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The Cambridge Companion to MERLEAU-PONTY

Edited by

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CONTENTS

List of Contributors *page* vii

Introduction 1
TAYLOR CARMAN AND MARK B. N. HANSEN

1 Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture 26
CHARLES TAYLOR

2 Sensation, Judgment, and the Phenomenal Field 50
TAYLOR CARMAN

3 Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty 74
SEAN DORRANCE KELLY

4 Motives, Reasons, and Causes 111
MARK A. WRATHALL

5 Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science 129
HUBERT L. DREYFUS

6 The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy 151
RICHARD SHUSTERMAN

7 Merleau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche 181
JUDITH BUTLER

8 A Phenomenology of Life 206
RENAUD BARBARAS

9 The Embryology of the (In)visible 231
MARK B. N. HANSEN

10 Merleau-Ponty's Existential Conception of Science 265
JOSEPH ROUSE

11 Between Philosophy and Art 291
JONATHAN GILMORE

12 Understanding the Engaged Philosopher: On Politics, Philosophy, and Art 318
LYDIA GOEHR

13 Thinking Politics 352
CLAUDE LEFORT

References 381

Index 393

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13. See H.-J. Rheinberger, "From Microsomes to Ribosomes."
14. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, chapter 1.
15. For a fuller account of this distinction, see Dreyfus and Todes, "The Three Worlds of Merleau-Ponty," 560–5.
16. Putnam, *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, 18–19; Boyd, "The Current Status of Scientific Realism."

11 Between Philosophy and Art

"Every theory of painting is a metaphysics," declares Merleau-Ponty in "Eye and Mind," his last major philosophical essay on the visual arts (Œ 42/171/132). The immediate target of his remark is Descartes, in whose brief comments on engravings Merleau-Ponty finds a denigration of art as but a handmaiden to perception, capable of disclosing only those features of the mind-independent world already available to ordinary vision. However, his claim is meant to apply much more broadly. By addressing the nature of representation, its content, means, and ends, and the relation of the artist to the world, a theory of painting entails a metaphysics: a conception of how the self, body, mind, and world interrelate. In his major essays on visual art – "Cézanne's Doubt" (1945), "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (1952), and "Eye and Mind" (1961) – Merleau-Ponty draws on this internal relation between theories of painting and metaphysics to challenge prevailing philosophical and scientific accounts of perception, meaning, imagination, and human subjectivity.

Yet if every theory of painting implies a metaphysical theory, not every metaphysical theory offers a theory of painting. Art plays a central role in Merleau-Ponty's efforts to elaborate his phenomenology; however, even in the intense, searching reflection of "Cézanne's Doubt" on the painter's life and work, it is not clear that from such phenomenological inquiry there emerges a philosophy of art. Does the essay offer an analysis of Cézanne, of Cézanne's painting, of painters and paintings, or of artists and art in general of which Cézanne and his work are – in relevant ways – representative? If philosophy requires general applicability, does this mean that as Merleau-Ponty's discussion is more particularly focused, it is less philosophical? If a philosophy of art must be careful not to lose what

may be distinctive about art in assimilating it to a more general account of human behavior, expression, and perception, does this mean that the more generally conceived Merleau-Ponty's theory is, the less it functions as a philosophy of art? In what follows, I want to suggest that these questions shaped Merleau-Ponty's essays on art, pulling in opposite directions, from the example to the general type, from a narrow focus to a broad one. I argue, more specifically, that this tension in Merleau-Ponty's essays between the attempt, on one hand, to offer a general philosophical theory and, on the other, to furnish particular explanations and interpretations of art, is ultimately left unresolved. That is, his deep commentaries on the arts illustrate and extend his general philosophical views but generate no philosophy of art in themselves.[1]

I. ART AND VISION

"Cézanne's Doubt" begins with a catalogue of some of the painter's mundane epistemic doubts (only later will his existential and metaphysical doubts be explored): he works alone, without the confirmation of students or the encouragement of critics; he wonders whether he has enough talent; he suspects that his unusual style may be owing to a defect in his vision. Merleau-Ponty dismisses the latter physiological explanation but flirts with ascribing some explanatory value to the various temperamental, physical, and psychological ills from which the painter suffered – his "morbid constitution," possible "schizophrenia," "alienation from humanity," "nervous weaknesses," and so on – only to dismiss the idea that the meaning of the artist's work could be determined from such features of his life. If this is ambiguous in implying alternatively that one could discover the meaning of the work through understanding the life or that the meaning of the work is produced by the kind of life its creator had, Merleau-Ponty appears to reject both accounts. Not only, he says, do Zola and Émile Bernard emphasize too much of their personal knowledge of Cézanne's life in understanding his art, but even Cézanne's "own judgment of his work" will not make that meaning clearer. Furthermore, although it is possible that part of the origin of Cézanne's art may reside in his mental illness, in its reception it is "valid for everyone" (*SNS* 15/11; *AR* 61).

Here, Merleau-Ponty argues not against the biographical or intentionalist explanations of art *as such* so much as the one-sidedness

of such approaches. As we will see, Merleau-Ponty will reject the dichotomy between the self and its external attributes, actions, and experiences. In the domain of art, this means that Merleau-Ponty will eschew the dichotomy between internalist explanations of art, which find art's meaning in the artist's intentions or life, and externalist explanations, which look to social or other contextual sources of meaning. For Merleau-Ponty, art, artist, and artist's life are interdependent; each explains the other and the others explain each in turn. To anticipate, Merleau-Ponty will introduce a way of conceiving of art as reflecting its creator's life, but not transparently. That is, Merleau-Ponty will argue that there is an internal relation between work and life, but that this relation reflects contingencies in how the work and the life unfold.

But first Merleau-Ponty describes the particular working methods of Cézanne, in particular, his advances over the impressionism through which he initially developed his style. Although much of what Merleau-Ponty presents here might appear as a kind of art-historical précis of impressionist and postimpressionist aesthetics, it is around this account of Cézanne's pictorial aims – and what greater, extravisual significance those aims had for the artist – that the larger phenomenological themes of the essay are organized. For in his pictorial practice, Cézanne instantiates the kind of perception that phenomenology ascribes to all ordinary perception. Yet Cézanne makes thematic the content of that phenomenological description of what he sees, raising it to a level of perspicuity such that his painting is both the product of vision and *about* vision, both exemplifies the way in which we perceive our environment and pictorially describes or reflects on the way in which we perceive. At the same time, Cézanne faces the problem of such phenomenological description: the phenomenologist describes the prereflective and prejudgmental bases for our experience in the world, but in describing that experience freezes it, or corrupts it, turning it into what the partial (and thus falsely totalizing) account of perceptual experience offered by science would say it is. In this way, Cézanne's painting is both an object for Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis and, like self-psychoanalysis, the source of a phenomenological analysis in itself.

