

Reversibility and *Ereignis*: Being as Kantian Imagination in Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger

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Abstract: This paper aims to clarify Merleau-Ponty's difficult concept of "reversibility" by interpreting it as resuming the dialectical critique of the rationalist and empiricist tradition that informs Merleau-Ponty's earlier work. The focus is on reversibility in "Eye and Mind," as dismantling the traditional dualism of activity and passivity. This clarification also puts reversibility in continuity with the *Phenomenology's* appropriation of Kant, letting us note an affiliation between Merleau-Ponty's reversibility and Heidegger's *Ereignis*: in each case being itself already performs the operation that Kant had located in the imagination. Reversibility discovers this Kantian imagination moving in place, *Ereignis* discovers it in temporality.

This paper aims to clarify Merleau-Ponty's difficult concept of "reversibility" by interpreting it as resuming the dialectical critique of the rationalist and empiricist tradition that so deeply informs Merleau-Ponty's earlier work. The focus is on reversibility in "Eye and Mind" (*OE*)¹ as dismantling the traditional dualism of activity and passivity. This interpretation sheds light on some difficult points in "Eye and Mind," including Merleau-Ponty's repeated and strange claims that things look at us. But it also puts reversibility in continuity with the *Phenomenology's* engagement with Kant. This lets us note an affiliation between Merleau-Ponty's reversibility and Heidegger's *Ereignis*: in each case being itself already performs the operation that Kant had located in the imagination. Reversibility discovers this Kantian imagination moving in place, *Ereignis* discovers it in temporality. My claims about reversibility complement, complicate and add to the existing literature, which literature does not, however, quite pursue the point that I make here.²

It is well known that Merleau-Ponty's *Structure of Behaviour* and *Phenomenology of Perception* (*PhP*)³ work as dialectical critiques of scientific and philosophical empiricism and rationalism. What is not so obvious or emphasized is that his later discussion of reversibility resumes this critique by other means, and that the earlier works in part anticipate reversibility.

Merleau-Ponty's earlier criticisms are well rehearsed. For the rationalist, the subject is an active constituter of the perceived world. This puts the subject outside the world, contrary to the experience that one is a bodily being in the world. But the emphasis on activity itself poses a problem: if we are wholly active in constituting the world, then it is impossible to explain how we are subject to illusion or need perceptual learning. More bluntly, it is impossible to explain something obvious: that in perception, a world is given, rather than actively made by us. This is what the empiricist gets right: perception opens to givenness.

But the empiricist makes an error in reducing perception to givenness and thereby reducing perception to passivity, as if perception begins with meaningless givens that only subsequently activate subjective processes. In this case subjective experience is a product driven by the given and we could not explain how there is a sense of a subject over and against the given. More important, we could not explain perceptual error, illusion, learning, or meaning, for each of these requires that the subject add something over and above the given. And so the rationalist is right in urging that perception involves activity.⁴

These points coil into Merleau-Ponty's observation that "Empiricism cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism [rationalism] fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching." (*PhP* 36/28) Empiricism makes us all too passive, incapable of looking for anything above the given, whilst rationalism makes us all too active and blind or indifferent to the given, incapable of having anything to look for. Merleau-Ponty is here rehearsing the seeker's paradox from Plato's *Meno*. As Martin Dillon (1988) shows, undoing this paradox is a recurrent Merleau-Pontean theme. *Meno*'s dualism of knowledge and ignorance is false: one is neither a wholly active knower, nor a wholly passive ignoramus, one is midway between knowledge and ignorance, one is always *learning*, that is, actively seeking only by being passive to what one seeks. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty shows that perception is learning, and that accounting for perception as learning means rejecting the traditional dualism of activity and passivity.

