

# THE SOUL OF RECIPROCITY PART TWO: RECIPROCITY GRANTED

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In the first part of this essay, the case for reciprocity was established in a negative manner. It was shown that its refusal is a crucial aspect of modernity: the result of the interacting influences of modern capitalist economics and an ontotheological outlook that is explicitly modern, not ancient. Interfused with both cultural phenomena has been a spirituality that favours a “disinterest” above mutual “interestedness”. Although today we live in an era of vaunted “postmodern” surpassings of modernity, they all dramatically reproduce, and specifically affirm, a disdain for reciprocity which lies at modernity’s very heart. This, it was shown, is true for three crucial instances: Deleuzian transhumanism, Levinasian intersubjectivity and neo-Kantian neo-humanism. All three only re-work the Cartesian and Kantian turn to the subject, which was also a turn away from the soul. But it was also argued that this turn not only entails a downgrading of reciprocity, but is rather built upon an arbitrary refusal of reciprocity, and not, at the deepest level, upon objectively critical considerations. The soul, which, I claimed, is allied to reciprocity, was rejected; the subject (which is allied to the unilateral gift) was rhetorically advocated in its place.

But this still does not fully establish a positive case for a postmodern retrieval of the premodern soul of reciprocity. This is what must now be undertaken.

## *1. Beyond Metaphysics, Metaphysics*

First of all, however, one must address the obvious suspicion. Was premodern reciprocity in nowise metaphysical? This seems unlikely, since reciprocity implies justice, and justice measure, and measure a stable framework within

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which the reciprocal offerings can hold their pre-inscribed positions of value. Nevertheless, what I have been trying to promote is an asymmetrical reciprocity, which implies not a fixed circle, but an unending spiral, in which each response only completes the circle by breaking out of it to re-establish it—like a ring on a finger where the ends bind by overlapping, but do not actually meet. Such a reciprocity would be consonant, not with a metaphysical circularity, but with a broken circularity between a relatively fixed ontological theatre for events on the one hand, and events which constantly exceed the theatrical stage of their performance, and yet thereby extend this stage, on the other.

Precise metaphysical circularity is ontotheological circularity, which is somewhat present in Aristotle, though with an admitted aporetic tension (between the highest being and being in general) and only fully adumbrated after Duns Scotus. After Scotus, one has a circularity whose aporetic character goes unrecognised, between a univocal being in general, and the highest infinite being as the exemplary instance of discrete individual substance.<sup>1</sup> Such a closed circle implies, paradoxically within univocity, an absolutely unmediated difference between infinite and finite. This difference is then bridged by one way voluntary offerings in either direction. Hence just as univocity engenders unmediated difference, so also the closed circle is only closed by the unilateral gift.<sup>2</sup> Although the proponents of such a gift oppose the irreversible line to the closed circle, it would seem that, more profoundly, these two belong together. To affirm one is to affirm the other—just as circular capitalist contracts which bind inexorably and impersonally are in theory the result of entirely willed, voluntary emissions from isolated egos capable only of either inflexible demand or else absolutely free gift (both implying no exchange of qualities with the other).

Before Scotus and the inception of modernity, metaphysical circularity was less unambiguous. At the level of gnoseological grasp of eternal ontology, there is in Plato and Proclean neoplatonism (so crucial for mediaeval theology), rather a circularity between the vision of eternal realities and the constantly renewed events of recollection—triggered by earthly loves and liturgical performances. But in the case of Christian reflections on the Incarnation, not only is this gnoseological circularity between ontology and narrative intensified, it is even the case that a supreme event revises the ontology of the finite world, conjoining it through the body of Christ eternally to God.<sup>3</sup> Now not only a new disclosure, but also an event in its alteration of finite reality, is essential for the disclosure of eternal “metaphysical” realities. To be sure, the latter themselves are not subject to change, and yet the doctrine of the Trinity implies a permanence which includes and exceeds, rather than merely denies, the integrity of the narrative moment. The “permanence” resides in an inaccessible beyond, which, to be known at all, gives itself not just once and for all in the structures of Creation, but perpetually through new events. If we disabuse ourselves here of post-Suarezian perspectives, we shall see that for

theologians up to Aquinas there was not “first” a metaphysically known world, and then an “extra” revealed reality; rather the event of revelation both interrupted and completed ontology itself.<sup>4</sup>

There is a danger here of being confused by terminology. In one sense, “metaphysics” and “ontology” should only be applied to the post-Suarezian attempts to have a prior “general” metaphysics and ontology, wherein being can emphatically be treated in its supposed own integrity, before one goes on to treat of God in “special” metaphysics as the highest instance of being.<sup>5</sup> But in another sense, it is clear that Patristic and Mediaeval theology elaborated accounts of being in general, albeit in such a fashion that the inherited general categories for being were both contaminated and revised by the consideration of narrative event. Do Christian thinkers like Marion, who seek to follow Heidegger’s pursuit of a post-metaphysical philosophy, deny the metaphysical or the ontological in this looser, wider sense?

One can be naïvely puzzled here—as two examples may serve to show. First of all, at times, for Marion, the convertibility of the transcendentals is a “metaphysical” thesis, and so presumably illegitimate, even though it was espoused by most pre-Scotist theologians, whom Marion realises one cannot accuse of ontotheology. Presumably, in addition, it somewhat conflicts with theses concerning the Good beyond Being, which would allow the good to exceed in scope the other transcendentals, while still subsuming them. Yet at other times, for Marion, convertibility can be read as an instance of saturated phenomenality.<sup>6</sup> Surely, though, a claim ineluctably to “see” the coincidence of truth, goodness, unity, being and beauty, even in the mode of partial aspects of a phenomenon, would amount to the most staggering instance of metaphysical presence imaginable, placing us precisely in the position of God himself. The claim that we may indeed in a sense see, yet not ineluctably, the coincidence, is more modestly established in a “speculative” guise under the guidance of a reasoning which assumes that the world is created by a simple God, in whom all excellencies coincide. But speculative means again “metaphysical” in a non-phenomenological fashion unacceptable to Marion. But if he denies this speculation, how is this consistent with the revealed simplicity of God and the consistency of his ways?

In the second place, Marion likewise at times claims the thesis of four-fold causality to be eminently metaphysical (as indeed, in the loose sense it is) and yet at other times interprets (I think correctly) modern purely efficient causality as the most metaphysical, as the most tied to ontotheology and the sense of one earlier causal being (in the end a supreme being) precontaining, and entirely explaining the instance of, a later effect.<sup>7</sup> Marion proposes instead the exceeding of a cause by an effect as alone explaining radical newness and the differentiation of effect from cause. Yet this thesis is compatible with the idea of cause as inhering form, with emanative communication of effect where the cause is only cause when the effect is given and “breaks off” from the cause (Marion himself acknowledges this), and also with the teleological

horizon of an event. Here Marion is surely wrong to suppose that the Husserlian horizon contaminates the most irreducible events of appearing, since, first of all, nothing utterly unanticipated can be registered by finite creatures, except perhaps the negative—this shows even more clearly that saturation's excess of form cannot really be distinguished from absence. Secondly, he is wrong if one takes horizon in a more theological and metaphysical context. Here it is not a matter of pre-defined possibility, and so of constraining logic, but rather an anticipation of an eminent actuality of surprising events in God. In consequence, for this perspective, to be within a horizon is not to be within possibility, but to receive proleptically something of the actual. (Marion could evade this second criticism simply by insisting that phenomenology restricts itself to the immanent, but throughout I am contesting the coherence of this notion.)