In his interpretation of Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty generally follows those art historians and critics who sought to distinguish the painter from his impressionist and postimpressionist or symbolist

contemporaries.[2] Postimpressionist painters such as Gaugin and Van Gogh charged that when impressionism disposed of academic conventions of composition and traditional narrative, moral, and allegorical content for the rendering of nature in its immediacy, it too readily dispensed with judgment and expression as well. That is, while impressionists thought that the rendering of nature in its visual totality – including the effects of water, wind, mist, smoke, and changing conditions of light – was the defining imperative of art, symbolists accused such work of being intellectually empty. Gaugin wrote, "the Impressionists study color exclusively [for its] decorative effect, but without freedom, retaining the shackles of verisimilitude ... [It is a] purely superficial art, full of affectations and purely material. There is no thought there."[3] The symbolist response to the impressionist rendering of the appearance of the natural world was to turn away from it, subordinating the realist impulse to imagery that drew on fantasy, dreams, and individual expression and employing stylistic techniques drawn from nonnaturalistic traditions in painting such as that of Japanese screens.

Cézanne's mature work, however, followed neither the impressionists nor the symbolists. He did not turn away from the rendering of appearance but devoted himself more fully to it, to showing not the brute – what Merleau-Ponty called "inhuman" – appearance of the world, but the appearance of the world as it comes into being as a configured space of individuated forms for an observer. That is, instead of showing just the sensations that the impressionists treated – like contemporary positivists – as belonging to the given in experience, to be transparently recorded, Cézanne tried to render the process by which such sensations feed into the generation of the landscape or other objects of experience. In the process, Merleau-Ponty says, Cézanne would return the solidity to objects, their presence as objects, which evaporated in the impressionist rendering of mere appearance. For Merleau-Ponty, the painter offered not a picture of the world "as it is," but a picture of the world coming into being in the percipient's view of it, not before or after but *as* the attributes associated with use, significance, and value are applied. This is not the impressionists' quasi-scientific rendering of the appearance of the world, but a view of the world that makes salient the contribution of one's particular consciousness.

However, Merleau-Ponty also contests positivist theories of perception according to which the world appears to us as sense data

that are then interpreted and given configuration in the mind. For he argues that the particular perspective of someone's consciousness is not to be understood as merely a screen of subjectivity that, were it removed, would allow access to the object itself. For the object of experience as understood by phenomenology is in part constituted by the perspective of consciousness. Against transcendental philosophies like neo-Kantianism that worried such a perspectival account of perception would sanction a kind of relativism about objects in the world, Merleau-Ponty followed Husserl in seeing a guarantee of the existence of independent objects in the very fact there are such multiple perspectives on a thing: "Perspective does not appear to me to be a subjective deformation of things but, on the contrary, to be one of their properties, perhaps their essential property. It is precisely because of it that the perceived possesses in itself a hidden and inexhaustible richness, that is a 'thing'" (*SC* 201/186).

Thus, Merleau-Ponty takes what was a long-standing artistic battle – between those who construed the *verité* of painting in terms of naturalism and those who found it in the expression of an inspired creative mind – and raises it to the level of competing metaphysical systems.[4] Neither system, nor the dichotomy they constitute together, will suffice as an account of the human grasp of the world. Furthermore, just as phenomenology rejected the dichotomy between realism and idealism, so Cézanne is described by Merleau-Ponty as refusing to be fixed between the poles of impressionism and symbolism, between a notion of art as rendering only appearances and a notion of art as grounded in an artist's personal, perhaps idiosyncratic response to the world.

II. VISION AND TECHNIQUE

Merleau-Ponty does not claim that Cézanne had some special capacity for vision that allowed him to render what others could not see. Indeed, if Merleau-Ponty is right that Cézanne shows us something about how we come to see the world, this would in principle be true of the impressionists' vision of the world as well. Rather, Cézanne shows us via pictorial means what Merleau-Ponty would otherwise describe by philosophical means: that our relationship to the world is as embodied beings, with a perspectival or incomplete grasp of the world in which the meaning of what we experience arises neither from some determinate and unchanging landscape of objects

that our perception passively follows nor from our mind imposing preexisting categories on the world. Rather, the meaning of our experience comes from our bodily and perceptual confrontation with the world, from within it. Such meaning is given to the world prior to any meaning or significance that might come from our intellectual judgment of what we find around us. Objects are meaningful first because of our sensorimotor relation to them – such as the fact that the front of an object implies, for beings who can move through space, the object's back as well. Phenomenological description expresses the meaning objects have as a consequence of belonging to the orbit of such embodied beings: "the experience of a real thing cannot be explained by the action of that thing on my mind: the only way for a thing to act on a mind is to offer it a meaning, to manifest itself to it, to constitute itself vis-à-vis the mind in its intelligible articulations" (*SC* 215/199). This is so even if the organizing or meaning-giving activity of our embodied perception hides itself in its operation, leaving us to see things in the world habitually as if determinate and existing independently of us.

Merleau-Ponty interprets Cézanne, however, as refusing to surrender to this habitual way of seeing. In Cézanne's painting, we do not see the revelation of some feature of the world to which earlier vision had been blind, such as, say, the color that the impressionists showed to inhere in shadows. Rather, we see the conditions under which our vision of the world is achieved. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty points out a number of pictorial techniques by which this generation of our experience is represented, but where those pictorial techniques or features occupy no place in the real world. So, for example, Cézanne paints a multiplicity of outlines around a figure to undermine the usual impression that the edges of things exist prior to our sense-making perception of them: "Rebounding among these, one's glance captures a shape that emerges from them all, just as it does in perception" (*SNS* 20/15; *AR* 65).