To be precise, Merleau-Ponty is showing how, in the field of perception, activity turns passive and passivity turns active. Yes, the empiricist is right in emphasizing the need for passive openness to the given, but that passive openness generates veridical and meaningful perception only if it *already* turns active: my hand as open to the proddings of the marble feels it as unified only if opening to it in the mode of *actively* exploring it; when my activity is disrupted by crossing my fingers, I feel a doubled marble;⁵ and an immobilized hand becomes insensitive to anything meaningful. (See Katz 1989; Buytendijk 1970) Similarly with my eyes: I must "'look' in order to 'see'." (*PhP* 232/268) And while the rationalist is right in emphasizing activity, this yields perception only if it *already* turns passive to the perceived: when looking through inverting goggles, the world is not visually rotated 180 degrees, it is utterly different and unnavigable; the perceiver cannot see this new world as meaningful because she does not know what to look for in it. This is because her habits actively look for a world that no longer gives itself; it is only when her eyes and body turn passive to this new world, give into it and thence see it in a manner suited to it, that she can look in order to see a sensible world.⁶

So, contra the empiricist, one already has to look in order to see, and contra the rationalist one already has to see in order to look. Really, seeing and looking are never so close to one another, as are touching and being touched—yet they never coincide since action and passion are of distinctive moment. Touching and seeing turn back and forth between passivity and activity *all the way down*. That is, at every level of perceptual process, passivity and activity remain distinct yet interrelated. If not, we would end up reducing passivity to activity (which is the error of the rationalist), or reducing activity to passivity (the error of the empiricist), or we would need an underlying ready-made world to coordinate their interrelation. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty's analysis in *PhP* repeatedly implies that activity and passivity must remain distinct, yet be interrelated, without yet having this relation be based in something already given or in anything like an underlying identity of activity and passivity. To put it another way, the reason why newness and learning can erupt in the perceived world, the reason why we are *not* caught in a ready-made world, is because activity and passivity are irreducible to one another, yet are implicated in each other. There is a sort of gap in the relation between activity and passivity that allows something novel to be engendered.

I mention this gap here because it flags something important in my usage of the word "turns." First, I introduce the word "turns" to designate a relational logic at stake in reversibility, without yet merely repeating the latter word. Second, when I say that activity turns passive, I do not mean that activity *turns into* passivity, in the way that ice turns into water when it melts, with

some underlying thing turning into another form. I am rather thinking of a relation that might be better exemplified by east turning west when I turn around. The town that's east of me 'turns into' the town that's west of me when I turn around and head back along my route, but east itself does not turn into west. There is a reversal of roles, without the roles collapsing into one another. In the cases of perception discussed above, we find, for example, that active touching, by its very own activity, turns around or is turned back into passive tactile feeling, is rerouted into passivity. But activity itself does not lapse into passivity, indeed activity remains of distinctive moment in driving this turning around. Consider the experience of touching something: at each moment one can feel, for example, oneself gently pressing down on one's desk and one's desk gently pressing back, or vice versa, yet these two moments cannot be conflated and they stand out as distinct. Indeed, the active pressing must retain its distinctness, for it is precisely the determinate pattern of one's active pressing that allows one to be passive to the pattern of impresses that are determinative of hard, rough, or spongy (etc.) tactile objects. (See Katz 1989; Lederman and Klatzky 1987) To put it another way, one's activity functions as the determinate ground against which the figure can show up in the form of a determinate passivity. And just as the figure and ground reciprocally determine one another, yet have no point in common (since every point is either in the figure or in the ground, and not in both), so too with activity and passivity. When I say that the active turns passive, then, I am saying that the active and the passive undergo a reorganization kin to a gestalt shift in which what's foreground turns to what's background, or the duck turns to the rabbit. (On the connection between gestalt shift and reversibility, see (Hass 1999) and (Kojima 2002).)⁷

What I have said so far is that in *PhP* perception turns back and forth between activity and passivity, as irreducible to one another. And this means that *PhP* already anticipates Merleau-Ponty's thought of reversibility. To see this let us look at "Eye and Mind." Right from its first sentences this work resumes Merleau-Ponty's earlier critique of the rationalist dualisation of activity and passivity: "Science manipulates things and gives up living in them. It makes its own limited models of things...it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals. Science is and always has been [...] admirably active..." (*OE* 9/159) Science, like the Cartesian rationalism that Merleau-Ponty dissects in section three of "Eye and Mind," is all too active. To refute this 'activism' Merleau-Ponty will look in an empiricist direction—but not to the empiricist philosopher. He will look to the experience of touch and of the painter.

