

# Merleau-Ponty and the Circulation of Being

THOMAS W. BUSCH, *Villanova University*

In an interview with Richard Kearney, Jacques Derrida clarified his views on subjectivity:

I have never said [he tells Kearney] that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not deny its existence. There are subjects, 'operations' or 'effects' (*effets*) of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it *says* it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it.<sup>1</sup>

Looking back at Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*<sup>2</sup> in the light of Derrida's statement, one can say that the deconstruction of the subject was precisely the point of that text. Time after time, Merleau-Ponty critically addresses versions of "some pure *cogito* of self-presence," which have the common effect of drawing the subject outside of time and place, and thus out of finitude itself. While this critique weaves throughout the various chapters of the text, two chapters in particular squarely take up the issue: "The Body as Expression and Speech" and "The Cogito." Connecting language to the *cogito* forms the heart of Merleau-Ponty's case and is crucial to his project of overcoming traditional dualisms.

After carefully showing the reader how meaning and expression are inseparable in arts such as acting and music, Merleau-Ponty insists that "it is no different, despite what may appear to be the case, with the expression of thoughts in speech" (*PP*, 183). A pure *cogito* of self-presence would be a pure immanence sealed off from the external world, but pure immanence is an illusion acquired by repressing the function of words. "Expression fades out before what is expressed, and this is why its mediating role may pass unnoticed, and why Descartes nowhere mentions it. Descartes, and *a fortiori*, his reader, begin their meditation in what is already a universe of discourse" (*PP*, 401). Because words are always already in thinking, even thinking to oneself, "self-possession and coincidence with the self do not serve to define thought" (*PP*, 389). Inside and outside, private and public boundaries break down: "Inside and outside are inseparable.... The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself" (*PP*, 407). This image of a spiraling about one another of inside and outside is not reductive of subjectivity. Indeed, Merleau-

Ponty retains the vocabulary of intentionality: "The new sense-giving intention knows itself only by donning already available meanings" (*PP*, 183). Here the rethinking of subjectivity joins the analysis of the body and its double structure of sedimentation and spontaneity. In the case of rethinking subjectivity, the notion of sedimentation is expanded, beyond the habitual skills and competencies that characterize the body's practical dealings with the world, to include the intersubjective and cultural (what Merleau-Ponty would later characterize as the interworld). For Merleau-Ponty, one learns a language when words are understood in terms of their meaning in "a context of action, and by taking part in a communal life" (*PP*, 179). Thus, "already available meanings" as sedimented background refer to more than phonetic, grammatical, and lexical parts of a language, but to a living language, inseparable from a way of life. The speaker/thinker is sedimented in a "heritage," a "tradition," a subject indebted to sources of meaning it does not found.

While the *Phenomenology of Perception* employs the discourse of phenomenology, it continually subverts its most fundamental, Husserlian, theses, particularly that of the subjective constitution of meaning. It is not surprising, then, that Merleau-Ponty came to reject the notion of "constitution," preferring instead that of "institution." In laying out these themes in lectures presented at the College de France, he writes of "Institution in Personal and Public History,"<sup>3</sup> which begins with the suggestion that "the concept of institution may help us to find a solution to certain difficulties in the philosophy of consciousness" (*I*, 38). In particular, he remarks that in the philosophy of consciousness "there is no exchange, no interaction between consciousness and the object" (*I*, 38). Here, I believe, Merleau-Ponty is referring to Husserl's transcendental consciousness, understanding it to be an active giver of meaning, one that neither is affected by its objects nor is a real participant in the world, acting upon and being acted upon by worldly events. Already, in *Phenomenology of Perception*'s attention to the body, Merleau-Ponty had argued that the body is both actor and acted upon. For example, in using a tool, the body itself acts upon the world with extended capacity, but in so acting is itself modified, defined, by the tool. The "situated" subject of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, whether looked at as the practical actor upon the world or as the expressive subject, is no master, but always already involved in a historically finite system of instrumental and expressive capacities. Action and thought, he tells us in that text, are always mediated, and the mediations serve as both enablers and limitations. This characterizes finite existence. His work subsequent to *Phenomenology of Perception* draws out the consequences of finitude for philosophical thinking. The turn to "institution" not only draws on certain implications of his critique of traditional philosophical options, but serves to rectify certain weaknesses of *Phenomenology of*

*Perception*, which identifies body and language as mediations, but pays little attention to other forms of institutional mediation.