Yet paintings, in representing things in the world, are things in the world themselves, and Merleau-Ponty does not explain how the image of the world Cézanne presents will escape being seen by us in the same way the rest of the world is. That is, if objects in the world take on form as we perceive them in the same way objects in a painting take on form as we perceive them, then what can the painting show us that looking at the real world doesn't already

reveal (or fail to reveal)?[5] One response, suggested but not explicitly argued for by Merleau-Ponty, is that Cézanne's techniques constitute discoveries by which he is able to make salient or perspicuous something that is part of visual experience, but not *recreate* that visual experience. Thus, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between a landscape painting by Cézanne in which he shows "nature pure" and a photograph of the same scene that would invariably suggest "man's works, conveniences, and imminent presence" (*SNS* 18/14; *AR* 64). If the mechanical reproduction displays such an already categorized and inhabited world, this would not be because the photographer intends it to be so but because the photographer in Merleau-Ponty's comparison lacks the technical means to show the world in any way except as we habitually see it. If Cézanne's painting prevents that experience of seeing an image just as one sees the world, it is not because his depiction of the landscape leaves features out that the photograph leaves in. It is because the painter, unlike the photographer, employs a technique that calls attention to – and does not just participate in – the ways in which objects are given individuation, meaning and form. So, in Merleau-Ponty's reference to what Émile Bernard described as "Cézanne's suicide – aiming for reality while denying himself the means to attain it," it is not just any painterly techniques that are denied, but those, such as mathematical perspective, by which a preformed, familiar, and naturalizing order is imposed on the flux of experience (*SNS* 17/12; *AR* 63).

Earlier artists had recognized the ways in which, despite the verisimilitude mathematical perspective offered, it was largely a conventional way of depicting the world that, when applied too rigorously, could result in distortions. Leonardo, for one, made a distinction between "natural perspective" which corresponds to how we view the world, and "artificial perspective, which is a feature only of art," after noticing such problems as inconsistencies in the scale of represented objects caused by foreshortened sides of very wide images and the way spheres must be always be rendered circular in an image to look natural, even if the application of perspective would transform them into elliptical shapes. What Cézanne does, however, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is thematize this use of perspective. That is, Cézanne makes the artificiality of perspective salient in his work, disclosing it in a way that allows it to be reflected on as a convention.

Cézanne's abrogation of perspective is also important for the way in which it demonstrates the painter giving up a kind of control, "abandoning himself to the chaos of sensations" (*SNS* 17/13; *AR* 63). Here, Merleau-Ponty refers to more than just exclusively *visual* sensations. For he argues that sensations are not experienced as arriving individually, one after the other, but holistically, each conditioning the others as they are all revealed. Sartre writes in this connection of how a

> lemon is extended throughout its qualities, and each of its qualities is extended throughout each of the others. It is the sourness of the lemon which is yellow, it is the yellow of the lemon which is sour... if I poke my finger into a jar of jam, the sticky coldness of that jam is a revelation to my fingers of its sugary taste.[6]

In the same vein, Merleau-Ponty refers to Cézanne's remark that "one should be able to paint even odors," such is the unity of the sensible properties of things in experience before they are submitted to the distinctions of the mind.[7] Such holistic sensations imply the role of the body in constituting the objects of experience. This is not the experience of someone affected by synesthesia, but an account of the grounds of experience – one's "lived perspective" – before it is submitted to the individuating and categorizing judgments of the intellect.

Merleau-Ponty describes this "lived perspective" in a passage on the work-table in Cézanne's portrait of Gustave Geoffrey (*SNS* 19/14; *AR* 64). Although a perspectival construction would dictate that the table be painted as a plane with receding sides, Cézanne paints it as if it were leaning over into the lower part of the picture because that is how one sees a table when standing before it, as a plane that slopes toward oneself as one looks over its surface. This does not mean Cézanne paints mere sensations instead of employing his preformed judgment about what he sees. Rather, Cézanne rejects the dichotomy between giving oneself over passively to sensation and applying one's judgment to organize sensation. Neither alternative, Merleau-Ponty stresses – neither the painter who sees nor the painter who thinks – captures the experience of seeing as a being in the world.

In his discussion of Cézanne's technique, Merleau-Ponty suggests that those artists who continue a tradition tend to be committed to such dichotomies as between sensation and understanding,

whereas those who initiate traditions foreswear such dichotomies. So Cézanne does not choose between representing things as they are and the way they appear. Rather, he will "depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization" (*SNS* 18/13; *AR* 63–4). This means that Cézanne draws contours of objects in a still life without employing a continuous line, for that would be to make "an object of the shape" (*SNS* 20/14; *AR* 65). Instead, he treats the outline as the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede. Those visible sides thus refer – as presences to absences – to the sides of the apple that we do not see, but to which our sensorimotor presence in the world is oriented. Here, and again later in the essay, Merleau-Ponty refers to "philosophers and painters" as such initiators of a tradition, suggesting that the philosopher and painter are engaged in the same sort of project, despite differences in method and material. The important difference, then, between Cézanne's and Merleau-Ponty's investigations is not the result, but that the painter may not be aware, or at least not be able to articulate his awareness, of the truth of experience he has revealed, whereas the philosopher might be able to articulate the truth of experience he has uncovered.

Yet, unlike the painter's success in bringing features of that experience into perspicuity, the philosopher's articulation of the experience must contend with the risk of distorting it. The articulation of the experience risks introducing distortions because it casts the experience in just those explicit and objective representations that scientific description employs, but which phenomenology has stressed is alien to the experience as it occurs to an embodied consciousness. In his late, unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty appears to seek to dissolve this contrast between experience and its linguistic articulation, suggesting that the structures of the two are interdependent. Here, at least, his treatment serves as a counterinstance to the charge that a philosophy of art invariably subordinates art to philosophy or deforms the art in making it amenable to philosophical analysis. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges in a way that the artist can engage in a kind of philosophical analysis of experience that is not entirely open to the philosopher.

The distinction between philosopher and painter is posed once again in "Eye and Mind" where Merleau-Ponty describes the scientific point of view that treats objects and beings in the world as essentially susceptible to manipulation and control. Merleau-Ponty

says, by contrast, that the domain of inquiry that belongs to the arts is precisely this human world that "operationalism" – a way of casting the world in instrumental terms – ignores. However, whereas literature (as well as philosophy) must appraise what it treats, must have a judgmental relation to its subject, the painter is "entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees." Merleau-Ponty says that the painter alone can stand outside the sphere of action and judgment, "as if in the painter's calling there were some urgency above all other claims on him." Merleau-Ponty asks what this calling is, "What, then, is the secret science which he has or which he seeks?" (Œ14–15/161/123). Although here he appears to invoke a modernist notion of artistic autonomy, in which art is in its essence held to be immune to the demands of the practical, moral, and political spheres, Merleau-Ponty understands artistic autonomy not as a rejection of the world's claims on the artist, but the pursuit of a claim that is greater. This claim, which Merleau-Ponty develops in "Eye and Mind" (in a way that represents a change from his predominant concern with vision in the earlier essays), addresses the artist's role in expressing a way of existing in the world that is not just his own but is that of the collective group, society, or milieu to which he belongs. Yet it is precisely in absenting himself, in a form of autonomous existence, from the demands of action and judgment that define membership in such a society that the artist is able to achieve such general, nonindividualistic expression.