In the phenomenon of double-touch, of one hand touching the other, I experience, say, my left hand as the active toucher, and my right hand as the passive touched. But the activeness of my left hand is inseparably mixed⁸ with the passiveness of my right. With the slightest active pressure from the right hand, the phenomenon reverses and my right hand turns active as my left turns passive. Really, within my body, activity and passivity inherently reverse, turn, into one another in ways that also reverse back and forth across my body. But this reversibility is not confined within my body merely. As we have seen, my active touching turns passive to the things I touch. It is because the cloth and the wine glass are not purely passive, but act against me in different ways, that I learn how to feel them for what they are. Thus Merleau-Ponty writes: "Things are an annex or prolongation of [the body]; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff of the body." (*OE* 19/163) He also writes that "Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence." (*OE* 22/164) Reversibility designates this multiplex phenomenon: that my body pervasively turns between the active and passive, such that the active and passive already reverse

into one another; that things similarly turn between active and passive; and that these two turnings already reverse into one another.

Tracing the like reversibility in the case of the seer-seen is more difficult, for our everyday and traditional frameworks blind us to the active role of things seen. This is why Merleau-Ponty looks to the painter. We think we already know how to see, and that we seers are thus wholly active in our seeing. The painter knows this is not true. We must look in order to see, and the painter knows that she does not yet know how to look so as to see the thing as it shows itself. So she lets things teach her how to look. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

It is the mountain itself which from out there makes itself seen by the painter; it is the mountain that he interrogates with his gaze.

What exactly does he ask of it? To unveil the means, visible and not otherwise, by which it makes itself a mountain before our eyes. (*OE* 28-9/166)

The painter must see the mountain in order to learn how to look at it, and this is in order to see it as the mountain seen from just this place, with just this body. And this is in order to, in paint, draw the eyes of the viewer into a kind of looking that will see, in the painting, a mountain, as seen from just this place, with just this body. (Notably, such a painting, as in the case of Cézanne, paints things by way of painting ways of looking and seeing.) How can the mountain have this strangely active role in the painter's learning? And how can the painter feel things looking at him? (Merleau-Ponty takes the latter phenomenon seriously and links it to the reversibility of the seer-seen, as, e.g., when he writes that "Inevitably the roles between him [the painter] and the visible are reversed. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them." (*OE* 31/167))

Things can have this role and can look at the painter because things are not wholly defined by the painter's take on them. The mountain exceeds the painter because she interrogates it with a moving gaze, against which the mountain acts. The mountain has a look, an active⁹ way of looking out at us, a way of glancing¹⁰ light off itself into our glance, a way of bundling, concentrating and moving light rays correlative to the way we bundle, move and concentrate light rays with our moving eyes and look. And the mountain can have this active-passive relation to us because a condition of our being able to see is our having moving bodies that can catch the light and be seen, be caught by the glance of others or by light rays glancing off us or into our eyes. That is, the mountain is not passively given in and of itself once and for all, it has a way of structuring its interaction with the light, and of thereby acting on the painter's body; the mountain and painter reverse into one another in the manner of the toucher-touched, but at a distance mediated by light and the movement of widely separated bodies, the painter over here, the mountain over there, with the moving sun, clouds, and so on, coming into play. We can shed further light on the issue by conceptualizing it in terms of Bergsonian pure perception, which has resonances with Merleau-Pontain reversibility¹¹: Insofar as the mountain is active-passive, it is not entirely different in kind from an organism such as the painter; if the mountain's interaction with light could make a difference to it, move it, if it could be active-passive with respect to light in the mode of being affected by it, then we would say that the mountain sees us. As it stands, the mountain is a glacially slow and near immobile organism, impervious to affect, which is why we barely register it as an organism on the time-scale through which we encounter it. This is why Merleau-Ponty does not say that the mountain sees us, only that it looks at us in such a way that it "makes itself be seen by the painter." Nonetheless, the painter's quickly affective eye "sees that which is missing from the world for it to be a painting." (*OE* 25/165) The painter can compress the mountain's slow interactivity into a shifting movement activity that can be seen in

the painting; it is this shifting look of things that Monet, for example, paints in his serial studies of haystacks, and that he tries to compress into each painting in the series.