Thus what we understand by the concept of institution are those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or history—or again those events which sediment in me a meaning, not just as survivals or residues, but as the invitation to a sequel, the necessity of a future (*I*, 40–1).

The essays that comprise *Signs*<sup>4</sup> take up where the critique of the basic options of modern philosophy in *Phenomenology of Perception* leave off, with the question of what happens to philosophy when finitude and contingency are truly respected. These essays feature the "thickness of the field of existence," "the symbolic matrices" of the "social field," paying due attention to institutions in meaning formation, and consequently in subject formation. Important essays such as "On the Phenomenology of Language," "The Philosopher and Sociology," "From Mauss to Claude Levi-Strauss," and "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" offer Merleau-Ponty's resituated understanding of rationality, language, and communication, within the context of the turn from constitution to institution.

Merleau-Ponty sees no value in Husserl's preoccupation with an "ideal language," of which particular languages would be confused realizations. In claiming that "if universality is attained, it will not be through a universal language which would go back prior to the diversity of languages to provide us with the foundations of all possible languages" (*S*, 87), he is challenging Husserl's eidetic method itself which Merleau-Ponty believes to be incompatible with respect for finitude. The challenge extends throughout the two essays that follow it: "The Philosopher and Sociology" and "From Mauss to Levi-Strauss." Sociology is not the study of representative instantiations of essences discovered by philosophers. "Philosophy so conceived is no longer an inquiry. It is a certain body of doctrines, made to assure an absolutely *unfettered* spirit full possession of itself and its ideas" (*S*, 99). Instead, respect for finitude obliges us to recognize our finite inherence in a language, "which, far from being a particular case of other possible systems of expression, serves as our model for conceiving of them" (*S*, 105). It is at this point that Merleau-Ponty articulates the central commitment of his finite, and clearly hermeneutic, philosophy:

Since we are all hemmed in by history, it is up to us to understand that whatever truth we may have is to be gotten not in spite of but through our historical inherence. Superficially considered, our inherence

destroys all truth; considered radically, it founds a new idea of truth. As long as I cling to the ideal of an absolute spectator, of knowledge with no point of view, I can see my situation as nothing but a source of error. But if I have once recognized that through it I am grafted onto every action and all knowledge which can have a meaning for me, and that step by step it contains everything which can *exist* for me, then my contact with the social in the finitude of my situation is revealed to me as the point of origin of all truth... (S, 109).

This constitutes a clear deconstruction of the mind/body dualism with its privileging of mind, of the repression of body in favor of self-identification with spirit, *res cogitans*, transcendental ego, and so on. The new idea of truth rejects the traditional image of a vertical transcendence of the mind outside of its inherence in a particular time and place in favor of the image of lateral transcendence, "no longer the overarching universal of a strictly objective method, but a sort of lateral universal which we acquire through ethnological experience and its incessant testing of the self through the other person and the other person through the self" (S, 120). This new idea of truth connects finitude, the social, and truth in recognition of the perspectivism of the finite subject. One's immersion in sources of meaning is deep enough to be invisible within the horizons of one's own thinking, so that "they cannot be truly known by just being scrutinized and varied in thought, but must be confronted with other cultural formations and viewed against the background of other preconceptions" (S, 108). Self-understanding and self-criticism depend upon an encounter with alterity. Additionally, rationality and truth themselves weave with the social. As Merleau-Ponty criticizes the authority of the philosopher's presumed intuition of the *a priori*, so too does he criticize the positivism of a scientific project to isolate pure facts. Facts make sense only when framed and situated and related to other facts through ideas. The ideas or categories through which one makes sense of facts are public and social, sedimented and institutionalized products of attempts to rationalize one's lived experience. They are to be considered provisional; hence the reference above to the process of "testing." Categories earn their "rationality" by their power to explicate, to make sense of, experience. "Our task," he tells us, "is to broaden our reasoning to make it capable of grasping what, in ourselves and in others, precedes and exceeds reason" (S, 122). The criteria for a broadened rationality are very pragmatic. A true or rational idea "proves to be essential by the knowledge and action it makes possible, and gets itself to be recognized by [supposedly] irrational communities" (S, 111). While acknowledging, in deference to Claude Levi-Strauss, the existence of unconscious structures in every society—"Rather than their having got it [a structure], it has, if we may put it this way, 'got them'" (S, 117)—Merleau-Ponty, instead of situating

