ABSTRACT. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy is not a simple revision of the themes of *Phenomenology of Perception*. It is a radical change of the kind Thomas Kuhn found in the history of science which involves: (1) a persistent anomaly, (2) the formation of new assumptions and (3) the creation of a new vocabulary. This paper concentrates on the problem Merleau-Ponty had with the tacit *cogito* and shows how he broke the tension it caused by changing the paradigm of his philosophy. It also examines that new philosophy to see whether it is more compatible with Christianity as some commentators have claimed.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty struggled most of his life with his rejection of the Catholic Faith. Like others, I had wondered if Merleau-Ponty was moving closer toward Christianity in his later philosophy. However, when I tried to make connections between the two, I failed. I did not understand that failure until I came to see how radically different Merleau-Ponty's ontology is from other ontologies. That awareness came after reading Thomas Kuhn's historical account of the revolution in scientific knowledge.

Kuhn describes science as operating within a *Weltanschauung* that shapes scientists' interest and how they view phenomena: The operation of science is considered "normal" as long as the changes that it brings about are cumulative. Once, however, phenomena occur that scientists cannot bring into accord with their expectations, and these anomalies persist, then a crisis may result which sets the stage for a change in *Weltanschauung* and inaugurates a revolution. Three elements are necessary for a revolution in scientific thought: (1) There have to be anomalies that persistently frustrate scientists; (2) These tensions grow to a critical point of rupture which forces thinkers to alter their concepts in such a way that a whole new set of assumptions must be made; and (3) They feel a need to create a new, or at least an altered, vocabulary to refer to these fundamentally changed meanings. With these elements in mind, I re-examined Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy and discovered that it contained a radical change similar to those described by Kuhn. I also came to the realization that the ontology of Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy is more compatible with religions where the divine is identical with Nature than with Christianity which does not equate God and Nature. This paper examines Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy to demonstrate that change in *Weltanschauung* and to explicate his ontology showing how it is incompatible with Christianity.
In *Phenomenology of Perception*, published in 1945, Merleau-Ponty argues that the intentional relations between the body as perceiver and the perceived world form a single, circular structure. The body and world belong to each other in such a way that the meaning of the things in the world are the meaning of the body's life in them: the body is but an intentional project of the world and the perceived world is constituted as a correlative to that project. To say this, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is to say that the lived body transcends itself. However, there are two kinds of transcendence. In addition to the horizontal transcendence where the world emerges out of the lived body, there is a vertical transcendence where the personal subject emerges out of perceptual existence which emerges, in turn, out of biological existence. Vertical transcendence implies that humans are consciously present to themselves and their world only through the thickness of lived experience and that their language is grounded in bodily existence. Merleau-Ponty sees the foundation of language in the *Phenomenology of Perception* as "a tacit cogito", as "a silence of consciousness embracing the world of speech in which words first receive a form and meaning". It is a silence where one is present to oneself and where one grasps the world inarticulately. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* the tacit cogito is considered to be anterior to philosophy.

After 1958, Merleau-Ponty again takes up the themes of *Phenomenology of Perception* trying to bring them to what he calls "ontological explication". He discovers that he had the right themes in that work, but the wrong paradigm. The tacit cogito is a particular problem for him. Several notes of *Visible and Invisible* written early in 1959 show that the tacit cogito does not account for what is unique about language in relation to the other functions of the lived body. It fails to explain how language is possible because it does not provide a true foundation of language. The anomaly of the tacit cogito disappears when Merleau-Ponty does not presuppose in his phenomenological investigations a philosophy of consciousness as he did in the *Phenomenology of Perception*:

Results of Ph.P.--Necessity of bringing them to ontological explication:

the thing—the world—Being
the negative—the cogito—the Other—language.

The problems that remain after this first description: they are due to the fact that in part I retained the philosophy of "consciousness"

Disclosure of the wild or brute Being by way of Husserl and the Lebenswelt upon which one opens. What is Philosophy? The domain of the Vorborgen (the hidden) (philosophy and occultism)

At this time, Merleau-Ponty comes to see that the foundation of language must lie in the unconscious. However, the tacit cogito of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is not unconscious. There Merleau-Ponty had described the possibility of its being known in extreme situations such as when persons dread death or fear another's gaze upon them. Yet, to discover the Vorborgen (the hidden or unconscious) as the true founda-
tion of language requires a complete break with a way of thinking that divides experiences into subject-object as those philosophies that take consciousness as paradigmatic do. Merleau-Ponty's new paradigm is the sensing body which does not divide experience into subject-object. This new paradigm makes it possible for Merleau-Ponty to uncover the true foundation of language and to resolve the tension that he experiences with the tacit cogito.