Tellingly, Merleau-Ponty concludes this discussion by returning to the Meno paradox. The question posed by the painter to the world is “not a question asked of someone who doesn’t know by someone who does—the schoolmaster’s question.” (*OE* 30/167) It is the Cartesian sketcher (see section III of *OE*) who poses the schoolmaster’s question, who already knows how to sketch everything—in virtue of a wholly active sketching procedure. It is easy to grasp how the painter does not pose “the schoolmaster’s question,” since she is a visual Socrates who knows that she does not know how to paint the mountain. This is why her painting is a six month dialogue with the mountain that ends in aporia. What is harder to grasp, which is what I am emphasizing, is that the painter’s question “is not a question asked of someone who doesn’t know.” The mountain is not a wholly passive object void of sense, it is transformed by and actively responds to the painter’s moving question. The mountain ‘knows’ how to be seen, it acts in the visible so as to appear as a solid, or as melting into cloud. The Cartesian sketcher sketches the mountain as given, all present, to the mind, and this activism fixes the mountain as passive, whereas the painter paints the mountain’s *action*, the way it works the light and sun so as to actively melt back and forth from solid into cloud. Indeed, this is what the painter can capture in paint, and what the photographer (according to Merleau-Ponty) could not capture: the thing as active, as operating with light so as to shift from solid into cloud. So here too we have the complex of reversibility discussed in the case of the toucher-touched: the painter’s body is reversibly active-passive, looking-seeing, but this reversibility is already the reverse of things as also active-passive.

This interpretation of reversibility in *OE* puts it in continuity with the interrelation of activity and passivity in *PhP*. But the later result no longer depends on the philosopher first endorsing traditional frameworks to then undo them in thought via philosophical dialectic; being itself has ventured this dialectic beforehand, has questioned the tradition from the start. The result emerges from a ‘good’ dialectic, without synthesis, not a ‘bad’ dialectic.¹² Nonetheless, there is a continuity, confirmed by *OE*’s striking attack against activism, its emphasis on learning and the Meno paradox, and its claim that vision and movement intertwine and “are each total parts of the same Being,” (*OE* 17/162) which returns us to earlier issues of perception and action in *PhP*. But it is most strongly confirmed by Merleau-Ponty’s remark that painting shows that “There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being, *action and passion so slightly discernible* that one no longer knows who sees and who is seen, who paints and who is painted.” (*OE* 31-32/167, emphasis mine) In the way that respiration turns back and forth between inside and outside, through moments of inspiration and expiration that are interrelated yet irreducible to one another, action and passion turn back and forth between and within the seer and the seen, without yet being reducible to one another. It is, however, precisely at this juncture that we move beyond *PhP*, for what turns action into passion is now being, not the body merely.

To develop this point I introduce a broader conceptual backdrop, by way of a working note from *The Visible and the Invisible*, where Merleau-Ponty writes: “Circularity [of] speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived (it is because of it that it seems to us that perception forms itself *in the things themselves*)—*Activity=passivity*.”¹³ This confirms that Merleau-Ponty is thinking of reversibility as undoing the active-passive dualism, and that what is key to reversibility is something in the things themselves. How are we to make sense of the latter? In this note Merleau-Ponty elides reversibility’s challenge to the active-passive dualism