them in some hardware in the brain, prefers to view structures as sedimented strategies of lived attempts to find an equilibrium with the environment, thus opening up the possibility of change: "Furthermore, the equipment of our social being can be dismantled and reconstructed by the voyage..." (S, 119). It would not be a stretch to say that rationality is a social, communicative process.

"Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," although the lead essay in *Signs*, can be viewed as its culminating piece insofar as it exemplifies the process of communicative rationality through painting. With the first painting an expressive mode or dimension was opened through its public sedimentation. Like speech, painting is not "the translation or cipher of an original text" (S, 43), but rather a point where "life emerges from itself ... and is thus not shut up in the depths of the mute individual..." (S, 53). Expressive acts exemplify how inside and outside, private and public, particular and universal, spiral around one another. Event becomes advent with the work of art as institution.

Husserl has used the fine word *Stiftung*—foundation or establishment—to designate first of all the unlimited fecundity of each present which, precisely because it is singular and passes, can never stop having been and thus being universally; but above all to designate that fecundity of the products of culture which continue to have value after their appearance and which open a field of investigations in which they perpetually come to life again. [An act of expression,] ... far from exhausting itself in the instant at which it occurs, inaugurates an order and founds an institution or a tradition (S, 59).

The expressive subject is both implanted in formative sources of meaning, in their public, sedimented form, and one who, in taking up these sources provides a "deformation," a carrying of them on through transforming them, providing them with not a "survival," but "a new life, which is the noble form of memory" (S, 59). Institutions, as sedimented nodes, nuclei, symbolic matrices, supply, for Merleau-Ponty, the coherence and stability which metaphysical essences are traditionally called upon to found, by providing those "durable dimensions, in which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history ... not just as survivals or residues, but as the invitation to a sequel..." (I, 40–1). But this sort of history does not exhibit "a manifest logic to which knowledge conforms" (I, 43), as in the Hegelian system. Rather, what is at stake is a "circulation" (I, 43) of meaning with no metaphysical center or telos and deeply affected by contingency and inertia, precisely what metaphysics would repress. From this or that perspective one can speak of an event as "progress," but from other perspectives the same event can be seen as "saddled with deficits."

In claiming that the circulation of meaning takes place by "invitation" and "response," the fact that "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" is dedicated to Sartre and is Merleau-Ponty's own response to *What Is Literature?*<sup>5</sup> ought not to escape our attention. *What Is Literature?* is Sartre's attempt to write an ethics (and politics), something he had announced as early as *The Transcendence of the Ego*.<sup>6</sup> Sartre's ethics emerges from his understanding of literature as a communicative process whereby writer and reader reciprocally recognize one another's freedom and cooperate in the creation of an aesthetic object. Merleau-Ponty takes issue with Sartre's understanding of language, according to which words, as they function in literature, are "transparent" and directly attach themselves unequivocally to things. In the beginning of "Indirect Language..." Merleau-Ponty challenges Sartre with his claim that "language is much more like a sort of being than a means" (S, 43), so that language always functions indirectly, allusively. Thus, communicative linguistic processes, for Merleau-Ponty, can never signal Sartre's utopian and ideal political ends, but rather signal a respect for inevitable differences of interpretation. What Merleau-Ponty accepts from Sartre's analysis is the relation of reciprocity Sartre finds implicit in processes of communication. Thus the discourse of "invitation" and "response." Circulation of meaning implies "brotherhood." The Other of communication is the one to whom I address myself, and thus one in whom I recognize "worth." These considerations are foreshadowed in *Phenomenology of Perception* when Merleau-Ponty speaks of dialogue as a "shared operation ... where the other is for me no longer a bit of behavior in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in a consummate reciprocity" (PP, 354). Communicative rationality is a "perpetual conversation" (S, 74) in which I discover "the obligation to understand situations other than my own and to create a path between my life and that of others" (S, 75). Merleau-Ponty's circulation of meaning, as a formulation of a communicative rationality, implies a communicative ethic.