Merleau-Ponty begins his ontological investigation by asking the question: "How is it that the body can perceive at all?" His answer is that it perceives because the body can turn its organs back upon itself and perceive itself. He begins therefore with an examination of the reversible movements of the body in its self-perception: If I want to examine my body visually as I write this paper, I simply look down at my hands, the front of my body and my legs. When I do this, I discover more than my body in my field of vision. I see the typewriter, desk, and scattered papers in front of my body. The world appears to me as my body appears to me. Nevertheless, I want to know how it is that my body can appear to me? To do this, we need to zero in more closely on self-reflection where the world does not also appear. Merleau-Ponty does this when he investigates the phenomena of self-touching: When my right index finger touches my left index finger, the right hand of my body is the toucher and the left hand of that same body is the touched. Merleau-Ponty says that, although these hands are of the same body, they are not identical. My body's narcissistic movement causes an eruption ("dehiscence") in my experience which does not make the toucher identical to the touched even though it is the same body that is both toucher and touched. Rather the toucher and touched form a single whole, a Gestalt, in which the touched is a figure on the ground of the toucher. The Gestalt for Merleau-Ponty is transcendence. The phenomenon of self-touching shows that perception is an opening ("dehiscence") of a dimension which establishes a level in terms of which every other experience will be situated.

For Merleau-Ponty this means that the tacit cogito, understood as a kind of knowing, cannot be the foundation of the spoken cogito. The thickness of lived experience through which humans are consciously present to themselves must be unconscious at its deepest level:

the perception (the first one) is of itself an openness upon a field of Gestaltungen--And that means: perception is unconsciousness. What is the unconscious? What functions as a pivot, an existential, and in this sense, is and is not perceived. For one perceives only figures upon levels--And one perceives them only by relation to the level, which therefore is unperceived.

Unlike the Phenomenology of Perception where my world is simply a correlative of my body's intentional project, Merleau-Ponty in this later philosophy sees them form a single whole in which my body as a Gestalt is co-present in every Gestalt because it is the central openness or dimension of them all.

Since the body can transcend itself through its reversible movements, both the body as sensible and the world as sensible emerge out of its biological existence. Yet, other levels of existence are possible for it such as thought and speech. If my body as toucher/seer is the
ground upon which my body and my world as touched/visible are inscribed, then my body, the typewriter, desk and papers have a generality to them. Philosophies which take consciousness as paradigmatic maintain that thought arises from the intentionalities of consciousness. However, Merleau-Ponty with his new paradigm claims that my body has a style that results from its own "architectonics". Once again let us examine vision: I see my hands, typewriter, and papers. Each requires "correct focusing" in order for me to see them. When I focus, I do not intend to see these objects. On the contrary, says Merleau-Ponty, I find the correct focus by following the "techniques" of the body in reassembling objects first from one perspective and then from other perspectives. My look wanders within the field of its vision, but it is restricted by the principal structures of my own body. That body has a silent "logos" by which it measures things. It is a constant style of visibility, and it is this style which is the foundation of thought and language:

It is as though the visibility that animates the sensible world were to emigrate, not outside of every body, but into another less heavy, more transparent body, as though it were to change flesh, abandoning the flesh of the body for that of language, and thereby would be emancipated but not freed from every condition.14

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of the body's transcendence reveals that every concept is first a generality of style. Therefore, consciousness does not impose form imperialistically on the sensible world as the philosophies of consciousness claim.15 There is no intelligible world to be imposed on the sensible world.16 All meaning is carnal. There is only the sensible world which emerges from the body's own narcissistic movements of transcendence.

At this point we can consider Merleau-Ponty's change in language in his later philosophy, specifically the new term, 'flesh'. That term indicates that a revolution has occurred in Merleau-Ponty's thought just as Max Planck's 'quantum' is the marker for the revolution in modern physics. 'Flesh' refers to a body whose narcissistic movements drives it to transcend itself by creating "a field of fields with a style and a typicality" in which the field of things and the field of words coexist in the field of the sensing body. That creativity is not a process in which form is created out of nothing, as the notion of intentionality implies, but rather, it is one in which a form that is already present arrives at itself and becomes manifest to itself:

Pregnancy: the psychologists forget that this means a power to break forth, productivity (praegnans futuri), fecundity—Secondarily: it means "typicality." It is the form that has arrived at itself, that is itself, that poses itself by its own means, is the equivalent of the cause of itself, . . . cohesion of self with self, identity in depth (dynamic identity), transcendence as being-at-a-distance, there is—17

