animality’ and ‘brute’ or ‘wild’ Being (*L’Être sauvage*); its accommodation of natural and social diversity; and of course, his thought on embodiment and Flesh. Several contributors both articulate and question the extent to which Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy might help us understand and respond to increasing and alarming evidence of environmental degradation.

For example, in examining the question of why we fail to do more to avert threats to the environment, Robert Kirkman uses Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of reversible flesh to articulate how human vulnerability as “a varied, multi-dimensional phenomenon of depths and hidden subtleties”

applies to covert and relatively abstract environmental threats such as global warming. The recognition that we can be affected by the world precisely because as embodied organisms we are not separated from its 'flesh' ties into Merleau-Ponty's idea of sentient-sensibility. At the same time, nonsentient or invisible dimensions make it difficult to be able to "feel in my bones a threat as abstract and diffuse as global climate change."

Kirkman's phenomenology of the perception of threats also applies Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the fundamental ambiguity of perception to global climate change. At the same time, he uncovers several sources of the ambiguity. These sources make it difficult to discern whether the strange weather patterns we experience are pleasant anomalies or "the first inkling of an environmental catastrophe."

Ambiguity and the relation of perception to the natural sciences account for what Kirkman calls a plausible deniability on the issue of global climate change. He takes the argument a step further, however, and shows how Merleau-Ponty's philosophy can be used to challenge this very position. An inescapable fact of incarnate life, the primordial perception of vulnerability can help focus our attention on the suffering that will surely ensue if certain predictions are borne out. This vulnerability can thus serve as a justifiable basis for an appropriate level of alarm and motivation to act concerning, as he puts it, even the mere possibility that global climate change will negatively affect our dependence on steady and predictable weather cycles.

Applications of Merleau-Ponty's reversibility thesis and perceptions of human vulnerability and limitations continue into Kenneth Liberman's reflection on wilderness experiences. Liberman uses an expansive sense of agency, one "that belongs to both the earth and to ourselves," to fathom and flesh out Merleau-Ponty's contention that "Nature is what has a sense without this sense being posited by thought." Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh as intercorporeal "fabric that pre-exists . . . but also includes us" is developed in Ken Liberman's inquiry into why—and how—people seek primitive contact with the earth.

Liberman contrasts the wilderness experience of abiding with the landscape with explorations intended to survey or conquer the terrain. In the process, he describes a deep sort of knowing, one often lost or ignored in political discussions on the subject of the environment. It involves a relinquishment of human agency and a cultivation of reciprocal relations born of our bodily engagements with the earth. "The earth draws us out of ourselves, not just to explore the terrain in order to dom-

inate it but to learn from our contact with it, and from the resistance it offers us.” What we come to comprehend through intimate bodily contact with the earth is a sense of our own obscurity: “the principal legacy of the wilderness experience.”

This felt sense of obscurity is an experience of depth; it is evocative of the depth of deep ecology movements and our deep, intercorporeal belonging to the sensible Merleau-Ponty tries to capture with his claim that visibility and invisibility are intimately entwined in the “flesh” of the world. Patricia M. Locke analyzes this sense of obscurity in ecological terms as “straits” and in embodied terms as “skin”—a perceptibly imperceptible gap or tissue between interior and exterior horizons. She turns to the world of the Haida Indians on the Pacific Northwest Coast “for a sense of what it is like to live in the straits.”

Just as Liberman calls attention to the restorative potential derivable from cultivating reciprocal relations with the earth, Patricia Locke brings Merleau-Ponty’s pre-reflective “wild” meanings (VI 155) to life in her depictions of the complex and dynamic reciprocities between earth, sea, sky, human beings, animals and inanimate entities in the Haida’s “non-Cartesian yet highly developed social world.” We see through her descriptions how the art and architecture of their great plank houses “echoes our corporeality and defines its natural surroundings,” enveloping its inhabitants “but is also a defining feature of the landscape outside.” These native communal household dwellings illustrate a dynamic sense of reversible flesh, a fluidity of boundaries and a “wild” multiplicity of criss-crossed images that give to the perceiver an experience of being “always on the verge, the border between touching and being touched, between human and animal.”

Locke borrows a saying from the culture that captures the precarious positioning of their houses on a “thin blade of treeless land” above the sea as well as the “fragile balance of the remaining fragments of the Haida world.” In its time and for the native Northcoast Indians, the metaphor of the “world as sharp as a knife” signified the narrow margin between life and death, a reminder of how easily and quickly one might slip and fall off that “edge.” Their saying and their sense for “living in the straits” reminds us of our own vulnerability and the possibility that we may indeed be risking everything we value unless we restore a sense of ecological balance to our complex and contemporary relationships with our natural surroundings.