Thus it seems that there is ambiguity in Marion. Is Aquinas, for example, a "metaphysician" in a negative sense? Marion has now rightly denied this with respect to *esse* and the absence, in Aquinas, of Scotus's ontotheological treatment of being. But in that case, are other elements in Aquinas—such as the convertibility of the transcendentals and fourfold causality, and one can add, his account of knowledge, his doctrine of universals etc.—still metaphysical? And because they are ontotheological? Or simply because they attempt a general ontology rather than a general phenomenology?

One suspects there is at least some assumption of the latter view. And this would mean that Marion thinks that one must surpass metaphysics in a sense stronger than simply surpassing ontotheology. He would mean it not just in a Heideggerean sense, but also in a somewhat Kantian and a somewhat Husserlian sense.

These senses both say, do not speculate! Do not transgress the bounds of what can be sensorily (Kant) or eidetically (Husserl) intuited. However, it has already been explained how one can only speculate. In fact, both Heidegger and Derrida understand the banishing of metaphysics as ontotheology in the opposite sense: as the illegitimate claim to intuited presence, which fails to see that in the ontotheological circle, presence is located aporetically either first in God or in being, because in truth it cannot be secured either in the invisible remote, or in the given object which turns out never to be immediate. If, therefore, Marion and many others refuse metaphysics both as ontology as such (outside phenomenology) and as ontotheology, then they refuse it for two opposite and therefore contradictory reasons.

What would be the way out of this? Certainly metaphysics as ontotheology, and as the claim to apodeictically intuited presence, should be refused. Yet the defeat of the latter possibility suggests that we are doomed to speculate. Kant and Husserl are right to identify speculation as metaphysics, since where there is no unmediated presence, identification of this or that reality will always have to conjecture as to total context, if it is to identify at all. Beyond metaphysics, then, there is only metaphysics, intruding into all

knowledge, all lived cultural existence. Heidegger and Derrida fail to see this because, as we have seen (with Heidegger, but it applies to Derrida also), they seek to apply the phenomenological reduction to the totality of speculation itself: claiming an intellectual intuition of the eternal fixed ratio between presence and always invasive absence. Without this metaphysical dogmatism (of presence) there can only be metaphysics (as speculation concerning absence).

But then two competing speculations will dominate. For the Derridean speculation, all finite intuition is an illusion: this radicalises the Kantian denial of intellectual intuition. Then there is an endless shuttle between the illusion of vision, the obliteration of vision, and again the inevitable need for illusion (to know or act in any fashion whatsoever). Both directions are entirely one-way passages between the visible and the invisible without mediation—though they oscillate in reciprocated futility. One can choose this speculation, although ultimately this is a choice for onto-theology reduced to its nihilistic destiny. It is therefore a mystical choice for ontological aporia, ontological unreason.

Alternatively, one can refuse both extremes of the modern attitude to intellectual intuition. One can deny the deconstructible angelism of Descartes and (much more) Husserl, which lays claim to absolute finite vision of appearing essences, and one can deny equally the Kantian refusal of intellectual insight into the structures of reality. Instead, one can hold that we are right to trust in a degree of limited intellectual vision of being. Not limited in the sense of seeing a distinct part, but limited in the sense of having always to supplement insight with conjecture if any distinct realities are to appear before us at all. Here our trust in the reliable import of the miraculous occurrence of such procedures must be a mode of believing that we share in a final eternal vision in which we participate. It must be to know by faith that we perceive *per speculum in aenigmate*. Within such knowledge, we will then affirm a virtuous and not futile reciprocal spiraling between the visible and the invisible: a benign circulation for which, instead of mutual cancellation, the finite visible is known as upheld in its finitude only by the infinite invisible, and inversely, the infinite invisible is known as intrinsically the giver of the shapes of the finite.

This circulation involves paradox (incomprehensible superfluity of glory), but no aporia. To choose this speculation is therefore to choose reason itself. Therefore Hegel was right—to follow the Church (as spiraling manifest and subjective embracing of reason in history, restored in the event of the *interruptus* of the Incarnation, which is the superlative temporal work of reason itself) is to follow reason. But Kierkegaard was also right: reason is only a subjective choice—for infinite mediated order, beyond finite “order”—made altogether without “reasons”.

But such chosen reason, which is also reason claiming us, is proper to the soul, whereas the first nihilistic knowledge is the poor destiny of the subject.

The soul is constituted as the site of the finite manifestation of the spiraling interplay between finite surface and transcendent depth which alone sustains things in being. The soul is the soul of reciprocity.

## 2. *Reciprocity and Touch*

What remains to be done is to give a more extended version of this thesis. In doing so, I shall develop an inter-tangled account of two texts: first of all, Aristotle's *De Anima*, which represents the premodern linking of soul and reciprocity. Secondly, I offer an account of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's late essay, "The Intertwining", which extends Aristotle's view (more than is admitted) into an already postmodern account of the post-subject, and yet, by bending back into the premodern Aristotle, goes beyond this to produce a post-postmodern account, once again, of the soul.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the post-subject is inscribed by linearity and irrecoverable loss, the revived soul is inscribed by a spiraling circularity and asymmetrical return.

According to Aristotle, the soul is commonly thought to comprise motion, sensation and incorporeality.<sup>9</sup> Following this scheme, we need first of all to understand how sensation is a folding back within the sensed itself, which mediates between motion (*kinesis*) and action (*energeia*). Secondly, we need to understand how incorporeal thought is a folding back upon itself of sensation.

Merleau-Ponty asks how it is that although the only world we have is a world entirely covered by our gaze and caressed by our touch, we nevertheless gaze upon and touch things independent of ourselves, and apprehend them as having a depth beyond our grasp? His answer is that our mind is not an ego looking through our body at what it sees. Rather, it is first of all our body itself which sees and touches. The body has a peculiar ontological status because it is at once itself tangible, as Aristotle had already noted, and yet something which senses other things. It is both object and subject, and must be object if it is to be subject. Thus unendangered removal from things is not the first precondition of sensation; to the contrary, the first precondition is endangered being amongst things. In order to sense, a thing must be capable of being sensed in turn: it is committed to this circle. On the other hand, this is a never completed circle. Merleau-Ponty adds to Aristotle that the subject/object alternation is repeated within the asymmetrical symmetry of the body itself: one hand can touch another. However, while a hand is being touched, its own touching power falls into latency. The circle is never closed, and the spiraling forever renewed.

A phenomenology of the body therefore shows that sensation is first of all a capacity of the sensible itself, albeit of a specially privileged class of sensible. The earlier Merleau-Ponty, of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, concentrated in "epistemological" fashion upon this special class of "bodies". However, the later Merleau-Ponty pursued a more ontological enquiry. This enquiry

concentrates upon the point already mentioned: all that is appears, and yet somehow appears as not reducible to appearance. Merleau-Ponty, then, uniquely carries out a phenomenological reduction to the point where reduction and phenomenology itself are breached: what appears is that there is more than appearance—but unlike Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida and Marion, he does not hypostasise this appearing of the inapparent as reduced self-canceling Being, the sublime, or the saturated phenomenon. Nor does he cling (like Marion) to any Husserlian subjective sphere of immanence: instead phenomenology opens out directly beyond itself into ontology. Yet, inversely, as for the Platonic *dynamis*, the mark of being is an appearing from a hidden depth.