The notes of Visible and Invisible indicate a sympathy between phenomenology and Freud's psychology. Merleau-Ponty proposes that Freud's notion of the unconscious be understood in terms of the interrogations of the sensing body.18 If this is done, then Merleau-Ponty thinks that it would reveal the hidden, originating ground of brute Being. In a note written in November, 1960, Merleau-Ponty remarks: "Do a
A KUHNIAN APPROACH TO MERLEAU-PONTY

psychoanalysis of Nature: it is the flesh, the mother".\textsuperscript{19} Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology connects humans and Nature such that an interrogation of the body is simultaneously an interrogation of Nature. This understanding of Nature is derived from Heidegger's view of Being in An Introduction to Metaphysics where Heidegger returns Being to the original meaning of Nature (\textit{physis}) as proposed by the ancient Greeks.\textsuperscript{20} "\textit{Physis}" represents everything that exists as well as designates an opening, an emergence and an unfolding. When Merleau-Ponty takes the sensing body as paradigmatic, he discovers that the domain of the hidden has the characteristics of \textit{physis}. There he sees brute Being as a polymorphic, spiraling matrix that is the pregnant ground where possibles fragment into appearances like a womb bursting forth in birthing.\textsuperscript{21} In Greek mythology Gaea is the earth, the mother of all, including gods and humans. For Merleau-Ponty the earth is "the being of the 'ground' (\textit{Boden})".\textsuperscript{22} If this wild Being as earth is the foundation of everything, then the term 'flesh' refers to more than the human body. For Merleau-Ponty, flesh is "a prototype of Being", and the human body is just a "very remarkable variant" of that flesh.

As mentioned earlier, some think that Merleau-Ponty drew closer to the Catholic Faith in his later philosophy. Atherton Lowry understands Merleau-Ponty's concentration upon the notion of Being in \textit{Visible and Invisible} as "a step toward affirming God or infinite being".\textsuperscript{23} He wants to use \textit{Visible and Invisible} as a springboard to Thomistic theism. Lowry links contingency with the "'to be' (esse) of a thing", and this linkage eventually connects with the "Pure Act of Existing" which is the Thomistic God. He expresses difficulty understanding why Merleau-Ponty cannot do the same. He even chides Merleau-Ponty for neglecting the very act (esse) by which things exist. Yet, if one understands the revolution that Merleau-Ponty initiates with his phenomenological investigations in \textit{Visible and Invisible}, then brute Being cannot be like the Act of Being of Aquinas which creates the world "ex nihilo". Brute Being is pregnant with possibles. It births what exists out of itself just as the sensing body births its own world in the dehiscences of its flesh. To think that Merleau-Ponty's brute Being and Aquinas' Pure Act of Existing are similar is tantamount to thinking that the term "planet" in the Ptolemaic system is similar to the word 'planet' in the Copernican system.

Merleau-Ponty's Being has a narcissism that places it at the mercy of its appearances—particularly humans who through conscious reflection and speech, can give meaning and expression to their existence. Through speech the sensible world is transcended; and a new dimension emerges in which Being is meaningful. That dimension is the cultural world. When Being is manifested in the cultural world, it is manifested as truth. Being perceives through all perceivers, but it thinks and speaks only through humans. Therefore, Being can think and speak the truth only if humans can think and speak the truth. Such a dependence is impossible for the Christian God who in his spiritual nature is an intelligent being.

Merleau-Ponty struggled through much of his life to find a relationship between philosophy and religion. He had hoped for compatibility—that philosophy and religion would reach God in complementary ways so that they could coexist together without one displacing the other.\textsuperscript{24} However, a phenomenology based on the sensing body causes a
revolution that creates a greater gap between philosophy and the Christian religion for Merleau-Ponty:

Precisely what has to be done is to show that philosophy can no longer think according to this cleavage: God, man, creatures—which was Spinoza's division . . .. [W]e do not take Nature in the sense of the Scholastics . . . and we do not take Logos and truth in the sense of the Word . . . Nature as the other side of man (as flesh—nowise as "matter").

Two areas mark the incompatibility between Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy and Christianity: (1) The Christian creator is the Almighty Father who is the external cause of everything whereas brute Being is the "mother" birthing out of herself all that exists. (2) The Christian Logos is the Word made Flesh of the prologue of the gospel of St. John whereas for Merleau-Ponty Being explodes and becomes logos manifesting itself as configuration, articulation and meaning. Merleau-Ponty's logos is primarily the silent ground of Being where all things are together. Strange as it may sound, Merleau-Ponty's ontology with its "hidden god"—the wild, pregnant Being which is flesh—appears to be more compatible with contemporary, feminist witchcraft than with Christianity. The mythology of feminist witchcraft is rooted in this insight:

all things are swirls of energy, vortexes of moving forces, currents in an every-changing sea. Underlying the appearance of separateness of fixed objects within a linear stream of time, reality is a field of energies that congeal, temporarily, into forms.