III. EXPRESSION

In explaining his notion of a social or collective form of expression, Merleau-Ponty cites a phrase from Valéry: the painter "takes his body with him." By this, he refers first to the phenomenological understanding of what may be called "embodied vision," meant not in the sense of vision existing only when causally dependent on a physical being, but in the less easily characterized sense of one's vision being shaped by or expressive of the fact that it is a capacity of an embodied organism: one encounters the world as a physical being, not an abstract "point of view" for which the world is a picture or representation in the mind. He also uses Valéry's remark to stress the fact that as one sees, one inhabits a body – a body that is seen by others. One's body is simultaneously seeing and seen, and when

it sees itself, it sees itself seeing, just as it can touch itself touching. This capacity of the body to be both its own subject and object leads Merleau-Ponty to describe the self as constituted nontransparently and nonautonomously, as both object and subject. Thus, against the notion of a unified subject that serves as the transcendental guarantee of the unity of the world, Merleau-Ponty introduces ways of speaking of a decentered self: one that is not immediately present to itself. There is, he writes, "another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This captive or natural spirit is my body" (*PP* 294/254/296).[8]

Instead of beginning with a notion of the autonomous self and then asking how one's knowledge of other minds is possible, Merleau-Ponty starts with the premise that as an embodied individual one is related – as both subject and object – to other embodied beings. Judgments about others can be made, including judgments about how those others relate to oneself, but the important point for Merleau-Ponty is that one's fundamental connectedness with others is prior to and the ground (not the result) of one's intellectual judgments about them. He stresses that such unity of sensing and sensed is part of being human, but such humanity is not a matter of "contingencies," such as the way our eyes are implanted in us: "The body's animation is not the assemblage or juxtaposition of its parts." Rather, it emerges from what Merleau-Ponty describes as "a kind of crossover" between the body as subject and the body as object: "between the seer and the visible, between touching and touched" (Œ 21/163/125). How to understand the relationships among these incarnations is a central question of Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy.

Merleau-Ponty contrasts the ordinary understanding of an image as showing the appearance of things with the notion that an image registers an attitude, a not exclusively visual point of view, toward the world. In looking at a cave painting on the walls of Lascaux, he says, "rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it" (Œ 23/164/126). An artist's imagery presents a way of seeing that reflects the artist's embeddedness in the world, but in so doing it furnishes neither a visual likeness of the world nor an external presentation of some internal mental imagery. Now a given painting may both realistically represent something in the world and express, perhaps necessarily, an attitude or point of view toward its subject. Yet for Merleau-Ponty, the representative capacity of the image is derived

from its registering an attitude and orientation toward the world. That attitude and orientation belong to our sensorimotor, prereflective, prejudgmental grasp of the world. So, Merleau-Ponty writes, "painting is an analogue or likeness only according to the body," meaning that it is not a visual identity that determines likeness between image and world but a fit between the understanding of the world the painter's image offers and our prereflective, prejudgmental sense-making experience of what we perceive (*Œ* 24/165/126). In this way, Merleau-Ponty reverses the familiar claim that through departures from a default form of realistic representation a painting expresses a particular attitude toward its subject. Instead, for Merleau-Ponty, the particular attitude a painting registers toward what it represents determines whether the painting appears realistic: it does if it coheres with our sensorimotor orientation toward its subject.

Yet however much we speak of realism in painting, there is for Merleau-Ponty, in principle, no possibility of an image "copying" or being a perfectly realistic rendering of the appearance of the visible world. For he recognizes no notion of a determinate and independent "visible world" that could serve as the end and measure of a painting of such a putatively exacting realism. This is not because human vision is always partial, say, because we cannot see all sides of a three-dimensional object at once. Rather, it is because the "visible world" is in part constituted in relation to its perceivers, but at a level more fundamental than the sense-making judgments of the mind. Thus, when referring to the visual density of Cézanne's brushstroke, Merleau-Ponty says that "expressing what *exists* is an endless task" (*SNS* 21/15; *AR* 66), he means it not so much honorifically as literally: "It is no more possible to make a restrictive inventory of the visible than it is to catalog the possible expressions of a language. . . . The eye is an instrument that moves itself, a means which invents its own ends." Here, the eye is defined not as an anatomical organ but, derivatively, as an attribute of one's experiences in the world. In the artist's case, the eye is "*that which* has been moved by some impact of the world, which it then restores to the visible through the traces of a hand" (*Œ* 26/165/127). What the artist restores to the visible is thus much greater for Merleau-Ponty than the "visible in the narrow and prosaic sense" (*Œ* 27/166/127). It includes those features of our existence in the world that attend to our bodily experience of

it, such as our experience in looking at something that it exists in three dimensions, with an anterior side that is present to us in more than just an intellectual sense: "I see depth and yet it is not visible, since it is reckoned from our bodies to things" (*Œ* 45/172–3/133).

The same restoring of the visible is true of the experience of time, which accounts, Merleau-Ponty says later in the essay, for why a galloping horse in a photograph taken at the instant when all its legs are off the ground does not look like it is running, whereas Géricault's horses do appear to run, although they are painted in a posture foreign to those of real horses at a gallop. It is because the painter's horses bring us "to see the body's grip (*prise*) upon the ground and that, according to a logic of body and world I know well, these grips upon space are also ways of taking hold of duration. . . . Painting searches not for the outside of movement but for its secret ciphers" (*Œ* 80–1/185–6/145). Although Cézanne shows the world in a way that suspends our habitual tendency to consider things only in their relation to our ends or needs, Merleau-Ponty stresses that this is not, in any ordinary understanding of the term, a kind of naturalism. For once Merleau-Ponty has dispensed with the naive notion of naturalistic painting and introduced the ways in which paintings such as Cézanne's show us what motivates the appearance of things to us, not the appearance simpliciter, he wants to forestall any attempt to deal with these reservations through a modified theory of naturalism – one that, say, acknowledges the partiality and generative facts of human vision. This is because for Merleau-Ponty, at least in his later essays, art is fundamentally "a process of expressing" (*SNS* 23/17; *AR* 67–8).