Within this perspective, it cannot be the case that first there are inert “objects” of sensation, and then there are sensing bodies perceiving them, as if this were a haphazard contingency. On the contrary, the only sensed things we know are the things that can be sensed, the things somehow destined to be sensed. But why, then, do we sense them as more than appearances, why is idealism counter-intuitive? Here Merleau-Ponty seeks to connect our sense of a depth within things sensed with the fact that, in sensing our own body, we as it were remove ourselves from our own body, into a reserved corporeal density. This suggests that the realm of sensed things/sensations is a kind of two-dimensional screen or “pellicle” between the depth of bodies, on the one hand, and the depth of objects, on the other. But in that case there is no dualism of sensed things and sensations, and we should cease to think in terms of the prime border being between the surface of our body and what lies outside it. Instead, the entire series of sensed things to which our body belongs forms one continuous surface which Merleau-Ponty (following Aristotle, though he does not say so) names “flesh”. At the point of “bodies”, flesh somehow folds back upon itself, becomes “for itself” as well as “in itself”, and in being able to touch itself is also able to touch the whole series of fleshly things.

However, this is no simple materialism. The flesh is as much spiritual as it is material, because the showing of a depth of possibility which is spirit, is constitutive of everything. Things do not exist as discrete solid items, but as networks of interconnections, remote echoes and indications, associations, “kinships”, expectations and deferrals. Like the ancients, Merleau-Ponty takes the primary apparent as “colour”, and insists that this red is uniquely rendered red by its situation, its contrasts with other remembered reds (and so its particular situation upon a continuum), and its contrast with other qualities within which it is instanced. Here the real and the signifying is tangled up, and not just for us, but intrinsically within an objective reality that is, however, also subjective reality. There are two never-interlocking circles: the one of the world, which includes body within its cycle, and the other of the individual perceiving body, which exceeds and jumps out of the first circle to form its own. Within the second circle, the world is equally

included. But this inclusion is only possible because the depth within bodies also is the depth within things. There are not really two confronting depths mediated by a screen. Instead, the density of things which the screen of flesh shows, is itself the unconscious fold within flesh wherein the conscious fold of perception can emerge. Things appear as separate from us, things that are not us appear at all, because they are simultaneously resistant to appearing. What appears is a density, a not-showing, which is the depth of things. In seeing things we can inhabit this depth, which then becomes our depth, our distance from things, and even from our own body, within our body.

On this view, philosophy must return to an always secretly presupposed ontological depth where the sensed and the sensation entirely belong together, and the sensed folds back into sensation with uttermost originality. However, this was surely already the view of Aristotle. He talks about how "sound" has two faces which are yet inseparable—the sound heard and the hearing of sound. For him also the voice (*phone*) and hearing (*akoe*) can at some level be identified.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he also speaks about how, in sensation, the body forms one surface with the things sensed, and names this surface "flesh" (*sarx*).<sup>11</sup>

And in Aristotle also, the doctrine of flesh is a paradoxically spiritual or psychic doctrine: indeed more emphatically so. For Aristotle, the soul is the actuality (*entelechia*) of moving things. It is, as it were, what the seeing of the eye would be, were it hypostasised.<sup>12</sup> Or rather it is like the faculty (*dynamis*) for seeing. However, absolutely, and even for the most part in time, actuality precedes potentiality, and both constitutes and shows what a thing is.<sup>13</sup> We know the eye in its seeing, not in dissection (hence modern science must forever miss the eye in its real *eidos*). Likewise we know the soul in its moving of things, in its sensing, and sometimes its knowing. And moreover, since we can know nothing of anything outside this sensing and knowing, we can take it that psyche is the *telos* of *phusis* herself.<sup>14</sup>

All moving things must negotiate with the outside world, even if their movements are only of generation and nutrition. In this negotiation they must sense things in order to survive and increase. They must touch things and touching always involves feelings of pleasure and displeasure.<sup>15</sup> In this way objective encounter is always also subjective, and Merleau-Ponty affirms this point in his own fashion. Uprooted, animal, wandering things need also, for survival and increase, to sense at a distance: hence they can also see and hear. But in all these cases, if the soul is first known in the actuality of sensation, then this in turn can only be understood in terms of the registering of an object.<sup>16</sup> To define the actuality of sensation, one must first define the object: for objective sound turns into subjective sound; objective sight into subjective sight and so forth—there is a teleological destiny here. (This was why Brentano thought there was already a doctrine of "intentionality" in Aristotle, although the idea of a radical intellectual "return" to things really derives from Augustine and Avicenna).<sup>17</sup> And indeed, this can only for

Aristotle be finally understood when we affirm that even vegetative and animal motion is a *methexis* in the immortal life of mind. (He does, like Plato, have a doctrine of participation at this point.)<sup>18</sup>

In the case of vision, this sensation is known through the object that is light. Light, declares Aristotle, is, in a sense, "the colour of transparency".<sup>19</sup> Transparency is a pure medium of communication; it is simply what allows things to arrive at and from a distance. But as such, it does not itself travel: light cannot be in motion, and even today one must agree.<sup>20</sup> Light is not in motion, because, as transparency, it is the spatial equivalent of the immediacy of the moment, which as the essence of passing time, is yet snatched out of time as the folding of the past into the present and the present into the future. Likewise, light as transparency is the immediate presence of "the over there" in "the before me", which although it mediates discrete spaces, also exceeds their discreteness and so is the removal of space from space. (Merleau-Ponty also regards both time and space as somewhat like this.) The "light" whose speed is measured by modern (experimental) physics, is only the machinery of particle or wave motion that somehow occasions the phenomenon of light, although the effect of light incomprehensibly exceeds this "cause". Modern physics does not attain to light as *eidōs*. Light, however, is also a little more than transparency for Aristotle. The medium has its own faintly visible glow that alone renders things visible through the transparent. This glow is the presence of fire in the transparent which activates it and permits vision. Thus "Colour [fire] moves the transparent medium".<sup>21</sup>

Visibility, therefore, is defined as the full actualisation of light according to its *telos* which resides in the psyche. Visibility is transparency, the miraculous crossing of distance which at once obliterates it and conserves it. Aristotle notes that the proximity of sensation must always preserve distance, because if an object is brought too closely up against the eye, it cannot be seen.<sup>22</sup> However, this does not appear to be the case in the instance of touch. Where, in this instance, is the medium which prevents blinding saturation? It is here that Aristotle, also, before Merleau-Ponty, interprets flesh (*sarx*) as the intervening medium between depths, or rather as the allowance of the opening and folding back upon itself of the one depth.

For he declares that in the case of touch, the medium is not light or air (as for sound) but rather flesh itself: the surface formed between touching bodies. Between these surfaces there is always in fact an imperceptible distance of air; however, in the case of touch the experience of the medium and the experience of what arrives through the medium are absolutely simultaneous.<sup>23</sup> Thus physical immediacy and phenomenological immediacy are in this instance at one. But if we were only at the surface of *sarx*, then the experience of saturating blinding would ensue; yet we are at no physical distance whatsoever. The distance is therefore a spiritual one, the distance of folded and reflexive removal of *sarx* from itself, of *eidōs* from itself as dense *hyle*, to become more fully *eidōs* in luminous transparency.

Touch, the lowest mode of sensibility, most common to all souls—vegetative, animal and intellectual—therefore proves the soul's peculiar instance; its removal, which is even, for Aristotle, in the case of the highest intellectual removal, its clear immortality. We are, as humans, immortal because more embodied; that is to say, as touching more comprehensively and with more intensity. For Aristotle says that human bodies are distinguished by greater keenness of touch, which is the lowest faculty; whereas in the higher sensitive capacities they must yield preeminence to other animal species. Moreover, people with more sensitive bodies are also the ones who are more intellectually able.