Images of borders, boundaries, and edges are taken up again in Edward S. Casey’s contribution. Allowing that edges or borders are

“oppressive and restrictive in many contexts,” he shows how they may also be comforting and constructive presences in others. In his depiction of their role in natural landscapes and urban environments, Casey reflects on ways that fixed, determinate borders may intermingle with fluid indeterminate boundaries to bring invisible connections to light and delineate moving senses of the ecological. These revived senses are expansive and dynamic enough to include spontaneously evolving formations of birds staking a territory out of thin air and the layout of Central Park where “what is boundary and what is border” have become as intertangled as what is natural and what is contrived.

Casey defines boundaries as porous regions of transitional back and forth movements. He points out a limitation in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical commitments to transitional movements within a “closely woven” and continuous fabric of flesh; namely “his aversion to treating the *ends of things*”—edges where “something comes to an abrupt and decisive termination.” Aversion to edges is natural, Casey contends, given that edges are often occasions for possible or hidden violence, masking threats that may be lurking around corners and which, by the way they may suddenly and surprisingly come into view, “flay” our glances and expectations. Ecological sensitivity requires that we overcome our aversion to thinking about edges in their discomfiting and disconnecting aspects. It requires paying attention to human practices that contribute to the deadly endings of things, practices like the use of agri-chemicals in farming, that lead us and others into *dire* straits, generating deadly zones where life can no longer be sustained or supported.

Carol Bigwood’s moving meditation on the arts of constructing and cultivating contrasts violent farming and biotechnological methods with nonviolent ones. She draws ecofeminist and phenomenological thought (Heidegger’s and Irigaray’s) into an understanding of ecology and a deeper appreciation of Flesh.

Etymologically, “ecology” stems from the Greek word (*oikos*) for household or dwelling. From Merleau-Ponty, Bigwood develops “an understanding of the body as primal ecological home”: a place where we touch and are touched. Through arts of cultivation such as nurturing and healing, she relates Flesh to a dynamic tending of generativity: “Cultivation is fidelity to growth, responding to the generativity of the living world with attuned questioning touch.” The body is central to Bigwood’s discussion. The nurturing self is an embodied self who makes a skill of touch.

Despite the skill involved in cultivating, it is often invisible, taken for granted work. Globally it is still performed predominantly by women “who do most of the farming, healing the sick with herbs and medicines, and taking care of the young and the home.” Bigwood underscores the importance of women forming a central part of environmental solutions. She helps us to see how crucial the arts of healing and nurturing are for “understanding our human being in a healthier way and for our very survival.”

Bigwood questions why Merleau-Ponty’s prime examples of touching are not examples of touching another. The intelligent feeling in the empathic, tender, and questioning touch she describes is a touching without grasping, the sort of touch that can help guide us to an ethos of organic sensitivity and a cultivation of compassion we will need to tend and heal our world home earth.

The relation of human beings to nature is one of openness, and this entails vulnerability, not only on our part but on the part of nature as well. As Duane H. Davis, the next author, states: “We could destroy the earth—perhaps that is what we are doing. But this same openness allows for us to care for it.”

In examining the question of transcendental reflection on the environment, Davis also addresses the question of what it means to be at home in nature and how being at home requires construction. “We build against the threats of nature because we are also not at home there.”

Davis compares Merleau-Ponty to two thinkers championed by environmentalists for their powerful descriptions of nature. He shows how Merleau-Ponty’s account of nature as lived from within an unstable perceptible field avoids “two errors of transcendentalisms”: Henry David Thoreau’s, which “betrays a nostalgic or even mystical return to nature-as-provider,” and Martin Heidegger’s, which dwells on “the strangeness (*Unheimlichkeit*) from nature that we are.”

Davis believes that Merleau-Ponty would cast our relationship to nature as more of a struggle than a romantic sentiment, “a struggle to define and redefine our relation to Nature,” and that his situating transcendence in a latent intentionality—a divergence (*écart*) or spread of differentiation across a open field which is not a monolithic unity—captures the sense in which we are, and are not, at home in nature. As Davis says, “we redefine ourselves and nature as we live there. The redefining presents a threat and provides a home—thus it calls for respect. Perhaps we can more wisely choose actions and policies that respect nature as threat and home, as origin and product.”