At the same time that "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" responds to Sartre (and exemplifies in this regard Merleau-Ponty's views on communicative rationality), so do the essays in *Signs* that we have discussed respond to Husserl. We have observed how in these essays Merleau-Ponty is concerned to subvert Husserl's eidetic methodology. In doing so, he uses uncharacteristically strong language. He claims that respect for finitude ought to prohibit "the philosopher from arrogating to himself an immediate access to the universal" (S, 109). Again, he warns that philosophy ought not to pose as "a propagandist in the service of objective knowledge" (S, 113), but instead recognize its proper dimension of "coexistence." In his "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man,"<sup>7</sup> written during this same time frame, Merleau-Ponty once more raises the issue of an eidetic intuition and access to universals

and, as in "The Philosopher and Sociology," mentions an exchange between Husserl and anthropologist Levy-Bruhl, the author of *Primitive Mythology*.<sup>8</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's reading of Levy-Bruhl gave him pause regarding the effectiveness of imaginative variation's central role in the eidetic method, a fundamental question bearing on that method's ability "to represent the possibilities of existence which are realized in different cultures" (PSM, 90). Merleau-Ponty asks, "How it is possible for a German, born in the nineteenth century in a milieu [*Umwelt*] which is not fixed, but in a world which has a national past to be realized and a future partly realized, to know this by mere imagination?" (PSM, 91). Merleau-Ponty admits that Husserl's exchange with Levy-Bruhl did not deter him from his project of transforming the level of lifeworld experiences into clearly definable universals. Merleau-Ponty's obvious concern is to distinguish his notion of rationality as "coexistence" and conversation from an approach to universals which, unappreciative of its historical situatedness, mistakes the particular for the universal. Thus, I read the subtext of Merleau-Ponty's own dialogue with the social sciences to be Husserl's views in the "Vienna Lecture,"<sup>9</sup> which have the effect of identifying reason itself with a certain historical sedimentation (a critique that presages Derrida's suggestive identification of metaphysics and ethnocentrism).<sup>10</sup> In his "Vienna Lecture," Husserl's subtext is the National Socialism that was sweeping his country. To the Nazis's particularist definition of the "homeland," Husserl opposes a "supranational" homeland, a new mode of community based upon reason, a "spiritual" community instead of a biological or "natural" community. This spiritual community is Europe, imbued with the "entelechy" of reason, based upon objective, identical, and universal idealities, a notion introduced by the initiators of "reason," the Greeks. The effect of Husserl's attempt to universalize is to exclude, if one notices his attitude toward the Orient and peoples such as Indians and Gypsies, although they might occupy the geographical space of Europe. Husserl is convinced that it is the West's mission to "educate" aliens, to bring reason to the mythico-religious life of non-Westerners.<sup>11</sup> Recall in this regard Merleau-Ponty's warning about the philosopher as "propagandist." What other than Husserl's views can be the object of Merleau-Ponty's remarks on "The Orient and Philosophy" in *Signs*? Lacking an absolute viewpoint, he tells us, "our entire evaluation of other cultures must be reexamined" (S, 137). We must admit, therefore, that "Oriental thought ... is beyond the reach of our categories" (S, 136). He suggests, in direct contrast to Husserl, who thought that the West's possession of the entelechy of reason would motivate, for example, Indians "to Europeanize themselves," whereas "we [Westerners] would never Indianize ourselves,"<sup>12</sup> that:

Indian and Chinese philosophies have tried not so much to dominate existence as to be the echo or the sounding board of our relationship to being. Western philosophy can learn from them to rediscover the relationship to being and initial option which gave it birth, and to estimate the possibilities we have shut ourselves off from becoming 'Westerners' and perhaps reopen them (*S*, 139).