This circumstance is doubly bizarre, in that the intellect is immortal, and not overwhelmed by too much reason, as sight is overwhelmed and destroyed as sight by a dazzling light, or hearing by a deafening sound.<sup>24</sup> Yet touch is not only destroyable as touch: too harsh a touch can kill the whole organism.<sup>25</sup> Touch, therefore, is the existential faculty, it mediates our being towards death. Yet as such, it also permits the exercise of the immortal and indestructible faculty! Opposites remarkably coincide here, such that the exercise of the invulnerable only emerges through the attempt to secure a relative security, whose precondition is nevertheless exposure to danger. For in sensing danger, we render ourselves open to being sensed in turn, on the basis of the general principle that the sensing must also be one among the objects sensed. Therefore if touch proves the soul, our inhabitation of animal life unto death also proves our immortal life. Because we die, we live. Or more exactly, because we can die a specifically human death, we live. (In Christian terms, this would be the natural presence of resurrection everywhere, despite our fall-enslaved death, exposed by the resurrection of Christ.)

Since touch is mediated by the flesh, there is also a distance, a transparency involved in touch, as much as with vision. But this is now much more emphatically an inner-reflected, psychic transparency. Inversely, however, Aristotle declares that all sensation involves the immediacy of touch, since even the transparencies of light and air are mediated by a series of contiguous bodies.<sup>26</sup> And through the transparent medium of light, the eye really does touch the visible object. Therefore all sensation is touching and occurs also by the medium of the flesh. Therefore, again, the visible medium, collapsed as touch into immediacy, regains mediation as the inner psychic distance.

Merleau-Ponty also affirmed that touch is mediated vision, and vision is mediated touch. He regarded this as yet another instance of reciprocal intertwining—noting that all touching falls within the field of the visible, while all that is seen is what can potentially be touched.

So far it has been seen that sensation arises in connection with the needs of the self-moving—that is, organisms—for survival and increase. However, the perspective of both Aristotle and Merleau-Ponty, which pivots round the sequence of formed flesh which is “prior” to both matter and spirit, suggests that there can be no functional reductivism involved here. If sensation is for

motion, then equally motion is for sensation, since this is always at a psychic distance, and therefore can always aesthetically remove itself from its pragmatic origins. And if the sensed can only be grasped as teleologically for sensation, then all beings share in this contemplative destiny.

It follows that we can equally grasp motion as *for* sensation: these two realities also move in reciprocal, intertwined circles. Merleau-Ponty notes that in order to sense we must also move: we must travel to the right vantage point, and then swivel or focus our eyes; we must move and control our hands in order to feel—brushing gently if we wish to register a subtle texture. Just as we must ourselves be visible in order to see, so in order to register mobile realities, we must not only be ourselves capable of motion, but must even actually move amidst these realities. It is not the case that vision is ideally possible from a fixed best perspective; instead, vision would not be possible at all if there were such a perspective. Vision is possible only as an exchange of gazes, in which realities are only ever shown to a point of view as themselves points of view. (Merleau-Ponty rightly interpreted Renaissance perspective as this realisation and not as a new assertion of objectivity.)<sup>27</sup>

In Aristotelian terms, the flesh is not only the site of sound, vision and touch in double (objective and subjective) senses, it is also the site of appetite, which equally moves and is moved, and as such forms the cusp between body and soul, just as a ball-joint fits into its bearing.<sup>28</sup> Appetite, as involved in motion, does not, for Aristotle, belong to the soul proper, or rather not to the higher imaginative and reasoning soul. This doctrine of an apathetic psyche can seem unsympathetically spiritualising, but the point is that for Aristotle it is the entire hylomorphic entity which feels, not the soul as such. Thus he points out that we do not say that “the soul gets angry”, any more than we say “the soul weaves or builds a house”.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the soul is either the terminus or the origin of movement: in perception, movement starts from particular objects and ends in the soul; in recollection, the impulse begins in the soul and extends to movement in the sense organ.<sup>30</sup> In both cases, the soul does not retreat from activity, but rather perfects it, since transitional movement (*kinesis*) is only on its way from potency to activity, whereas the soul as *entelechia* is perfectly realised activity (*energeia*), whose effectiveness is self-realising and therefore beyond alteration. Nevertheless, the highest level of the soul possesses its own active appetition which is *boulesis*.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see in the next section, this appetition always accompanies intellection, and hence it does not appear to be true, at least in the *De Anima*, that there is nothing at all like “will” in Aristotle: there is indeed no modern, uninflected neutral will, but then that is also absent in Christian writers like Augustine. In this text, *boulesis* as higher appetition seems not unlike the Platonic *eros*.<sup>32</sup>

It is flesh as appetite which always registers sensations according to pleasure or aversion. In fact, all that is ever registered is an aesthetic proportion or its lack. In the case of hearing, what one hears in hearing sound is sound as the proportion between sound sounded and sound heard: there

is no merely objective sound to be heard that is not orientated towards hearing. This is why sound is, as such, harmony: sounds are normally pleasant, and an unpleasant sound will grate. There never are heard any merely neutral sounds, outside harmony or its lack, and so not in some measure pleasing or unpleasing. Indeed, as we have already intimated, an extreme of disharmony actually removes the capacity for hearing: so showing, negatively, that it is, literally, sound that makes itself heard. In this way it communicates both *dynamis* and *logos*.<sup>33</sup> Even more fundamentally, touch is to do with aesthetic harmony: thus the most acute touch, is literally and metaphorically “taste”. Aristotle says that “touch is a kind of mean between all tangible qualities”.<sup>34</sup> Unlike the qualities known to the other senses, those known to touch are diverse: hot and cold, rough and smooth and so forth. Touch can register and mediate them all, because the body is itself composed of all the diverse elements in due proportion.

Merleau-Ponty likewise speaks of a “participation” and a “kinship” between objective and subjective sound, light and touch. Between these two halves of a never-quite-foreclosed-circle, there is, he declares, a “reciprocity” and a “tangling”.

Normally, for the tradition, including Aristotle, hearing and especially vision are more allied to incorporeal intellect than is the sense of touch. But in *De Anima*, Aristotle envisages a strange sort of psychic *kenosis*, whereby the soul occurs within a self-emptying towards the precariousness of existence. It is also therein affirmed, as we have seen, that touch is the most generic of the senses, the nearest to showing sense as such. But one would go wrong in supposing this to be an “empirical” modification to the Platonic preference for vision. For, to the contrary, it is the tactile proof of the soul which demands, for Aristotle, that real vision, the real mediated transparent distance, always be a psychic distance opened up in the fold of flesh itself.