The next contributor, Maurita Harney, also focuses attention on how radical shifts in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intentionality, progressively generalized to the point where it "becomes 'globalized' to the world of which I am a part," may be viewed as stage setting for the development of a philosophical ecology. She compares aspects of Merleau-Ponty's views of intentionality with Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of sign and its development within the field of biosemiotics.

Biosemiotics studies processes by which signs are generated and communicated. Harney shows how taken together, both approaches may prove useful in developing a philosophical ecology where "the relationship between organism and environment is more like a reciprocal, communicative interaction than the action-reaction of a subject and an inert, passive world." For, as she points out, in neither approach "can meaning or significance be reduced to sets of causal events in the physical world."

Contributors in Part II of the volume relate ideas in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of nature to issues in environmental ethics. David Abram's contribution updates Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception by describing the "astonishing proliferation of worlds" in twenty-first century life. He questions how we can maintain a sense of ecological balance, coherence and integrity in the context of our "tumbling" between a multiplicity of micro- and macrocosmic worlds, environments that are more of or less corporeal, incongruous, and hidden from each other. The fathomless, digital domain cyberspace, where bodiless minds "meet" and communicate is considered along with other (technological, scientific, transcendent) realms.

Abram believes that the proliferation of these less corporeal worlds perpetuate a historical (philosophical, religious, scientific) disparagement of sensorial reality. He attributes the contemporary erosion of ecological values to the lack of a common ground or sense, which has resulted in a reckless disregard, a "trashing" of the directly experienced world. Abram recalls attention, as Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and other chapters in this volume do, to the sensuous body's world at the heart of the others. It is the world where we learn, or are socialized out of, a somatic empathy with others.

John R. White, the next author, connects Max Scheler's notion of vital sympathy, "our sympathetic entry into another's vital experience," to a notion of vital values derivable from Merleau-Ponty's view of sensing as a vital process. White defines vital values as those which contribute to the flourishing of ecosystems and their living members. His essay explores

how they are given through lived bodily experience and shows why a body-ethic is required for a comprehensive environmental ethics.

White discusses vital values in connection with social formations and bodily praxes that may alienate us from our own animality and interfere with our experiencing ecological values *as* values. This is a key and crucial point, for unless we perceive ecological values as valuable, what reason do we have to defend the environment? White's thesis and the use he makes of Scheler's differentiation in value ranks also helps to shed light on why "even persons highly sensitive to other morally relevant values might fail to grasp the significance of ecological values."

To illustrate his thesis, White points to effects of contemporary American capitalism on lived body experiencing. The example provides a model for how the inclusion of a body-ethic, an ethic of the socialized living body, into a comprehensive environmental ethic can help us apprehend how "it could be that the 'outer' devastation of the environment is in the end a projection of the 'inner' alienation we experience from our own animality."

In her exploration of its ethical ramifications, Molly Hadley Jensen connects Merleau-Ponty's thematic focus on differentiation in nature to the ecologically vital value of diversity. Merleau-Ponty's view of the sensed and sensing body-self as fundamentally polymorphic, communicative, elementally open and reciprocally involved with others is, as she says, "an ethically potent reinterpretation."

Through its double-belongingness to sentience and sensibility, Flesh is characterized by a difference that itself is "never collapsed" and that enables sense perception. Furthermore, in Merleau-Ponty's understanding, "difference need not imply separation or opposition: difference and diversity are a basis for coherence." Just as isolation and seclusion dull the senses, so too one who "is separate, isolated, and removed from others lacks the capacity for sharing with, feeling for, and responding to others." Body-selves flourish through intercorporeal relations. Thus the flesh ontology "undermines the assumption that difference poses a threat to self or community" and "conceives of the possibility that human and more-than-human cohere for the flourishing of life."

In Jensen's view a fleshed-out ethic of diversity understood as a life-sustaining matrix can "offer ethical guidelines for confronting ecological threats." It can, for example, challenge models of "development" that suppress diversity; help counter "a prevailing logic of sameness, a logic that legitimates dominance of one species to the detriment of diverse others";

and help to revise Kantian-styled ethics based on rational, autonomous egos.