Art expresses, but not just in the limited sense of articulating something that exists in one's mind prior to being made public. Rather, art expresses in the sense of bringing into being something that is only inchoately, if at all, conceived before it is given form. The English term "realization" has the dual meaning that expression does in this view: one can realize something in the sense of discovering some truth that was, in principle, available prior to its realization; however, one can also realize something in the sense of bringing it into being – in a sense, creating it. It is in this latter, Hegelian sense that Merleau-Ponty speaks of expression: "'Conception' cannot precede 'execution'" (*SNS* 24/19; *AR* 69).[9] Rules of art or design serve only as the means through which that expression, of

which the painter is not the exclusive source, occurs. Thus, Merleau-Ponty refers to André Marchand's comment, after Paul Klee, "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me.... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it" (*Œ* 31/167/129).

But Merleau-Ponty does not advocate a theory of art as idiosyncratically expressive. He says that an artist such as Cézanne "speaks as the first man spoke and paints as if no one had ever painted before," so that the risk is whether what is expressed can succeed in being extracted from the flow of experience and take on a meaning for the artist and for others (*SNS* 24/19; *AR* 69). Expression thus implies a kind of social context in which meaning can be shared, and consequently expression admits the possibility of failure of meaning as well. This, then, is the deeper, existential and metaphysical meaning of Cézanne's doubt, a doubt about whether his work can achieve meaningfulness at all. It is a doubt that springs from the contingency of meaning when the creation of art enjoins no preestablished language of forms but offers, in both content and form, a new order of expression. As in the quote referring to Klee, Merleau-Ponty conceives of such meaning as generated not exclusively by the artist, but by the world in which the artist is situated. In *The Visible and the Invisible,* he describes how in performance the musician "feels himself, and others feel him to be at the service of the sonata; the sonata sings through him" (*VI* 199/151). It is as if the artist – like the rhapsode in Plato's *Ion* – serves only as a vehicle for the expression of the artwork, rather than the reverse.

Merleau-Ponty employs this transitive conception of art in arguing against Sartre's relegation of visual art to a lower cognitive level than literature. Sartre allows that an image might serve as an imaginative projection of the artist, perhaps creating an affective relation with the viewer, but he withholds the possibility that visual art could enlighten audiences about the world in a way comparable to the capacity of literary works. Against this view – and, in concert with André Malraux's comment that works of art affect us not through what they represent but "through their styles" – Merleau-Ponty adopts a position akin to that of Heidegger in his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," construing visual art as a means of "disclosure" of the world – not in terms of resemblance, but in terms

of showing through the artist's way of rendering the world what in experience resists articulation.[10] He writes, "The painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside,* a merely 'physical–optical' relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible" (*Œ* 69/181/141). Thus, while Merleau-Ponty shares with romantic theories a stress on art's capacity to express truths about the world unavailable to ordinary cognition, he charges such expression with creating new, shared forms of meaning: "The painter can do no more than construct an image; he must wait for this image to come to life for other people. When it does, the work of art will have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in only of them like a stubborn dream.... It will dwell undivided in several minds" (*SNS* 26/20; *AR* 70).

IV. STYLE

In "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Merleau-Ponty suggests that the shared or intersubjective nature of artistic meaning can best be understood with reference to the concept of style. There he rejects two contrary theories of style, both of which he finds in Malraux's *Voices of Silence:* that style is an expression of some suprastylistic force, for example, a "spirit of the age," and that style describes the imposition on the world of a given artist's idiosyncratic imagination. Against such views, Merleau-Ponty contends that style should be understood as the expression of an individual's bodily perception of the world: style encodes what our embodied existence in the world makes salient about it, that is, how we, prior to any intellectual judgment, give meaning and configuration to the world. Yet just as our experience is perspectival, so, too, a style instantiates a particular point of view, one that serves to assemble and integrate features of the world into coherent objects, even as it shows the impossibility of perceptual closure. So all persons have a stylistic relation to the world; the artist, however, is the one who reveals that relation in material forms such as sculpture and painting.

Endorsing Malraux's suggestion that perception already stylizes, Merleau-Ponty describes how the painter does not simply represent a subject such as "a woman" or "an unhappy woman," but shows

"a way of inhabiting the world, of treating it, and of interpreting it by her face, by clothing, the agility of the gesture and the inertia of the body," emblems of a certain way of being in the world. Such ways of inhabiting the world do not, Merleau-Ponty comments, already belong to "the woman seen"; rather they are "called for by her" (*S* 68/54; *AR* 91). This suggests a way in which the artist's style participates in a kind of exchange or debate with the world that already exhibits a style, a way or manner of existing: "the perceived world . . . is not a pure object of thought . . . it is, rather, like a universal style shared in by all perceptual beings."[11] This exchange occurs even though the painter may think of his project in unidirectional or monologic terms. Citing Malraux's anecdote of the garage keeper at Cassis who sees Renoir inexplicably painting a stream while standing before the open sea ("he didn't seem to be looking at anything in particular, and he was only tinkering with one little corner of the picture"), Merleau-Ponty says,

> Renoir can paint women bathing and a freshwater brook while he is by the sea at Cassis because he only asks the sea . . . for its way of interpreting the liquid element, of exhibiting it, and of making it interact with itself. The painter can paint while he is looking at the world because . . . he thinks he is spelling out nature at the moment he is recreating it. (*S* 70/56; *AR* 93)[12]

The concept of style also enters into Merleau-Ponty's account of how to understand the relationship between the preconditions attending a person's life, the givens of context and character associated with that life, and the projects that give that life meaning. In this discussion, he makes what first seems to be an epistemological observation: that if we think we find in a life such as Cézanne's the "seeds" of his work, it is because we first come to know the work and then see the circumstances of his life, filtered, as it were, through the work, through those qualities in the work that we wish to understand or explain. Yet this observation, he shows, is underwritten by a deeper explanatory relation: the conditions of Cézanne's life could genuinely figure in his projects only by signifying for him *what* he had to live, not *how*. How he would live would be a matter of how he interpreted those givens. In other words, if one has no control over certain conditions of the life one leads, one does have a kind of freedom in the manner in which one leads it and the ends one chooses to recognize as one's own. This way of leading a life, by which one

gives meaning to the given features or preconditions attending one's existence, can be called one's *style* of being in the world. Because, for Merleau-Ponty, such meanings are given to these conditions at a level of preconscious, sensorimotor experience, one's style is not in the first instance constituted by a conscious choice, and thus one's style may not be apparent to oneself or to others. This is analogous to the way in which, in Sartre's view, a person's fundamental project, although freely chosen and definitive of who one is, may not be recognized by the person until late in life, if at all.