Inversely, Merleau-Ponty’s new phenomenological insistence upon touch, while it equally does not displace vision, ensures that it cannot be merely *eidetic* vision of appearances within an immanent space, as for Husserl. Instead it must be vision of real material things in themselves. But the relative switch from vision to touch does also disturb the sway of phenomenology as such. It is true that, within this philosophy, vision is meant as but a metaphor for all manifestation, assuming no privilege for ocularity. However, such a privileging does seem to intrude when appearing is thought of (as by Husserl, and even in the end as we have seen, by Heidegger, Derrida and Levinas) on the model of objects as shown before a neutral, uninflected subject. (Marion escapes this only by recourse to voluntarism.) By contrast, where thought is construed as founded upon touch, then attention to appearance has to share priority with ineradicable feeling, since touch always feels harmony (kinship, participation) or its lack; and also with construction, since the hand that touches can only touch in moulding and transforming. If it is true that the hand may only touch as subject because it is also an object that

may be touched, then it is also true that the touched object can only affect us because we can affect it, and potentially, much more powerfully and more purposefully. This is presumably why Merleau-Ponty says that the body is the exemplary sensible. Therefore Merleau-Ponty, unlike other phenomenologists, gives equal parity to feeling and construction along with *eidetic* intuition in his construal of the nature of thought. That he likewise gives equal parity to conjecture, we shall see in the next section.

### 3. The Entangled Psyche

We have seen how the sensed folds back upon itself into sensation. In the second place, sensation folds back upon itself into intellection, for both Aristotle and Merleau-Ponty.

Aristotle's figure of the fold is actually an unfolding. The "bent line" of sensed flesh "straightens itself out" as *sensus communis*.<sup>35</sup> If touch proves the soul, then, as with Plato (in the *Phaedo*), the mediation of heterogeneous senses also proves the soul.<sup>36</sup> For this mediation is not physical and manifest; it is rather invisible and mysterious. How do we touch, see, and hear etc. the same thing? The problem is taken up again by Kant in his own fashion as that of transcendental deduction, as we have seen. For both Plato and Aristotle there must be a psychic "common sense" which grasps a hidden proportion between the incommensurable. As connected by common sense, the various sensing faculties are, for Aristotle, "numerically and analogically one", according to an analogy of comparable ratios (Aquinas will later move beyond this towards a more purely ineffable kinship and *convenientia*).<sup>37</sup>

Common sense involves imagination, which is a relative abstraction of *eide* from *hyle*. But if this abstraction and mediation is possible, then presumably it is because of the function of mediation and abstraction already performed by touch, which, as we have seen, is a common factor involved in all sensation; just as the immediacy of touch is also inhabited by the distance of vision and hearing. Common sense, is, therefore, for Aristotle already latent in sensing itself, albeit as the bent line which demands (of itself) a straightening out.

Imagination is the medium in which the judgement of the higher soul swims. "The soul never thinks without a mental image", and the film of images is to the mind as the air is to the eye, in affecting it.<sup>38</sup> It is the judgement, however, and not sensory perception, nor mental imagination, which is true or false. Indeed the mind cannot go wrong in what it perceives and imagines, in so far as it always correctly perceives or imagines essences; however, the perception and the imagination can mislead the judgement, in so far as they may register a misleading appearance of the combination of essences.<sup>39</sup> Here the judgement must assess the circumstances, and the ratio of what appears to what does not appear. In this way something like "conjecture" starts to impinge.

In the *De Anima*, however, judgement as conjecturing does not at all leave the feeling of sensation behind. Instead, conjecture turns out to be only the

folding back upon itself, or in Aristotle's terms, the unfolding, of feeling. This happens in the following way.

As Kant later realised (in the fashion described above) the whole issue of identifying a relatively coherent object, of picking something out from the flux, or of distinguishing something, depends upon the question of time. Aristotle realised this also. For if it is the judgement of combinations of essences which can be false as well as true, then, he observes, combinations depend upon time, and so too do judgements, which occur in time. They are both contingent events. However, time is aporetic. Aristotle declares that a thought takes time, and yet one cannot divide an integral thought into two halves of time, such as to say what was thought in each half. Yet time is in principle divisible—so any time taken by a thought ought to be divisible.

This aporia becomes more acute when we think about thought as judgement. A judgement of opposite successive qualities, like bitter and sweet, seems to divide the judgement into different successive moments. Yet for judgement to work, it must be single—and therefore must occur in a "now" which holds ecstatically together the past, present and future. Here, indeed, it is possible that Aristotle is invoking and endorsing Plato's oral teaching (which he has earlier described in this text), according to which the soul embraces the "oneness" of mind and the "twoness" of knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

A parallel aporia, according to Aristotle, arises in relation to qualities. The thought of a quality is likewise properly indivisible, and yet the mind can assay the division of such a thought, at least as a kind of algebraic abstraction.<sup>41</sup> However, both sets of divisions—of the enduring instant which does and does not take time, and of the experienced quality which is single and yet divisible as continuous—are considered by Aristotle (where it is the case that such dividing refuses the synthesis of the "two" in the "one") to be privations, which, when enacted by the mind, causes the mind likewise to undergo privation.<sup>42</sup> But the thought of a quality is itself in time. When the entire quality of a thing is misapprehended, when it is thought in terms of a false combination of essences, then, says Aristotle, it has been sundered from its own integrity. To think a wrong combination is to think a lack in quality; moreover, it is equally to think a lack in the integral event—it is to shatter the integral "now" of the event which fuses past, present and future (and so folds out of the time series, but as the time series) into a sequence of isolated "nows" which bear the correctly intuited essences withheld from their true instance of qualitative combination. (On this reading, Aristotle is even nearer Heidegger's insights than the latter acknowledged.)

But just what is the intellect judging? Primarily, sets of combinations which are presented to it by the imagination. Its relation to these images, however, is not first and foremost theoretical. The struggle between reason and desire is not, to begin with, one between disinterest and interest, as it would be for Kant. Rather, this struggle arises again because of time: it is the

struggle between long and short term interest.<sup>43</sup> And this renders reason more like a more drawn-out, distanced sort of desiring. More emphatically still, the judging soul first asserts or denies images, not as true or false, but rather as good or bad. It then pursues the good and avoids the bad.<sup>44</sup> So this is initially the more cunning deployment of movement and sensation by a mobile and more richly sensitive animal (hairless, with a soft, sensitive surface). However, as we have already seen, this seeming functionalism in Aristotle is always exactly reversible: the soul is “the true place of forms”,<sup>45</sup> and if, for example, snub-nosedness occurs only in matter, nonetheless the essence or *eidos* of snubness takes off incorporeally from any particular matter, such that its precise nature, its indeed deeper reality, resides more properly in abstraction within the soul.<sup>46</sup> (Psychic functionalism in Descartes is not equivalently reversible, since for him passions do not disclose *eide*.) Thus if our knowledge of good and bad is rooted in pleasure and pain, then nevertheless “to feel pleasure or pain is to adopt an attitude with the sensitive mean towards the good or bad as such”.<sup>47</sup> Pleasure and pain subserve survival and increase, and yet beyond these they register irreducible harmonies, or the lack of these—which can only be argued away, as by modern physical science, by an act of artificial abstraction from ineluctably given reality, from the only world we can really inhabit and talk about. Thus the most immediate aspect of pleasure and pain, which is the unfolding of objective harmony or its lack, is nonetheless the most abstractable, that which most comes to inhabit the formal distance of psyche.