with a challenge to the “real opposition” in Kant, which is between “perception” and “counter-perception”—between intuition and concept.¹⁴ Kant’s famous doctrine is that “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”¹⁵ Reversibility tells us *that Kant’s doctrine holds because there never was a question of concepts without intuitions in the first place*. Things already have the active way of putting themselves together that our concepts would otherwise have to lend them, and our concepts are already intuitive, they are already flagged by things; such ‘concepts,’ we could say, are what the eye sees as “missing from the world for it to be a painting.” (*OE* 25/165) In *PhP*, concepts are not in the mind merely, but in the way the expressive body, in virtue of its schema, moulds itself to things, and the way things given to the body are moulded as replies to this schema. In virtue of this schematizing structure, body and thing turn to one another as question and reply,¹⁶ so the given is nascent with concepts, and our concepts are not purely spontaneous but express concepts nascent in things. This critique of the concept-intuition dualism is echoed by Merleau-Ponty’s rejection, in the midst of his study of touch in the chapter on “Sense Experience,” in *PhP*, of the a priori-a posteriori dualism. And this echoes his rejection of the active-passive dualism, for Merleau-Ponty’s point is that the a priori (which is required to avoid pure passivity) is not, however, an autonomous spontaneity (a pure activity). The a priori of touch is rather a spontaneous operation upon and in the given, an activity within passivity, such that touch turns between the active and the passive.¹⁷

Now in Kant, concepts and intuitions are brought together by schemata, and this requires the operation of the imagination. Insofar as reversibility undoes the dualisms of concept and intuition, what achieves reversibility achieves the operation of the Kantian imagination. In *PhP* what achieves this is the body schema. In virtue of this schema, the body, through its habits, spontaneously anticipates more than is there—yet in ways (slowly) responsive to what is there. In turn, this operation of the body schema entails the ecstatic temporality in virtue of which the body is ahead of itself in an open yet projective future. Ecstatic temporality as operating through the body schema is the operation of the Kantian imagination in the sense that it is capable of producing images, coherences, or structures, over and above the given. (In Kant’s discussion imagination is *not* the psychological faculty.) What must be noted is that the reversibility of the *Phenomenology* points to an imagination operative *on the side of the body*, even if open to the world and time—and to this extent we could say that it remains a philosophy of the subject that yet anticipates Merleau-Ponty’s later and more radical philosophy.

OE and *VI* locate this imagination in being itself. Things themselves out there, such as the mountain, are not coincident with themselves, are not reducible to what a sketching mind makes of them, they have, in their relation to us and other things, an activity surpassing of and distinct from passivity. There is a power in them of producing images, coherences, structures, over and above the given. And they do so not on the basis of an already established schema but on the basis of operating in an ontological gap, or turning between activity and passivity, that can engender such images without there yet being an already established ground for such images.

Deleuze writes that Kant “raises himself up to the synthetic identity of the subject and object, but the object is merely an object relative to the subject: this very identity is the synthesis of the imagination; it is not posited in being. Kant goes beyond the psychological and the empirical, but remains within the anthropological.”¹⁸ What I am saying is that the *Phenomenology*’s discovery, in perception, of the active and passive turning into one another is the discovery of the synthetic identity of the subject and object through their bodily reciprocity, via the body and its temporality as operating the synthesis of the imagination. But this discovery remains within the anthropological, or, more precisely, its non-anthropological implications have

not yet been unpacked. In the deeper reversibility of his later thinking, Merleau-Ponty unpacks these implications and moves beyond the anthropological to posit the synthesis of the imagination in being. Support for this claim and the above reading is, I think, given in a working note from the period of *VI*, published only recently,¹⁹ in which Merleau-Ponty writes that “The imaginary deploys itself in this field [of sense]—which is therefore carnal.” He then writes:

The imaginary: *decentring* of the sensible.

The concept: *decentring* of the imaginary.

Me-world chiasm: the things gaze upon me. I gaze upon myself (through the eyes of things). (443)

Now Heidegger is someone who also famously dwells on the relation between imagination and being in Kant, well captured in his remark in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1997) that Kant “shrank back” from what he had discovered in the imagination in the A deduction. And it seems to me that what Heidegger discovers in *Ereignis* is that the synthesis of imagination is posited in being. Heidegger’s *On Time and Being*, for example, is trying to get us into the position where we can hear the “*es gibt sein*” as announcing a peculiar performative or inherent delay structure of being, such that the “it” announced does not give itself now, on a ground of passive presence, but through an action yet to come, that will have given it—yet this action is announced through a now which thus recedes as *Abgrund*.²⁰ In other words, being is capable of producing images, coherences, structures, over and above the given, being operates as the synthesis of imagination. Over and above the immediately given, there is an *es gibt sein*; being as meaningful event is given, and not nothing.