Unlike Sartre, Merleau-Ponty does not speak of an absolute form of freedom, of an ability to stand "outside" the conditions of one's life and choose what to make of it with those contours and constraints in place. Rather, the freedom is of an internal sort; it is a freedom to act within an already constituted life, specifically to project forward into that life an intention or desire to realize a certain goal. It is in reference to this projected future that the present state of the life acquires a determinate meaning. So Cézanne's life did not determine his work as cause to effect, but the two were nonetheless internally related: the projection of the future work gave an interpretation to the present life from which that projection was made. Merleau-Ponty describes this as an "equilibrium" in Cézanne's life. This is why it feels natural to find "hints" of his later work in his earlier life – natural because what is significant and "essential" in the life is drawn out, or made perspicuous, through his relation to his projected future. The important point here is that this relation between life and work is not discovered extrinsically; rather, it describes the individual's *own* interpretation of his life from within: "We can only see what we are by looking ahead of ourselves, through the lens of our aims" (*SNS* 27/21; *AR* 71). The style of an artist's life and the style of the artist's work may be intertwined, then, not because one explains the other, but because a projection of what the work will be offers the artist an interpretation of the way in which his life emerged against the background of its preconditions. Yet style is not, for Merleau-Ponty, a choice as much as an achievement: describing the formation of a style he says, "the painter does not put his immediate self – the very nuance of feeling – into his painting. He puts his *style* there, and he has to win it as much from his own attempts as from the painting of others or from the world." Referring to an analogous comment by Malraux on a writer's style, he comments on "how long it takes

the painter . . . to recognize in his first paintings the features of what will be his completed work, provided that he is not mistaken about himself" (*S* 65/52; *AR* 89).

V. FREEDOM AND SELF-EMERGENCE

Merleau-Ponty asks whether defining a life in terms of the way in which one pursues one's goals might suggest an incompatibility with freedom. For if "we are from the start our way of aiming at a particular future," then how is this original feature of oneself to be distinguished from the other givens that attend one's life? In this picture, one might say one's life is free from external constraints, but only because what would count as limits on such a life serve among its defining features – a radically nonautonomous view of the self that Merleau-Ponty, borrowing from Kierkegaard, summarizes in the striking phrase, "if we experience no external constraints, it is because we are our whole exterior." Merleau-Ponty further suggests, "if there is true freedom, it can only come about in the course of our life by our going beyond our original situation and yet not ceasing to be the same" (*SNS* 27–8/21; *AR* 71–2).

It might be objected that to go beyond one's original situation or to change one's fundamental project is, within the confines of the theory Merleau-Ponty sketches, precisely to change one's self, to be a different person and thus realize freedom not within one's own life, but within the life of "another." Merleau-Ponty believes, however, that freedom within a given, original life is possible, for he insists that we never entirely change: "looking back on what we were, we can always find hints of what we have become" (*SNS* 28/21; *AR* 72). From an external standpoint, this reply would be unsatisfactory, for there is no guarantee that those features that survive a change in the self are *essential* features, rather than just accidental features that one can find in both the person's earlier and later incarnations. In Merleau-Ponty's theory, however, this retrospective understanding in which a life reflects a unity or sustained identity through time belongs first to the internal perspective of the person whose life it is. Thus, what matters for the sake of unity is whether the individual from his or her own perspective can see the ability or desire to go beyond the original situation as *anticipated* in that original situation. For Merleau-Ponty, an individual at any given time in his or her life is not just determined by the events of the past. Rather, he

proposes, not only is the future determined by the past, but the past, through imaginative projection, is determined by the future. This is obviously not an understanding of determination in solely causal terms; it is a notion of *determination as interpretation*, which seeks a stable equilibrium between the events of one's life and one's interpretation of them. One's actions are seen in relation to a past and projected future, each of which shapes what in the other is taken to be significant or brought into relief. This is why Merleau-Ponty can assert that psychoanalysis – as a hermeneutic method – allows us to see our being free as amounting to the "creative repetition of ourselves, always, in retrospect, faithful to ourselves" (*SNS* 32/25; *AR* 75).

In his discussion of Leonardo, Merleau-Ponty illustrates this connection between the original conditions attending one's life and the nature of the life as it unfolds. He recounts Valéry's paean to the artist as a man for whom no dream, fantasy, or illusion colors his self-knowledge or mediates between what he wills and what he does. For Merleau-Ponty, Leonardo thus exemplifies a putatively free man whose actions are determined only by current concerns in his life and whose decisions are unaffected by any internal psychic factors of which he is unaware. Drawing on Freud's analysis of the artist, however, Merleau-Ponty suggests that even in the autonomous Leonardo we can see features of his childhood that entered unreflectively into the work of his mature self: he left his work unfinished, just as his father had abandoned him; his apparent lack of attachment to any woman is connected to his exclusive attachment to his mother, from whom he was taken when he was four; his mature scientific experiments display the same wonder as that of a child, and so on. Even if such psychoanalytic explanations in this particular case seem arbitrary or ad hoc, Merleau-Ponty suggests that what psychoanalysis in general confirms is the relationship between one moment of life and another.[13] Of course, this connection does not yet satisfy Merleau-Ponty's criteria for freedom because, even if there is such a connection between later and earlier stages of an individual's life, this does not entail that the individual will interpret them as thus connected. Yet Merleau-Ponty might want to insist that the connection is there nonetheless.

In Merleau-Ponty's (as well as the analyst's) view, the relationship between earlier and later events is not a linear cause to effect. Rather, "in every life, one's birth and one's past define categories or

basic dimensions that do not impose any particular act but which can be found in all" (*SNS* 31–2/24–5; *AR* 75). Merleau-Ponty appears to operate with two positions here. One is that a person's life can be understood as more and more conditioned by actions and events as it is lived, such that at any one time the cumulative history of one's life shapes its subsequent history, even if it does not exhaustively determine it. The other position is that one's life is best conceived not as a chain of causes and effects but as exhibiting a kind of organic development, such that the nature of the person is not the result of the actions and events attending one's life, but rather emerges through them. This emergence gives a unity to the life not just from the outside, as the entity that happens to serve as the locus of those events, but from the self-interpreting inside as well. The nature of this self may not be visible in any greater degree to the individual herself than to external observers. Thus, Merleau-Ponty speaks of Cézanne as "never at the center of himself," needing to look to others for self-recognition (*SNS* 32/25; *AR* 75). Again, the analogy with an artist's style presents itself: an artist's style, once formed, may emerge into perspicuity only in the course of the artist's work, becoming visible to the artist and to others only late in his oeuvre. In "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Merleau-Ponty speaks of an artist's style as "just as recognizable for others and just as little visible to him as his silhouette" (*S* 67/53; *AR* 90).