In this way, if the good is eudaemonistic, always a matter of pleasure, it is equally and reciprocally true that pleasure is always a matter of encountering the objectively good—the “ethical” good. This is what we first sense, and then, at a deeper level of abstraction, imagine. Only with a further act of abstraction does this good unfold still further into the “true” of the judgement. However, it is the good that retains priority and initiative. Aristotle declares that “what does not involve action, i.e., the true or the false, belongs to the same sphere as what is good or evil; but they differ in having respectively a particular and a universal reference”.<sup>48</sup> After this statement, he goes on to illustrate what he means by “universal reference” in terms of the abstracted essence of snubness, and numbers thought of without matter. However, the Aristotelian aporia of substance ensures that, while in a sense, snubness is more really in the soul, in another sense it makes no sense without reference to real noses. (Only the doctrine of Creation finally resolves this aporia—by allowing the being of “matter” also fully to proceed from mind.)<sup>49</sup> Therefore, if snubness is not really separable from matter, the true and the false of judgement are not really separable from the good and evil of imagination. (So in this text, if not in others, Aristotle follows Plato in not dividing theoretical from practical reason; moreover, it would seem to follow that if there are good and bad things as well as notions, so also there can be true and false things as well as notions—again, as for Plato.)<sup>50</sup>

This means that all reason is still feeling, and only distinguished as a feeling for the more universal and the more elevated. As feeling, it feels both the presence of the good and its lack. True and false which sustain dialectic, are therefore, for Aristotle (here at least) subordinate to a feeling for the good and lack of its instance. What is false is not a sheer abyssal mistake, but always a partial truth. Moreover, it can only ever appear as the less desirable. The soul is "all existing things",<sup>51</sup> the "place of forms", because subjective knowledge is the objective knowable, and this in turn, as the imagination of sensation, is unfolded sensation, which finally is the sensible. Therefore, the soul is the felt sensible, which is flesh unfolded.

If judgement nonetheless unfolds feeling beyond feeling, this must have to do with speculation. What does not appear is also somehow seen and felt, but seen and felt only through conjecture.

Here Merleau-Ponty supplements Aristotle, with a more "postmodern" sense of absence, construction, and the mediation of signs. Aristotle does, indeed, speak of how what we see and feel are signs, such as a flashing beacon, which warns us of danger.<sup>52</sup> However, Merleau-Ponty has a stronger sense of absence and signification.<sup>53</sup> He insists that, since the cube only ever appears to us in some of its facets, and yet does appear as a distinguishable cube, that somehow or other the invisible sides are shown to us. Without seeing the invisible, there could be no manifest visibility, only a blinding and inchoate flux. This is not Marion's sublime appearance of the invisible in the extreme yet typical instance as saturated phenomenon, but rather an appearing of the invisible in the everyday instance, whereby it does not dazzle, but exhibits itself as a specific and beautiful form. The invisibility of the cube is shown as the nonetheless formed and appearing cube. Here, however, phenomenology is itself crossed by semiotics. For the visible sides appear as the signs of the invisible. These signs move us and convey their own judgement; yet in thereby constituting our subjectivity, they do not really obliterate it, since the passage from the signifier to the signified is here one of judgement, and only aleatory if, indeed, the mere will of the subject intervenes. The passage is mediated as a certain style, according to Merleau-Ponty. Thus, while language "covers" the entire visible world, visibility reciprocally intrudes as the invisible "feeling" of meaning which pervades syntax and alone sustains it. Therefore semiotics is equally crossed by phenomenology. We hold onto particular phrases in music; they haunt our memory, not because of their structure, but because of their ineffable "soul", which is only possible through structure, and yet "takes off" from structure. We know that it takes off, because we can analogously convey the same or a kindred style in different and heterogeneous structures.

Hence, for Merleau-Ponty, it is style that mediates the visible and the invisible. The world holds together only as a work of art, and without this recognition there could be no truth. Since the sensed is destined for, is in a way already, sensing, we only see the world because it equally gazes back

upon us, in tangled reciprocity.<sup>54</sup> This is “intercorporeality” (which is founded, one can add, upon interobjectivity within the veil of flesh). Intersubjectivity builds upon this base; for given that sensation is always a fold in the sensed, we do not recognise another subject by projection of our own ego, but rather as a more intense gaze back upon us that itself further enables our own gaze, and does not simply reduce me in turn to an object. Another subject sees me as a gazer who by the movement of my gaze and the construction of a new perspective, himself makes an active difference to the world the other is looking at. I see the other as looking at me as such a one, such a phenomenon. Thereby I know myself more as an active gazer, and more operate as such. In “Interrogation and Dialectic”, Merleau-Ponty refused the Levinasian and Sartrean idea of encountering the other as invisible negation, since this reduces the other to an abstract and general “for itself”. Instead he insisted that I encounter the other in his very invisibility and asymmetry in “one sole image in which we are both involved”<sup>55</sup> along the one visible surface of being. There is here a mutually enabling exchange of active interventions. In consequence, says Merleau-Ponty in “The Intertwining”, when two people gaze at a landscape, one can really give his green to the other: truly, one can see another’s green. To see green is not (as Wittgenstein would agree) to be locked within inviolable interiority, it is rather to move round green, re-envisage green, and give green back to green as a somewhat other green. So we can also show it to the other. To see is already to paint, and my pictures are in principle available to other people.

Aristotle almost concurred. If, for him, to know is passively to become all things, it is also actively to make all things (*panta poein*), in the way that light produces colours.<sup>56</sup> For activity is first *energeia*, not *kinesis*, and activity is ontologically prior to potential. Passive reception must really be active reception, as what is received becomes actively more its true self. In Platonic tradition, perhaps, there is less of a misleading sense of there being first a passive and then an active moment, and more of an idea of a single active reception.<sup>57</sup> And then the “making” performed by the mind runs less risk than with Aristotle’s conception of evolving into an idealist *a priori* making, and can more be seen as the simultaneous acting back upon real received things in the mode of physical artistic shaping and the formation of words and signs. Likewise, there is less risk of an idealist construal of the Socratic view that the soul is not properly taught, but is itself the site of universals. Aristotle repeats this nostrum in the *De Anima*, but without some sense of recollection, it seems that the universals just immanently unfold form within mind as if, indeed, all lay pre-given within the soul, in contradiction of Aristotle’s priority of actuality.<sup>58</sup> The Platonic “recall” of something transcendent to mind more requires the encounter with external things through mind, and their re-shaping by the logos operating through us—since these processes alone trigger recollection. In this way, by adding recollection to teleology, the immortal soul which is paradoxically unfolded flesh, is yet more firmly

folded back into flesh, if it is to be true to its immortal essence, and after death, gain itself forever.

#### 4. *Intimations of Immortality*

Yet for Merleau-Ponty, the soul is not immortal. Can one think the soul of reciprocity without God, within immanence?

As has already been noted, Merleau-Ponty carries out the reduction to pure intuited givenness beyond such givenness, to reach a pre-reflexive level (yet folded back upon reflexivity), wherein appearance is crossed by judging conjecture and linguistic construction, and appearance itself is as much felt as seen, and so given only in a specific mood. Unlike Heidegger, Derrida, Levinas and Marion, however, Merleau-Ponty seems to sustain this interruption of phenomenology at the highest transcendental level. No synthesis ever takes place between the asymmetrically disposed circles, and no purely objective account is offered concerning the entire situation in which body interlocks with world. Indeed, one could read Merleau-Ponty as finally reviving Brentano's original psychologism which haunted phenomenology from the outset, and which was always linked to the *De Anima*, and *not only* to J. S. Mill's empiricist reduction of logic to mere contingent biology. (For if the soul participates in immortal mind, then the insistence that logic is psychic is no empiricistic denigration of the objectivity of logic.)<sup>59</sup>

In this respect, Merleau-Ponty veers more towards a kind of Protagorean relativism.<sup>60</sup> He identifies flesh with ontological Being, and the transactions within flesh with ontic events. However, the relation between them is not conceived in terms of the hypostasisation of flesh as an appearing inapparent, or sublimity: this is impossible, given that flesh is the receding horizon of a nonetheless specific surface. Nor is it conceived in terms of the disguising of flesh in the event of appearing, through which disguising, flesh is all the same fated to be flesh. There is no Germanic pagan-gnostic drama of fated fallenness at work here. Instead, the Latinizing of Heidegger allows that flesh is reliably and truly disclosed within perception. All the moments of "style" that are received and constituted, give the very being of flesh itself. One trusts, has faith in, the perceived beauty of the world as the beauty of Being as such. Likewise, the crossing of regards in Merleau-Ponty is not simply the meeting of essentially one-way and sublime gazes upon sublimity, as for Marion. Instead, a specific content and style is constituted in this crossing, which is thereby a circulation as much as an intersection.