For the feminist witch, the Goddess is the creative power that births the world. She is the hidden deity within all things. In addition, the unconscious and the body are of central concern in the rituals of witchcraft since they are avenues to an awareness of the Goddess. Be that as it may, similarities like these with contemporary, feminist witchcraft only indicate how far removed from Christianity the ontology of Merleau-Ponty really is.

In this paper, I have argued that Merleau-Ponty's ontology is not a simple revision of the themes of Phenomenology of Perception. Rather it contains the three essential elements of revolution that Thomas Kuhn says are necessary for a radical change in thought. I have concentrated on one anomaly—the tacit cogito. Its problems could only be overcome by creating a new paradigm for philosophy. That revolution did not bring Merleau-Ponty any closer to the Catholic Faith, instead it distanced him even farther from it. Those who do not see the revolution are mislead by Merleau-Ponty's ontology. They are as far off the track in their attempts to reconcile it with Christianity as those who try to measure quantum space-time with rulers and clocks.
ENDNOTES


3 I imagined that what happened to Merleau-Ponty in the writing of Visible and Invisible was similar to what happened to the German physicist, Max Planck, who in 1900 hit upon the revolutionary idea of the quantum. Planck had accepted Wilhelm Wien's mathematical expression for the spectrum by "black body radiation" and wanted to derive the Wien formula from the laws of thermodynamics. However, no sooner had he the derivation, then anomalies developed in the formula's application to the larger wavelengths of the spectrum. Realizing that the formula was wrong, Planck invented a new formula which seemed to fit all the experiments.

This second formula was immediately confirmed by other scientists. Nonetheless, the formula had no theoretical justification. This lead Planck to try another derivation. He used Ludwig Boltzmen's development of the laws of thermodynamics that employed the, then, new approach from probability. When Planck applied these probability techniques to the resonators which give off electromagnetic radiation, it turned out that it only worked if he assumed that each resonator could absorb units of energy that were multiples of some minimum unit. These units could never be half a unit or three-quarters of a unit which was contrary to classical physics where resonators could change energy in a continuous way. Planck's new assumption lead to a revolution in physics.

According to Kuhn that revolution required an alteration of language. From Planck's first derivation to his second the resonator changed from a standard, or classical, phenomenon to something radically new. Planck marked the difference by altering the language that described the phenomenon: 'resonator', which often referred to continuous acoustic swelling and diminishing, became 'oscillator', which carried no connotations of continuity. Furthermore, the unit of energy was no longer called "epsilon" but was, from then on, referred to as "quantum".

This picture of scientific revolution led me to examine Visible and Invisible looking to see if Merleau-Ponty, like Planck, had an anomaly that he could only overcome if he changed his assumptions. This anomaly became evident in the early notes of 1959 where he criticizes the tacit cogito.


5 Ibid., 403.

6 "The tacit cogito) therefore presupposes a prereflective contact of self with self . . .--this is how I reasoned in Ph.P.
Is this correct? What I called the tacit cogito is impossible". Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Visible and Invisible. Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 171. "The tacit Cogito does not, of course, solve these problems. In disclosing it as I did in Ph.P. I did not arrive at a solution (my chapter on the Cogito is not connected with the chapter on speech): on the contrary I posed the problem. The tacit Cogito should make understood how language is not impossible, but cannot make understood how it is possible—there remains the problem of the passage from the perceptual meaning to the language meaning, from behavior to thematization". Ibid., 175-76. See John D. Glenn, Jr., "Merleau-Ponty and the Cogito" Philosophy Today 23 (Winter, 1979), 310-20. Glenn argues that, although there are at least three areas of tension in Merleau-Ponty's account of the tacit cogito in Phenomenology of Perception, these notes should not be read as a repudiation of the tacit cogito. Instead, it indicates for Glenn only a revision; whereas it is the thesis of this paper that the change in paradigm makes the tacit cogito something radically different than it was in the Phenomenology of Perception.

7 Phenomenology of Perception, 404.
8 Visible and Invisible, 183.
10 Visible and Invisible, 195.
11 Ibid., 151.
12 Ibid., 189.
13 Ibid., 205.
14 Ibid., 153.
15 Ibid., 189. See also 237.
16 Ibid., 214.
17 Ibid., 208.
18 Ibid., 269-70.
19 Ibid., 267.
20 Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 13-14. Some references in Visible and Invisible to Heidegger's work which are not footnotes are: the amorphous perceptual world of Heidegger's Being (170); Physis (177); transcendence (185); the visible as pregnant with the invisible (216); Grund as Abrund (250); and universal dimensionality as Being (265).
21 Some important characteristics of Being in Visible and Invisible are: "being as a winding" (194); the notion of pregnancy (206-9); and "its polymorphic matrix" (221).

23 Lowry, 123.


25 *Visible and Invisible*, 274.


27 *Visible and Invisible*, 211.