VI. ART HISTORY

The passage on Leonardo at the end of "Cézanne's Doubt" is quite brief in comparison with the attention devoted to Cézanne. Although the case of Leonardo offers Merleau-Ponty an opportunity to distinguish his own understanding of the implicit unity of a life from that of psychoanalysis, it leaves a sense of incompleteness in the essay, as if Merleau-Ponty might have aborted an attempt to offer an analysis of the Renaissance painter on a par with that he accorded Cézanne.

Perhaps the abrupt ending also suggests a sense of essential incompleteness in Merleau-Ponty's theory, as if the phenomenological investigation that was so fruitful in the case of Cézanne could only with difficulty be extended to others such as Leonardo. For considered as a theory of art, Merleau-Ponty's analysis is both too specific and too general. Too specific because although Merleau-Ponty found

a nearly perfect visual expression of a phenomenological theory of perception in the work of Cézanne, he has not offered a theory of art that can easily be generalized and applied to other cases. This is because, ultimately, Cézanne functions in Merleau-Ponty's essay only as an illustration of a theory of experience and perception that, although it applies to the experience and perception of art, does so in the same way it applies to everything else in human experience and perception. Thus, the essay may appear too general because it does not isolate anything peculiar to art, artists, or artistic experience, nor anything essential to representation as art. To be sure, he makes compelling use of Cézanne's work in laying out his phenomenological theory – but this is because, in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the painter's work, it is a theory they, philosopher and artist, both share. But such a theory is not a theory of art, even if it is a theory of vision's relation to the world to which artists at certain times (as in early modernism) subscribed. Merleau-Ponty offers a model of painterly practice that has the same ahistorical, universal structure as does sensorimotor experience in his phenomenology. Yet although a phenomenological account of human existence in the world may be offered in ahistorical terms (even as it recognizes the role of historical change in shaping the content of that experience), a theory of visual art must recognize its historically changing dimensions.

Merleau-Ponty does suggest in "Eye and Mind" that modern art exhibits a "system of equivalences, a Logos of lines, of lighting, of colors, of reliefs, of masses – a nonconceptual presentation of universal Being," such that when artists attempt to invent new means of expression, or modify those already at hand, their effort is essentially an attempt to find new systems of equivalences for the transhistorical features of human existence they disclose. This would imply that whatever the differences are among various movements, periods, and styles of art, they share a common purpose: penetrating the "envelope of things" (*Œ* 71–2/182/142). Yet Merleau-Ponty's examples are largely drawn from the large, but by no means exhaustive, class of artists, such as Cézanne, Matisse, and Klee, for whom the organizing principle of art is the visual interrogation of the world. This interrogation is not, of course, to be understood on the model of naturalistic or mimetic fidelity: Cézanne wants to reveal what generates the appearance of things, and Klee, in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, frees line from its putative subordination to how things appear

and lets it take on a generating power itself. But such a phenomenologically inflected principle of art could hardly be extended over the whole of art history. Indeed, it might be said that such a model of art – art as a competitor and an antidote to the scientific view of the world – applies mainly to those artists (Leonardo, Monet in his series paintings, Cézanne, Seurat) who looked to science, in part, for their own self-definition and who sought to arrive, through their own means and methods of art, at truths about a world otherwise understood in scientific terms. (Recall that while Merleau-Ponty attributes to Cézanne the endeavor to depict form as it comes into being, he acknowledges Cézanne's own understanding of his project as committed to the representation of things as they are.)

Even if one finds no general theory of art in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, however, one can find a general theory of experience, a theory that artists may indeed make central to their art. For example, minimalist artists of the 1960s, such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris, found in *Phenomenology of Perception* a way of understanding how the notion of "preobjective experience" underlying all perception could guarantee the meaningfulness of their work, even in its complete visual abstraction and its eschewal of an animating conceptual core. A bit later, Richard Serra would draw on such a minimalist interpretation of phenomenology to create pieces such as *Shift* of 1970–2, a site-specific work composed of six sections of concrete (815 feet in total) laid down on a hilly field in King City, Ontario. There the art's meaning is generated not through its appearance, nor through its "concept," but through the way it structures the experience of individuals – as moving, seeing bodies – who start at opposite ends of the work and try to keep each other in view as they traverse the terrain in which "abstract geometries were constantly submitted to the redefinition of a sited vision."[14]

Where Merleau-Ponty does allow history to enter into his analysis of painting is in his account of the nature and genesis of the means of expression. He says that the various and changing interpretations that we give to great works of art over time issue, in fact, from the works themselves: "It is the work itself that has opened the perspective from which it appears in another light. It transforms *itself* and *becomes* what follows; the interminable interpretations to which it is *legitimately* susceptible change it only into itself" (*Œ* 62/179/139). Here, the meaning and expression of a work of art

are not fixed features of the work, but they are also not simply projected onto the work by interpreters without constraints (drawn from the work itself) over which interpretations are true. Rather, Merleau-Ponty suggests that changes over time in the interpretation of a work of art may reflect the self-generated transformations of the particular work itself. Merleau-Ponty does not say what determines the validity of a given interpretation in that conception of art but does stress how the interpretation of art, like the sense given to the objects of one's experience, must be understood as an essentially situational phenomenon, emerging in the confrontation of an individual with a work.

Merleau-Ponty suggests that before art represents in its manifest content something in experience, its imagery is "autofigurative," it forms itself. That is, representational art shows not the painter's depiction of a determinate and independent world, even if the painter sees his art in those terms, but the world shaping itself through the painter: "The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible" (*Œ* 69/181/141). The history of painting likewise exhibits an evolution (but not progress) that occurs, like Hegel's "cunning of reason," as if behind the painter's back. Merleau-Ponty describes how even as artists try to achieve their immediate goals in painting, as if it were a stable practice with internal standards of success, they bring about its transformation: "At the very moment when, their eyes fixed upon the world, they thought they were asking it for the secret of a sufficient representation, they were unknowingly bringing about that *metamorphosis* of which painting later became aware" (*S* 60/48; *AR* 85).

For Merleau-Ponty, this transformation is best understood as a process in which artists respond to their immediate situation, including the tradition of art they find themselves in, but create art that is pregnant enough in meaning that it "prefigures" art made by individuals finding themselves in very different circumstances. "No doubt one reason why our painting finds something to recapture in types of art which are linked to an experience very different from our own is that it transfigures them. But it also does so because they prefigure it" (*S* 75/60; *AR* 97). The relation of art of the past to that of the present is not one of causal influence but a kind of "continuous

exchange" in which today's art "activates" or makes salient forgotten or ignored features of past art, while past art serves to inaugurate a tradition. In this tradition, Merleau-Ponty writes, "The classical and the modern pertain to the universe of painting conceived as a single task" (*S* 75/60; *AR* 96–7), each artist "advancing the line of the already opened furrow" (*S* 73/58; *AR* 95).[15] This "task" is not the exposure of an independent and determinate world, but the disclosure of a point of view on that world. Here, it would be fair to describe such a historical task as akin to a general style: a way of representing the world that is generated in the art of a number of painters because of their shared tradition, context, or goals, even as each tries to realize the aims of his or her art alone.