But does such an account do justice to the reality of time? In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty took over from Husserl and Heidegger the view that we do not constitute time, but rather are constituted by the tangled inter-involvement of past, present and future.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty considered here that time belongs entirely to *our* mode of being. In the world as such, past, present and future are all co-present in a

kind of spatial simultaneity—although for Merleau-Ponty, space itself does not involve discrete points, any more than time involves discrete nows. Only the subjective mover across space introduces absence into plenitude, as he retains the places he leaves, cannot quite grasp the place he is now in (as too close to him in its nowness) and anticipates the place he is yet to arrive at. When Merleau-Ponty later switched to a more ontological perspective, his views on time are less clear, because left to us in sketchy form. In a notebook entry he rejects both viewing time “from above”, as if it was already there (his earlier view, in some ways?), and yet rejects also the idea that a supplementary now could keep arriving from the future, pushing the whole series of foregoing nows into the past. This seems to amount to a rejection of a Heideggerean primacy of flux, as relying on an active nothingness—the future nothing arriving as something. Instead, Merleau-Ponty obscurely says that the new present is something both there and not there, and “is a cycle defined by a central and dominant region with indecisive contours”.<sup>62</sup> So even if time is now no longer within the subject, it still seems to be subordinated to spatial circularity.

Can such a view make sense? Merleau-Ponty has an important point, as against postmodernism. For time is not necessarily an irreversible one way arrow. If time is ecstatic, not a succession of discrete nows, then it is only sheerly linear for a particular coding. How do we know that past moments do not in some sense return, as if time obeyed an absolute Newtonian calendar without days, weeks, months and years?<sup>63</sup> For Augustine, and Bede in his wake, this was certainly not the case, since they discerned a great cosmic week ending in an eschatological sabbath, as well as the recurring once composed of the Sun’s daily cycles. Merleau-Ponty rightly insists in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, against Heidegger, that we can never exit from the supposedly inauthentic now-time of the instance into a purely ecstatic being that expresses fully the reality of flux.<sup>64</sup> But for Merleau-Ponty this is not really a resignation to ontic fallenness, since the ecstasy runs in an ever-renewed cycle in which the simultaneous hiding and revealing of time and presence in the now, itself conveys a harmonious rhythm, and not a tragic loss which we must impossibly seek to undo. However, against Merleau-Ponty one must point out that time is the time of unprecedented arrival, and of irreversible one-way gift. Things occur, never to return. Yes, one can conjecture that their loss is also their later returning as different, since they are given as self-differentiating and so as living. But this suggests a spiraling and not a pure circling. In this way, the arrow and the cycle can be integrated.

As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty’s later vision of space also suggests a spiraling, and so seems to require time as its co-ordinate. However, his reluctance to think arrival from an absolutely null future, means that all the reality of flesh must lapse back into an eternal presence of circularity. His is an immanence of spatial plenitude, not of absent/present fluctuation.

It is an immanence anxious to refuse nihilism—and so in spirit, utterly commendable.

But is it coherent? Normally immanence issues (paradoxically) in dualism, as we saw was the case with Spinoza. If the absolute is within finite reality, then there is a secret eternal presence of this reality which is only disguised in the modes of times. These modes do not participate in, do not analogically disclose, the hidden absolute. Yet Merleau-Ponty speaks as if the absolute of flesh is faithfully conveyed in the beauty of all perception. His model is not pantheism, but rather (as he clearly confesses) a decapitated Catholic theology in which God incarnate is *only* incarnate and incarnate everywhere. So just as Thomas Aquinas saw the *esse* of the God-Man as identical with the divine *esse*, so Merleau-Ponty sees the ontological on the surface everywhere, immediately and fully present to the ontic.<sup>65</sup>

Yet can this work? The decapitated Incarnation is pantheism all the same. And a recognised transcendence would have allowed Merleau-Ponty to admit absolute arrival from the future without lapsing into Heidegger's nihilism. Instead, if spatial plenitude finally reigns, then all the temporal events of perceiving, all embodiments, must after all belong to a lesser level of mere appearing, which disguises simultaneity. Unique arriving events of style and kinship resolve back into a specifically named "pre-established harmony" between the two halves of the chiasmus.<sup>66</sup> Each true glance must after all transport us beyond event into an earthly paradisaic bliss that is always there, and always the same. (Sartre noted that Merleau-Ponty never recovered from a blissful childhood on the western coast of France.)<sup>67</sup> Of course, such visions were sometimes enjoyed by Patristic sages, but only within a horizon that allowed also for the restoration of fallen passing moments. Spatial immanence rather implies that passing moments are exited from by the soul, and that their fallenness need not be remedied.

Despite his unrivalled evocation of reciprocity, Merleau-Ponty finally speaks of narcissism. To be fair, this is not merely me seeing myself in reflection, but rather my seeing myself only in reflection.<sup>68</sup> The Narcissus is not me, nor the other, but rather the entire circle of flesh itself. Thus Merleau-Ponty speaks of two mirrors forever exchanging contents that are only in the other mirror. Yet the nihilistic abyss seems to open up after all, if the circularity is of an immanent One, who only is through its two never synthesised aspects. In that case, all it is, as the ultimate, is the empty mutuality of ceaseless echo. At this level there is indeed only a single circle and no gift.

Whereas if there is to be ultimate gift, then a spiraling must preserve both space and time in co-primacy. There must be both exchange and loss of the gift, if one is to have an asymmetrical reciprocity, and a non-identical repetition. Here Marion's exactly half-correct perspective itself returns to supplement and be in turn supplemented by, that of Merleau-Ponty. The reciprocating circles of twin souls must not be superceded by one impersonal circle, but must be themselves given, in their twin, never-interlocking

circularity, by an elevated otherness. If, all the same, the gift they are offered is not merely the empty gift of one-way sacrifice, but rather the gift of reciprocity, then what is disclosed is transcendent otherness that is itself personal exchange: eternal spiraling, not an eternal and impersonal unity. Incarnation may not, after all, sustain incarnation without the Trinity—within whose immanence the reciprocating two are again preserved from mutual narcissism by the grant of a third instance which is active as well as receptive *donum*.