Sally Fischer also finds in Merleau-Ponty's thought an ecologically beneficial alternative to the individualistic subject of modernity. She makes a case for a Merleau-Pontyan social ontology that moves from "egology," "which emphasizes the individualism of subjectivity along with its technological control and power over/against objectivity" to a socially "ecological" way of understanding self/other relations in nonhierarchical terms. She follows Merleau-Ponty in his attempts to reevaluate radically the most fundamental presuppositions of Western metaphysics: "our ontological categories of thought, thing, selfhood, and alterity," a project for which she finds important support in Luce Irigaray's works, and she wishes to place the latter's thought and Merleau-Ponty's ontology of flesh in the service of re-creating "socially and ecologically sound ideologies and institutions." She argues for "a Merleau-Pontyan social ecology" based on this changed notion of self and others, and she views these changed conceptions politically "as a kind of ecocommunitarian politics" accomplished "through the dialectic of concrete intersubjectivity." However, this politics, and this intersubjectivity are, in turn, possible only because of the *dialogical* intentionality implicit in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, an intentionality that allows others to be "recognized as real others, rather than as universal subjects." Inherent in this dialogical intentionality is a type of "consummate reciprocity," which in turn generates a "reciprocal recognition that 'I am not everything.'"

Jocelyn Dunphy-Blomfield is also concerned about questions of dominance, problems of communication, and power in maintaining a stable world-order and personal relationships amidst environmental destabilization by industry and economic development. She takes up Enzo Paci's analysis of Merleau-Ponty as "preeminently a philosopher of relations" and David Abram's emphasis on our inclusion within ecological systems, and she attempts to bring these themes to bear on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of action in social and political life. She shows how Merleau-Ponty's writings on psychology interweave both a philosophy of nature and of human action, and that "his study of love as both union and oppression" in "The Child's Relations with Others" form equally a connection between nature and action and an access to ecology. In both we can see "the principles of truth and freedom as fragile," and never more so than when attempting to justify torture in order to stop terrorism. The essay ends with an examination of Merleau-Ponty's remarks

about the use of torture in French Algeria, remarks that are as pertinent today as they were in 1958.

Hwa Yol Jung's essay on "Merleau-Ponty's Transversal Geophilosophy and Sinic Aesthetics of Nature" picks up themes common to both Jensen and Dunphy-Blomfield's essays, and situates them a very different context. Seeking to overcome "our human-induced ecological crisis," Jung finds in Merleau-Ponty's "intercorporeal ontology" the means to establish and secure the beginnings of a foundation for "the edifice of geophilosophy *as if the earth really matters*." The core of what Merleau-Ponty can offer to geophilosophy, for Jung, is his "carnal ontology which provides us with the earthly comprehension that all relationships necessarily begin with the intercorporeality or interweaving of lived bodies both human and nonhuman."

Moreover, Jung appropriates Merleau-Ponty's concept of "lateral universals" in developing the notion of transversality, which consists of a fundamentally "new way of facilitating *lateral* border-crossings by decentering all the centers from one culture to another (intercultural), from one species to another (interspeciesistic), from one discipline to another (interdisciplinary) and from one sense to another (intersensorial)." Transversality "deconstructs and replaces universality as a Eurocentric idea," and "unpacks anthropocentrism (as well as egocentrism), which regards man as the apex of all creation and the measure of all things and as such is the cause of wanton ecological destruction and the accelerated disappearance of biodiversity." This discussion invokes, among other things, Irigaray's turning to Eastern thought in her efforts to transcend logocentrism, Eurocentrism, and phallogentrism, and provides an insightful application of Sinism—"expressed in the corporeal language of ideography," and which includes Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—to the construction of geophilosophy. Jung reflects on the rich expression of geophilosophical ideas in Sinic eco-art forms such as bonsai, haiku poetry, and feng-shui, "widely practiced as an art of everyday living" that "sanctifies and ritualizes" an inseparable bond between humans, the land and cosmic 'elemental' energy (ch'i)."

Finally, Martin C. Dillon's essay stands apart, as he so often did in life, as an insistent, vigorous counterpoint to all others in this volume. He believes that there are "fundamental flaws in the conceptual structures that inconspicuously inform contemporary discourse about our environment." One is that the "very word 'ecology' is misleading and should be abandoned" because the Earth is our dwelling place, but not our house (*oikos*). Houses are things we build for protection from our surroundings and the

elements. The belief that the Earth is our home “reflects the familiar desire to influence by worship, supplication, and arcane rites the powers whose sendings take our destinies out of our hands.”

Instead of ecology, which he sees as underwritten by primitive superstition, Dillon prefers *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, conceived as the task of discovering “how the world works,” and then incarnating that knowledge in our actions “with the hope that it will produce consequences more to our liking” than those that flow from ignorance or superstition. Key to this *phronesis* is Merleau-Ponty’s “ontology of becoming,” with its emphasis on overflowing meaning that is sometimes not compatible with human needs and a world that imposes limits on our freedom that we have no choice but to accept, even though we are largely ignorant of the fate of this world and “bereft of reliable information about any origin or destiny it might or might not have.” Noteworthy also in this context is the fact that Dillon is the only author present here who takes the sea as a theme for extended analysis.