Merleau-Ponty appears to believe, however, that such a general style is grounded in, and expresses, an even more fundamental phenomenon: a common human style of perceptual comportment. In this way, he offers a model of art history that is analogous to, but more radical than, theories of the internal evolution of art developed by such philosophically minded historians of art as Alois Riegl, Erwin Panofsky, and Henri Focillon. Riegl sought to uncover the unity within the various manifestations of art by appeal to universal "laws" of artistic development and a Hegelian concept of the *Kunstwollen*, a kind of aesthetic will or intention that operates through the artist. Panofsky tried to register the unity of historical periods in the idea of a symbolic form, a neo-Kantian notion of period-specific, a priori categories that structure thought and experience. And Focillon theorized that the unity of art through its changes was explained by the way those transformations were internally generated: "form liberates other forms according to its *own* laws."[16]

Merleau-Ponty, however, proposes a kind of unity much more fundamental than that offered by these theorists, one derived from the basic orientation of the human body in the world. If those art historians sought a general explanatory model of why art changes, Merleau-Ponty sought a way of understanding how, through its changes, art is in its essential features the same. Such a view of art history as inhering in and generated out of a universal style may offer an answer to the charge that Merleau-Ponty offers less a general theory of art than a thesis about a particular historical moment or form of art. For if all art is, in its fundamental motivation, the same, then to speak of one art is to speak of them all. In any case, if Merleau-Ponty's writings

on art illuminate the experience of art, and the relations between artist, spectator, and world, without propounding a theory of art that would admit of universal application, that may be one of the sources of its depth. The artworks and artists he treats serve less as examples than as exemplary instances, chosen precisely because of the ways in which they serve as models of what art strives to be. Merleau-Ponty does not theorize about artistic practice in a way that detaches it from ordinary human experience but shows instead ways in which the two are continuous in their interrogation of the world.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive commentary on the genesis and contents of Merleau-Ponty's writings on the visual arts, see the essays by Galen Johnson, forming the first part of Johnson and Smith's *Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*.
2. In addition to relying on the letters and conversations between Cézanne and Émile Bernard that the latter published as *Souvenirs de Paul Cézanne* (1912), Merleau-Ponty relies on generally antiformalist histories of the artist such as Joachim Gasquet's *Cézanne* (1921), a biography of the artist, and Fritz Novotny's pioneering series of articles on Cézanne's rejection of mathematical perspective. See Novotny's "Cézanne and the End of Perspective."
3. From "Diverses Choses, 1896–1897," an unpublished manuscript, part of which appears in Rotonchamp, *Paul Gauguin, 1848–1903*, 210, 216, 211; reproduced in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, 65.
4. Baudelaire comments in his "Salon of 1859" on the distinction between artists who are faithful to the optical effects of nature and artists who are faithful to their own temperaments or singular understandings of their milieu: "The immense class of artists . . . can be divided into two quite distinct camps: one type, who calls himself *'réaliste'* . . . says, 'I want to represent things as they are, or as they will be, supposing that I do not exist. . . . And the other type, *'l'imaginatif,'* says: I want to illuminate things with my intellect and project their reflection upon other minds" (Baudelaire, "Salon de 1859," in Florenne, *Écrits sur l'art*, vol. 2, 36–7).
5. What can be called the "El Greco fallacy" is a version of this problem: it will not explain the elongated, tortured figures of El Greco's painting to posit that the painter had a form of astigmatism or other visual abnormality, for if El Greco saw the world as appearing this way, he would also see normally formed images of the world on his canvas this way, and

thus there would be no added impetus, were he to paint what he saw, to depict his figures in that elongated fashion. Merleau-Ponty rejects the physiological explanation of El Greco's work; see *SC* 219/203.

6. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 227/257/209.
7. "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work," *The Primacy of Perception*, 6.
8. Similarly, "If I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive" (*PP* 249/215/250).
9. Merleau-Ponty describes the incident in which a film recorded Matisse as he was drawing, which, when played in slow motion, showed the hesitations, false starts, and other gestures that were invisible to Matisse and others in real time. Merleau-Ponty comments that while Matisse would surely be wrong to treat the film as revealing the truth about his process of drawing, the slow-motion representation does demonstrate that Matisse's action was the result of a series of decisions made not at the level of conscious deliberation, but at that of habitual motor-reflexive "know-how." Nonetheless, they were choices of a sort, ones that reflected "a score of conditions that were unformulated and even unformulable for anyone but Matisse because they were only defined and imposed by the intention of executing *that particular painting which did not yet exist*" (*S* 58/46; *AR* 83).
10. Malraux, *The Voices of Silence: Man and His Art*, 320.
11. "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work," *The Primacy of Perception*, 6.
12. Malraux, *Voices of Silence*, 280.
13. In a lecture given in 1951, Merleau-Ponty rejected the notion of the unconscious. What psychoanalysts call the unconscious, he said, corresponds only an "unrecognized, unformulated knowledge, that we do not wish to assume" (*S* 291/229).
14. Rosalind Krauss, *Richard Serra/Sculpture*, 31. For an account of the role of phenomenological themes in minimalist and earthwork sculpture generally see Krauss's *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 266–88. Whereas Krauss has used phenomenology in describing the historical context and theoretical sources of art such as Serra's, the art historian and critic Michael Fried has used Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment as the core concept in his methodology of interpretation. See, for example, his *Courbet's Realism* and the essays collected in *Art and Objecthood*. Stephen Melville provides an overview of these and other uses of phenomenology in art history in his "Phenomenology and the Limits of Hermeneutics," 143–54.

15. For a similar theory of the retroactive transformation an artwork may have on one earlier in a history they both share, see Arthur Danto's account of the "style-matrix." Danto suggests that the discovery of new forms of art can enlarge the set of predicates in terms of which earlier forms of art are interpreted (e.g., the emergence of expressionist art, or nonrepresentational art, allows earlier art to be predicated with the opposite terms, "nonexpressionistic" or "representational"). Danto, however, sees this change as occurring a lot in the artwork but in its description. See Danto, "The Artworld."
16. Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*; Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*; Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, 97.