Nor then, may the reciprocal soul reciprocate, unless it be immortal: given from, in order to return to, an eternal existence. But this implies equally the deified destiny of the flesh, of which the soul is the unfolded form. For if Aristotle, as we saw, divined the resurrection of the soul, then it was left to Christianity to glimpse the immortality of the body.<sup>69</sup>

NOTES

- 1 See Olivier Boulnois, "Quand commence l'Ontothéologie? Aristote, Thomas d'Aquin et Duns Scot", *Revue Thomiste*, 95, (1987) pp. 85–108.
- 2 On univocity and difference, see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference et Repetition*, Paul Patton, trans., (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 304: "Univocity signifies that being itself is univocal, while that of which it is said is equivocal; precisely the opposite of analogy".  
Of course, precisely not. Analogy speaks analogously of the analogical and so truly does escape dialectic. Whereas, if one says that the equivocal univocally is, then a dialectic after all ensues: being is also equivocal, differences are a veil for the same sameness.
- 3 See John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, (London: Routledge, 2000), Chapter Three, "Truth and Touch", pp. 60–88.
- 4 *op.cit. loc.cit.* and Chapter Two, "Truth and Vision", pp. 19–60.
- 5 J.-F. Courtine, *Suarez et le Système de la Métaphysique*, (Paris: PUF, 1990), pp. 436–457.
- 6 Jean-Luc Marion, "Étant Donnée: 'Le Phénomène Sature'", in J.-F. Courtine, ed, *Phénoménologie et Théologie* (Paris: Criterion, 1993), pp. 79–128.
- 7 Étant Donnée, Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant Donnée: Essai d'une Phénoménologie de la Donation* (Paris, PUF, 1997), p. 106; "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'Onto-théo-logie", *Revue Thomiste*, 95, pp. 31–66.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—the Chiasm", in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Alphonso Lingis, trans., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 130–156. In the same book, see also "Interrogation and Dialectic", esp. pp. 79–83.
- 9 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 405b 10–15; 430a 20–25; 432a 15–20. For English edition, see Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, on Breath*, W. S. Hett, trans., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Editions, 1936).
- 10 *De Anima*, 419b 4–10; 426a–426a 10.
- 11 *op.cit.* 423b 25–7.
- 12 421b 20–413a 4.
- 13 431a 1–5: "For everything comes out of that which actually is" (*esti gar ex entelechia ontos panta ta gignomena*).
- 14 415b 15–21.
- 15 414a 33–414b 17.
- 16 412b 26–413a 4; 414a 17–19; 418a 3–8.
- 17 Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 49–50, 54–55.
- 18 415a 30–415b: "For this is the most natural of functions among living creatures: to reproduce one's kind in order that they may have a share in the immortal and divine in the only way that they can" (*in tou aei kai tou theoin metexosin e dunantai*).
- 19 418b 11–12.
- 20 418b 21–27.

- 21 419a 13–15.  
 22 419a 8–419b 3.  
 23 423b 13–18: “But there is a difference between tangible things, and visible or audible things. We perceive the latter because some medium acts on us, but we perceive tangible things not by a medium, but at the same time as the medium, like a man wounded through his shield; for it is not the stricken shield that struck him, but both he and the shield were struck simultaneously”.  
 24 426a 27–426b 69; 429b–429b 6: “... neither seeing nor smelling is possible just after strong colours and scents; but when mind thinks the highly intelligible, it is not less able to think of slighter things, but even more able”.  
 25 435b 4–26.  
 26 435a 9–20.  
 27 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Working Notes”, in *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), Claude Lefort, ed, p. 212. See also James Elkin, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). I am indebted to Conor Cunningham for calling my attention to this book and its topic.  
 28 433b 21–3.  
 29 408b 11–17.  
 30 408b 11–18.  
 31 432b 5–8; 433a 23–25.  
 32 For a good statement of the view that there is no such thing as the “will” in Aristotle, see J.-P. Vernant, “Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy”, in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Nacquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York, NY: Zone, 1990), pp. 49–85. Vernant argues mostly from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and accuses Aristotle of a “confusion” between “the internal, the spontaneous, and what is really autonomous”. But does not this verdict reflect the Cartesian bias of the French tradition of historiography of Greek judicial concepts from Louis Gernet onwards? A story is always told of an “evolution” towards the discrimination of faculties and of the will, that seems to presuppose a Cartesian (and Kantian) account of “a pure choosing will” distinct from desire, affection and an inclination infused by reason. Yet such a concept of will is not self-evident—before Descartes, its stoic, semi-pelagian, Abelardian, Scotist and nominalist adumbrations were always rigorously countered by Maximian, Augustinian and Thomist traditions.  
 33 424a 28.  
 34 435a 22–24; 423b 26–424a 16.  
 35 429b 16–21.  
 36 425a 14–425b 12; 426b 8–24.  
 37 See Narcisse, *op.cit.*  
 38 431a 17–20; 431b 2–7; 432a 11–14.  
 39 430b 28–32; 428a 12–13.  
 40 404b 19–28; 426b 25–427a 15; 430b 7–430b 32.  
 41 430b 15–30.  
 42 Ibid.  
 43 433a 22–433b 13.  
 44 431b 18–22.  
 45 429a 27–30.  
 46 429b 18–22.  
 47 431a 9–13.  
 48 431b 10–12.  
 49 See Edward Booth, OP’s magnificent work, *Aristotelian Apoeretic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).  
 50 This would mean that, for Aristotle as well as Plato, dialectics is finally subordinated to the enticement of the Good—rendering them both more the anticipators of Augustine than I allowed in *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), chapter 11 and 12.  
 51 431b 20–22.  
 52 431b 3–7.  
 53 Merleau-Ponty, *loc.cit.*  
 54 Unlike Marion and Derrida, Merleau-Ponty (along with Sartre) seems to have received enthusiastically the Maussian paradigm of gift-exchange. See Dermot Moran, p. 443.

- 55 Merleau-Ponty, *loc.cit.*, p. 89.  
56 430a 22–417b 27.  
57 See Catherine Pickstock, “Music: Soul, City and Cosmos” in *Radical Orthodoxy*, J. Milbank, C. Pickstock and G. Ward, eds, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 243–277.  
58 417a 22–417b 27.  
59 See Martin Kusch, *Psychologism* (London: Routledge, 1997), and Dermot Moran, Introduction, pp. 23–59. Kusch’s superb and iconoclastic book, which suggests the limitations of (nearly) all twentieth century philosophy, nonetheless may underrate the nineteenth century Catholic prehistory of psychologism versus intuitionism in the conflicts between Aristotelians/Thomists and Malebranchian ontologists, and correlatively fails to see that while the end of “anti-psychologism” (both analytic and phenomenological philosophy), might usher in naturalism, it could equally allow the return of a metaphysics orientated towards transcendence. For what this ending renders dubious is not traditional realist metaphysics, but all philosophies (analytic *and* continental) that imagine a stable immanent universe of eternal (but not transcendent) logical entities, or given structures of eidetic intuition etc. (Kusch also very oddly supposes that explanation in terms of social context is somehow intrinsically allied to naturalism, whereas of course it is ontologically neutral, and could equally be used to cast relativistic cultural suspicion upon naturalistic positions.)  
60 See Moran, pp. 391–434.  
61 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith, trans., (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 410–434.  
62 Merleau-Ponty, “Working Notes”, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 184–185, 190–192, 194–195.  
63 Catherine Pickstock pointed this out to me about nine years ago.  
64 *Phenomenology of Perception*, *loc.cit.*  
65 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Faith and Good Faith”, in *Sense and Non-Sense*, H. L. and P. H. Dreyfus, trans., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 172–182.  
66 Merleau-Ponty, “The Intertwining”, p. 133.  
67 Moran, p. 391.  
68 “The Intertwining”, pp. 139–141; “Working Notes”, pp. 255–256 (in the latter passage, narcissism sounds more like narcissism plain and simple—but this is but a jotting).  
69 Catherine Pickstock has pointed out a similar dimension of “Resurrection” in Plato’s *Phaedo*, in her *A Short Guide to Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).