This represents Merleau-Ponty's commitment to the conversational model of rationality which promises to "introduce us to unfamiliar perspectives instead of confirming us in our own" (*S*, 77), and insists that pursuit of the truth "is incomplete as long as it does not pass into other perspectives and into the perspectives of others."<sup>13</sup> Gary Madison is exactly right to point out that Merleau-Ponty's critique of reason "is to be understood not as an abandonment of reason or rationality but as an attempt to work out a new conception of reason, to arrive at, 'an enlarged reason.'"<sup>14</sup> Reason, Madison correctly adds, for Merleau-Ponty is not something metaphysically given or guaranteed, but is an outcome of dialogue, "a discussion which does not end." The universal as well, freed from metaphysical givenness, assumes the figure of an always open horizon. Implied in the differences between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty over universal essences and the circulation of being is a radically democratic politics, one that "always exists in the relative and the probable" (*AD*, 205), and in which one, acutely conscious of one's own perspectivism, takes other perspectives seriously.

While Merleau-Ponty's resituating of subjectivity, rationality, and universality significantly prefigures Derrida's deconstruction of the same, several strains of criticism today hold that Merleau-Ponty's project could not, after all, free itself from the metaphysical tradition that he sought to overcome. In this regard attention has shifted from the essays in *Signs* and *Adventures of the Dialectic* to the ontologically oriented and posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible*.<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Bell, in *The Problem of Difference: Phenomenology and Poststructuralism*,<sup>16</sup> offers a version of this criticism with his claim that Merleau-Ponty has "not adequately accounted for difference, or transcendence" (*PD*, 179). Bell admits that at a certain level of analysis—perception and speech—Merleau-Ponty holds a view of differentiation (*ecart*) without which identities could not appear. This is the level, Bell tells us, of "flesh," the paradoxical intertwining of immanence and transcendence without reduction to one another. But, Bell adds, "Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh, however, is in turn grounded in the fundamental unity of Being.... Difference is, in the end, reduced to a difference of Being, a difference rooted in the identity of Being" (*PD*, 179). Bell understands this "identity of Being," based on a reference by Merleau-Ponty to "one sole Being," as a repetition of Heidegger's difference between Being and beings.

Merleau-Ponty claims there is *Being*, the 'one sole Being,' there are *beings* of everyday perception (i.e., horizontal Being), and *between* the two there is a fundamental separation, a fundamental gap, or the 'third term' Merleau-Ponty calls 'ecart.' But to understand difference as the difference *between* two identities, as the difference between Being and being, is nevertheless to understand difference as something derivative of identity. Difference, in the end, is reduced to identity (*PD*, 229).

This would imply that the circulation of being that we have found in Merleau-Ponty's essays on rationality, the universal, and communication does not circulate on its own contingent account, as it were, but is bound by some constraints or rules of movement, some logic of identity, something transcendent to the process of circulation, to the effect that the differences that are deeply imbedded in the communicative processes that comprise the circulation of Being are derivative. To find thinkers who appreciate how difference cuts all the way down one must turn, Bell concludes, to the poststructuralists—to Deleuze, for example.

I would not want to argue that one finds in Merleau-Ponty's ontology "the play of differences" Bell mentions as constitutive of the poststructuralist break from the metaphysical tradition, nor would I deny the temptation to read Merleau-Ponty's texts in Heideggerian terms. However, I do argue that it is possible to understand the ontology of *The Visible and the Invisible* as an ontology of the circulation of Being, an understanding of Being as it is implicated in the phenomena of communication. Here, in the question of rethinking ontology, as it was in the question of rethinking society and history, the turn to "institution" is crucial. As Bell recognizes, Merleau-Ponty insists that *ecart* "is not a no I affect *myself* with, a lack which I constitute as a lack by the upsurge of an *end* which I give myself—it is a *natural* negativity, a first institution, always already there" (*VI*, 216). But whereas Bell would limit the natural negativity to the perception and language of the lifeworld and not extend it to Being, I would extend the notion of "institution" to the understanding of Being itself as reflecting an essential experience of communicative processes. Merleau-Ponty was quite clear in his criticisms of Sartre in *The Visible and the Invisible* that Being and its differentiations were not separable: "The negations, the perspective deformations, the possibilities, which I have learned to consider as extrinsic denominations, I must now reintegrate into Being—which therefore is staggered out in depth... (*VI*, 77).

