

following chapters Steeves explains the role of the virtual body in the exercise of the imagination.

In Chapter 2, "Perceptual Imagining," Steeves elaborates upon Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception as a wholly embodied function through which our sense data are incorporated into both the physical and cognitive behavior of the subject. The distinction between the physical and cognitive gradually dissipates as Steeves' analysis proceeds. This progressive dissipation is seen in the following four chapters. First, in "Aesthetic Imagining," Steeves articulates a synthesis of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception (the cognitive act) with the subject's interaction and reaction (i.e., one's behavior understood in a broad sense) with works of art. This yields an analysis of aesthetics that is wholly effectual to the lived experience of the subject. This is elaborated upon in Chapter 3, "Fanciful Imagining," to the extent that the activity of the imagining body comes to be understood as the sole existential influence upon the subject. It is responsible for her pathology, as is described in Chapter 4, "Pathological Imagining," as well as her own self-understanding, as described in Chapter 5, "Self-Imagining."

In his concluding two chapters Steeves returns to the motif of the mime in order to introduce a novel analysis of the ontology of the self. Although it seems overdone at times, Steeves' motif of the mime serves as an exemplar of the ideas he seeks to elucidate.

DARRYL MURPHY, *University of Guelph*

***Interrogating Ethics: Embodying the Good in Merleau-Ponty***

JAMES HATLEY, JANICE MCLANE, CHRISTIAN DIEHM, Editors  
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Merleau-Ponty nowhere gives us an explicit ethics. Yet everywhere, from his studies of perception and the body through his investigations of the political, ontology, nature, and institutions, his philosophy grapples with the web of relationships through which we stand to one another as expressive and responsible agents. An implicit ethics haunts his work, and the essays in this volume seek to reveal it. But as James Hatley points out in his introductory essay, this will not be an "ethics as usual." If ethics is rooted in the webwork through which we become responsible to ethical imperatives then ethics cannot simply be the affirmation of an already or easily established good; instead it must be an inquiry into how our becoming responsible through this webwork complicates the very notion of the good.

The essays in the first part of the book take up this issue in especially insightful ways. Alia Al-Saji's study of the genesis of the ethical body in Merleau-Ponty combines careful readings of *Eye and Mind*, *Signs*, and *The Visible and the Invisible* with observations about painting, mirrors, and the mirror stage to show how we find the sense of our bodies visually completed in other bodies, and how this relation opens up ethical questions once it is given voice in expression. Bernhard Waldenfels' essay echoes this point by emphasizing how Merleau-Ponty's ethics must be based in a "logos of response" (98), that is, a logic in which ethical imperatives emerge only from the to and fro of responding to the world and one another. As Waldenfels observes, such an ethics leaves behind the is/ought distinction and shows how ethics must be sensitive to imperatives that do not fit within current teleological, deontological, or utilitarian accounts. Diane Perpich's response to Waldenfels is illuminating, and it is apt for a book on this topic to build in such exchanges between thinkers. Mary Rawlinson's essay nicely complements these conclusions. She tries to make sense of Merleau-Ponty's apparent blindness to sexual difference from within his own philosophical framework, arriving at the important result that in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy ideas are radically contingent on the ways we produce perspectives on our world, through our bodily engagement with others, in practices such as literature and painting. She gives a powerful demonstration of this ethical framework through an insightful reading of Henry James's *A Portrait of a Lady*, showing how Isabel Archer's experience is what produces her perspective on the good, her idea of it. Even though an idea in this sense diverges from classical understandings of the idea of the good, Archer's idea, "that the paradigm of real evil is to render another no more than the means of satisfying one's own desires" (89), echoes one formulation of Kant's categorical imperative. What is key here is that the good that Archer arrives at is mediated not by an immediate universal but by our bodily and perspectival ways of finding a universal within the singular. Altogether, the essays in this part unsettle the idea of an abstract good, and direct our attention to the good's bodily and intersubjective birth.

The second and third parts contain essays showing how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and language provide resources for a phenomenologically based ethics. These essays include Janice McLane's study of the way that identifying oneself as a victim operates on bodily levels that erode agency, Carolin Woolson's analysis of the role of bodily memory in ethics, David Brubaker's tracing of a tension between Merleau-Ponty and Foucault, Glenn Mazis' discussion of divergences and affinities between Levinas' ethics of the face and Merleau-Ponty's ethics of the flesh, and Susan O'Shaughnessy's analysis of Merleau-Ponty and

Wittgenstein on the role of language in mediating conflicts (such as in interfaith discussions).