Temporality is an important part of Dillon’s appreciation of Merleau-Ponty’s ontology, both in terms of lived-time described in Merleau-Ponty’s earlier phenomenological writings and natural time that appears in his later ontology of flesh. Dillon also applies these ontological insights to public policy issues such as conservation and the restoration of nature, and he states that the essential question facing us is “How, then, do we stand—how should we stand—with regard to the world in which we dwell?” He seeks an answer to this question in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology as well as in a Heideggerian resoluteness and *poiesis*, and seems to hold out a faint hope for *phronesis* avoiding the misuse of technology in war and human annihilation. It is a hope that the editors and all the authors represented here endorse.

Suzanne L. Cataldi

William S. Hamrick

NOTES

1. As with all the citations to Merleau-Ponty’s works in this book, when dual pagination is provided, the original French pagination precedes that of the English translation. Single pagination will always be that of the English translation.

2. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 84, “Intentionality as the Main Phenomenological Theme,” trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1931), p. 242.

3. “Merleau-Ponty [I].” Trans. William S. Hamrick. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol. XV, no. 2 (May 1984), 123–154, at p. 132. This previously unpublished manuscript was the initial version of the well-known memorial article for Merleau-Ponty that appeared in the October 1961 issue of *Les Temps modernes* and was reprinted in *Situations IV*.

4. See, for example, David Abram, “Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth,” *Environmental Ethics* 10 (1988), 101–120 and *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996); Renaud Barbaras, “Merleau-Ponty and Nature,” *Research in Phenomenology* 31 (2001), 22–38; Carol Bigwood, “Renaturalizing the Body (With a Little Help from Merleau-Ponty),” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* (Fall 1991), 54–73; Helen Fielding, “The Finitude of Nature: Rethinking the Ethics of Biotechnology,” *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy: A European Journal* 4 (2001), 327–334; Sally Fischer, “Ecology of the Flesh: Gestalt Ontology in Merleau-Ponty and Naess,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 34 (2002), 53–67; Eleanor Godway, “The Being Which Is Behind Us: Merleau-Ponty and the Question of Nature,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 30 (1) (1998), 47–56; Nancy J. Holland, “‘With One Headlight’: Merleau-Ponty and the Philosophy of Science,” *Philosophy Today* 46 (2002), 28–33; Monika Langer, “Merleau-Ponty and Deep Ecology,” in Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds. *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991); Irene Klaver, “Phenomenology on (the) Rocks,” *Research in Phenomenology* 31 (2001), 173–186; Glen A. Mazis, *Earthbodies, Rediscovering Our Planetary Senses* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002); John Russon, “Embodiment and Responsibility: Merleau-Ponty and the Ontology of Nature,” *Man and World: An International Philosophical Review* 27 (3) (1994), 291–308; Ted Toadvine, “Naturalizing Phenomenology,” *Philosophy Today* 43 (1999), 124–131; and Ted Toadvine and Charles S. Brown, eds. *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003).

5. This interest increased dramatically after the 1995 publication of anonymous student notes taken during the 1956–1957 and 1957–1958 courses at the Collège de France. These notes came to light when the library of the École Normale Supérieure de Saint Cloud was moved. The French editor, Dominique Ségard, annotated and published the notes, with certain spelling and other corrections, along with Merleau-Ponty’s own notes for his 1959–1960 course on “The Concept of Nature, Nature and Logos: The Human Body,” under the title of *La Nature, Notes de Cours du Collège de France*. This work, essential for anyone with a serious interest in Merleau-Ponty’s thought, illuminates the development of that thought and makes it clear that the previously published *Résumés de cours* for those years includes only a brief sketch of what *La Nature* elaborates. For example, there are extremely detailed reflections on Descartes’s view of nature, on Schelling and Bergson—a chapter titled “The Romantic Conception of Nature”—and on Kant—“The Humanist Conception of Nature.” Also, whereas the original *Résumés de cours* provided only one thin reference to Alfred North Whitehead, *La Nature* contains an entire thirteen-page essay (“The Idea of Nature for Whitehead”) as well as other scattered references. Also, the third lecture course manifests much more completely the development of Merleau-Ponty’s later thought as it eventually appeared in *Signs, Eye and Mind*, and especially in *The Visible and the Invisible*.