My sense is that Merleau-Ponty is moving beyond the anthropological by finding this synthesis of the imagination at work in being via a movement that reverses across us and things in place, for it is place that grants moving interaction and thence the divergence between activity and passivity, the “decentring” through which we find images, coherences and structures over and above the given. Heidegger is finding this synthesis at work in being via the movement or event of temporality itself.²¹

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¹ References to “Eye and Mind” are given in the form *OE* [pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1964)]/[pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1964)].

² Irigaray’s famous critique of Merleau-Ponty’s account of the toucher-touched flags the issue of activity and passivity central to my discussion. Irigaray (1993), 160-1, seeks something that altogether exceeds the traditional active-passive distinction. In effect I argue that Merleau-Ponty’s challenge to the tradition and his concept of reversibility seeks something that operates as the sort of “middle-passive” that, according to Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty is missing. However, what operates as the middle-passive in Merleau-Ponty does not appear as a stable ontological region, but as a turning between active and passive. There is nothing identifiable as the middle-passive. So perhaps, then, Irigaray’s criticism is preserved. While Merleau-Ponty does not, as Irigaray claims, operate with a traditional ontology, neither does he operate with Irigaray’s.

Several commentators link Irigaray’s observations about activity and passivity to discussions of reversibility in Merleau-Ponty, but do not pursue this connection in depth back into Merleau-Ponty’s works as a whole. See, e.g., Vasseleu (1998), 65-67; Cataldi (1993), 105-6; and Grosz (1999), esp. 158-9. Others have noted the link between reversibility and activity-passivity (e.g., Kleinberg-Levin (1999), 207) or have helpfully tied this to issues in Husserl (Zahavi (2002)), but have not pursued the link in depth back into Merleau-Ponty’s earlier works, or drawn support, as below, from *OE*.

Chapter nine of Dillon (1988) analyzes Merleau-Ponty’s reversibility thesis, arguing as I do here for a continuity between this thesis and *PhP*, but Dillon articulates the issue as challenging traditional distinctions between identity and difference and self and other. This reading is helpful in showing how reversibility makes explicit a decentering of the subject already implicit in *PhP*, but this way of interpreting the matter, which tends to focus on reversibility as cutting across the perceiver and the world and the perceiver and other, has the disadvantage of not showing how being is reversible on the side of *both* the perceiver and the world—which on this paper’s argument is crucial to understanding *OE*. The nature lectures (Merleau-Ponty (2003)) clearly suggest that reversibility on the side of the world is an issue at stake in reversibility and the flesh. Vis a vis Dillon, my interpretation takes far more seriously *OE*’s claim that things look at me.

Hass (1999) also argues for a continuity between reversibility and earlier works, this time in terms of sense, e.g., in terms of the relation between figure and ground. No doubt reversibility can be read back into the early work in many ways, but as shown below, there is clear support for doing so in terms of activity-passivity, and this gives a new insight into Merleau-Ponty’s work.

³ References to the *Phenomenology* are given in the form *PhP* [pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1945)]/[pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1962)].

⁴ These points are drawn from *PhP*, especially the introductory chapters. Talero (2002) gives an especially helpful critique of the structure of Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of empiricism and rationalism, reminding us that for Merleau-Ponty the empiricist and the rationalist are each getting something right, a point often overlooked in the literature.

⁵ See the section in *PhP* entitled “The Theory of the Body is Already a Theory of Perception,” in relation to the chapter “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility.”

⁶ See Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Stratton's experiment in the chapter on "Space" in *PhP*. An excellent discussion of this material, from which the above points are drawn, is to be found in Bredlau (2006).