Attention to the body in the second and third parts is mostly inspired by Merleau-Ponty's posthumously published writing about what he calls flesh. (A notable exception is Jennifer Gosetti-Ferenci's nuanced account of how the generation of gestural language calls us into relation with alterity; her account incorporates empirical studies of the spontaneous development of sign language in children and Kristeva's notion of poetic language.) The focus on flesh is not surprising, for flesh is a principle that exceeds individuals and marks our bodies as implicated in something beyond us. Flesh is thus a powerful resource for ethics. A reader of these essays, however, might be forgiven for thinking that the ethics of the flesh is all too friction-free, that an ethics of the flesh springs from something like an element of pre-personal harmony. According to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty confessed to having never recovered from a happy childhood. This has brewed into a nostrum about Merleau-Ponty as a happy philosopher hung up on connections rather than differences, birth rather than death, harmony rather than discord, and so on. In my view, this is misleading. Merleau-Ponty rightly observed that perception is inherently violent in imposing its own perspective on things, and was interested in how reason, ideas, and philosophy itself are (as Rawlinson emphasizes) fragile and contingent, arising only in rare moments, and who was concerned to trace the way in which history and institutions harbor discords that can undermine human happiness. An ethics of the flesh would not simply be an ethics of harmony but of a tension to which we find ourselves already responsive or obligated. The tension between harmony and discord surfaces in an exchange between Ted Toadvine and David Abrams, on Abrams' Merleau-Ponty inspired contribution to environmental ethics. Toadvine argues that Abrams' eco-phenomenology poses a radical gap between perception and reflection, and downplays reflection and language. According to Toadvine, Abrams does this in order to give an account of our perceptual and bodily attunement to nature as manifesting a "kinship" between us and nature, a kinship that thus neglects the gap between us and nature that is marked by the difference between perception and reflection. In response, Abram notes that the kinship he proposes includes the hunting and killing of other animals (to which Toadvine has ethical objections) and that Toadvine has given an altogether too harmonious and placid reading of Abrams' notion of "kinship" (284). What is at stake here are issues of harmony and discord. If a Merleau-Pontyan interrogation of ethics unsettles the idea of the good then it must be open to finding an unsettled and perhaps unsettling—even discordant—idea of the good. We cannot simply cleave to notions of an harmonious flesh that leads us back to a good that we find

welcoming because in accord with our ethical intuitions. A Merleau-Pontyan ethics would be an ethics of hard work, an ethics of collectively accomplishing a good rather than an ethics of an ideal settled in advance. To develop such an ethics we would do well to see how the flesh invites itself to go wrong. This aspect of Merleau-Ponty's ethics, it seems to me, is unfortunately obscured by the particular approach to flesh that predominates in the second and third parts.

*Interrogating Ethics* concludes with a codicil. This contains an intriguing essay on the mouth, by David Wood, which traces how the very function and formation of the mouth, as regulating what is food or not, already marks our bodies and our ontology with a tension between facts and values, between is and ought. In other words, this primal opening of the body bodes a bodily ethics. The final essay, by Hugh Silverman, speaks about what it means to speak about a philosopher such as Merleau-Ponty, and shows how our discussion of him brings in various specters of other philosophers. Here, death shows itself in the discussion of ethics, embodiment, and responsiveness.

Overall, *Interrogating Ethics* is a rich and intriguing volume which opens an ethical dimension within Merleau-Ponty's thought. It contributes to Continental philosophy's exploration of an ethics beyond the usual since it emerges from and spreads into diverse areas of life, rather than being pursued as a topic and practice separate from the general run of life.

DAVID MORRIS, *Trent University*

### ***The Sense of Space***

DAVID MORRIS

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*The Sense of Space* picks up Merleau-Ponty's investigation of spatiality from the *Phenomenology of Perception* and works out a rigorous philosophy where depth figures as the original ground of human existence. It is in depth that we primarily live, argues Morris. Not, however, the depth of scientific measures or the geometer's ruler, but a depth that is a dynamic crossing of body and world, a depth in which we are always already emotionally, expressively, and intersubjectively involved. Morris compellingly assumes the style of the *Phenomenology*, employing vivid experiential descriptions and scientific case studies while, like the later Merleau-Ponty, driving these phenomenological investigations to fruition