Important entries in *The Visible and the Invisible* attest that Merleau-Ponty left behind the transcendental tradition (which, according to Bell, he persisted in to the end). For example, he decided to "leave the philosophy of *Erlebnisse* and pass to the philosophy of our *Urstiftung*" (*VI*, 221).<sup>17</sup> This is seen to imply

refiguring his former understanding of transcendental categories: "Replace the notions of concept, idea, mind, representation with the notions of *dimensions*, level, hinges, pivots, configuration..." (VI, 224). These become categories of Being itself which, in their functioning, are the "invisible" of Being. "Being is the 'place,'" Merleau-Ponty writes, "where the 'modes of consciousness' are inscribed as structurations of Being..." (VI, 253). The very dimensions through which the meaning of Being circulates are structurations of Being. These dimensions, pivots, or levels are the instituted openings of meaning and its development which are factual components of all communication. As a weave of the sensible and cultural, these phenomena can develop (contingently) through the very exchanges they make possible. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty's later and richly developed understanding of "the instituted" is rooted in his earlier phenomenology of expression: "The new sense-giving intention," he writes in *Phenomenology of Perception*, "knows itself only by donning already available meanings, the outcomes of previous acts of expression" (PP, 183). The "sense-giving intention," which can give rise to "a fresh cultural entity," is, in this early account, an instance of human "transcendence," which is an "irrational power to create meanings" (PP, 189). This is reflected in the distinction Merleau-Ponty draws between "spoken speech" and "speaking speech" (PP, 197), between cliché and originary expression of meaning. This recognition of an originary meaning in Merleau-Ponty's early phenomenology of expression finds its complement in the notion of "wild" Being in the latter ontology. The ontology of communicative life, then, recognizes both dimensions, institution and creation, and rather than being a repetition of Heidegger's ontological distinction between Being and beings, is a restatement of the originary and sedimented of his earlier study of expression, a refiguring of actuality and possibility to meet the experience of communicative life. The relation between the originary and the instituted, as implicated in the experience of communicative life, is a circular form of dialectic, which reflects the continuous "spiriling" about of inside and outside, wherein neither can rest in its own identity, and marks an ontology of "exchanges." This is the ontological consequence of Merleau-Ponty's critique of immanence and transcendence in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

There will undoubtedly always be diverse readings of the enigmatic *The Visible and the Invisible*. Read in the light of the essays on communicative life which were written at the same time as it, the ontology neither becomes an exotic experiment nor marks an abrupt turn of thought. In the "Epilogue" to *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Merleau-Ponty was already thinking of a notion of Being in terms of "dialectic" (the circulation of Being without metaphysical center or telos): "There is dialectic only in that type of being in which a junction of subjects occurs, being which is not only a spectacle that each subject presents to itself for its own benefit, but which is rather their common

residence, the place of their exchange and of their reciprocal interpretation" (AD, 204). The unity of Being in the context of its circulation eludes a logic of identity. Instead, it translates into the possibility of ethical and political community, solicited by that very "call" to an irreducible Other which is the very life of expression.

tbusch@email.vill.edu

### Notes

1. Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 125.
2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962). Hereafter cited as *PP*.
3. Merleau-Ponty, "Institution in Personal and Public History," in *Themes from the Lectures at the College de France (1952-1960)*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). Hereafter *I*.
4. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964). Hereafter *S*.
5. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, in *What Is Literature? and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).
6. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Noonday Press, 1957).
7. Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man," trans. John Wild, in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, 1964.
8. Lucian Levy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mythology: the Mythic World of the Australian and Papuan Natives* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983).
9. Edmund Husserl, "The Vienna Lecture," in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

10. "One can say with total security that there is nothing fortuitous about the fact that the critique of ethnocentrism—the very condition for ethnology—should be systematically and historically contemporaneous with the destruction of the history of metaphysics. Both belong to one and the same era." Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

11. Husserl, "The Vienna Lecture," 280, 283, 286.

12. Ibid., 275.

13. Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 204.

14. Gary Madison, "Merleau-Ponty and Postmodernity," in *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 72.

15. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968). Hereafter *VI*.

16. Jeffrey A. Bell, *The Problem of Difference: Phenomenology and Post-structuralism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). Hereafter *PD*.

17. For an extended discussion of the influence of structuralism on Merleau-Ponty, see James Schmidt's splendid study, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1985).