⁷ This turning relation has philosophical implications suggested by Len Lawlor's indispensable mapping of issues of transcendence and immanence in French philosophy in his recent book *The Implications of Immanence* (Lawlor (2006)). Roughly, if activity and passivity shifted back and forth ambiguously with respect to some underlying identity, then Merleau-Ponty would ultimately remain a philosopher of transcendence who needs to root this shifting in a prior ground. But as I suggest below, the reversible relation between activity and passivity, which is generative of new senses and meanings, is symptomatic of an immanent principle that lacks such a grounding character. This matter is the topic for another article.

⁸ I take this language of mixing from Lawlor's concept of "mixturism," a relation in which the mixed terms would remain dual, distinct. (See *Ibid.*)

⁹ This 'activity' of the mountain still needs further interpretation that must wait for a subsequent article.

¹⁰ The language of glancing here is prompted by Edward S. Casey's recent studies of the glance, e.g., Casey (2000).

¹¹ Bergsonian pure perception (see Bergson (1991) chapter 1) conceptualizes perception as a reversible circuit of affect and effect between the body and things, and leads to the view that perception occurs as if in the things themselves. In a note in *The Visible and the Invisible (VI)*, cited below, Merleau-Ponty connects the latter with reversibility. References to *VI* are given in the form *VI* [pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1964)]/[pg# in Merleau-Ponty (1968)]

¹² See Merleau-Ponty (1968), 94-95. That is, in *OE*, Merleau-Ponty, with the help of the painter, grasps the point that activity turns passive and vice versa by way of grasping this turning as a tendency of being itself, versus grasping this turning via analysis of abstract concepts.

¹³ *VI* 318/265, November 1960. The equal sign here does not remove the difference between the two sides or reduce activity and passivity to an identity, since the topic is reversibility as an "act with two faces" (see endnote 14). Also see the working note of February 1, 1960, *VI* 288/235, in which Merleau-Ponty rejects "an activity-passivity *split*" which he takes to be there in Sartre, but which "Husserl himself knows does not exist since there is a secondary passivity."

¹⁴ The note begins as follows: "The chiasm, reversibility, is the idea that every perception is doubled with a counter-perception (Kant's real opposition), is an act with two faces, one no longer knows who speaks and who listens." That Kant is in the background of reversibility is also suggested by Merleau-Ponty's use in *OE* of the term "antinomies" in reference to the distinction between the visible and the mobile, i.e., the passive and the active. See *OE* 19/163.

¹⁵ Kant (1987), A51/B76

¹⁶ See *PhP* 237/205, where Merleau-Ponty writes that the thing perceived is a reply to schematized probings of the body. The theme of perception as dialogue is prominent in *PhP*.

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty writes that "We say *a priori* that no sensation is atomic, that all sensory experience presupposes a certain field," which is to say: all sensation activates its *own* field. "But

these *a priori* truths amount to nothing other than the making explicit of a fact: the fact of sensory experience as the resumption of a form of existence.” While it “is *a priori* impossible to touch without touching in space,” “this insertion of the tactile perspective into a universal does not represent any necessity external to touch, it comes about spontaneously in the experience of touching itself, in accordance with its own distinctive mode.” (See *PhP* 255-6/221) The *a priori* arises spontaneously within the *a posteriori*, it is nothing other than an operation on the *a posteriori*.

¹⁸ This appears in Deleuze’s review of Jean Hyppolite’s book on Hegel, *Logic and Existence*. See Hyppolite (1997), 192.

¹⁹ The note is from November 1960 and is titled “Negativity. Chiasm.” This is in Toadvine and Lawlor (2007), 443, which contains previously unpublished notes, and appeared only after this paper had its initial presentation. Also see the note from May 1960 titled “Sensible Being.”

²⁰ Heidegger (1972). On this point about *Ereignis* and *Abgrund*, see de Beistegui (2004); also see Sallis (2001).

²¹ I would like to thank audience members at the SPEP session where this paper was initially presented for their helpful comments, particularly those of my commentator Patrick Burke, Bryan Bannon and John Russon.