

JYU DISSERTATIONS 17

Petri Berndtson

Phenomenological Ontology of Breathing

The Phenomenologico-Ontological Interpretation of the Barbaric Conviction of We Breathe Air and a New Philosophical Principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

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The general topic of my philosophical dissertation is phenomenological ontology of breathing. I do not investigate the phenomenon of breathing as a natural scientific problem, but as a philosophical question. Within our tradition, breathing has been normally understood as a mechanistic-materialistic physiological life-sustaining process of gas exchange and cellular respiration which does not really seem to have any essential connection to human being's spiritual, mental or philosophical capacities. On the contrary to this natural scientific view, I argue that breathing can be understood as a philosophical question that has phenomenological, experiential, ontological, spiritual, bodily, mental, poetic, elemental, ethical, voluntary and mystical dimensions. My investigation conceptualizes breathing in the first place as a question of phenomenological ontology. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenologico-ontological method of interrogation of the lived body's experiential openness to the world and Being provides the most fundamental point of departure in this dissertation. Merleau-Ponty emphasized in his investigations the lived body's perceptual openness to the world and Being. He argued famously for the primacy of perception. His thesis of the primacy of perception means that perception as the perceptual openness to the world and Being is the foundation which is always presupposed by all the other levels of our existence and being-in-the-world. In this dissertation, I challenge this idea of the primacy of perception with Merleau-Ponty's own remarks about breathing. I argue that in his own remarks about breathing, he implicitly points toward a level which is even more fundamental than the primacy of perception. In this dissertation, this level of our being-in-the-world I call the primacy of breathing. Breathing as the lived body's respiratory openness to the world and Being is now understood as the foundation which is always presupposed by all the other dimensions of our being-in-the-world. These dimensions are, for example, our theoretical, practical, social and perceptual ways of relating with the world. If the idea of the primacy of breathing is taken seriously, it means that all the questions of philosophy could be rethought, re-examined and re-experienced within the fundamental atmosphere of respiratory openness to the world and Being. In this dissertation, I initially try to rethink philosophy as a new philosophy of breathing. This new philosophy of breathing would be phenomenological ontology of breathing. The bases of this new phenomenological ontology of breathing are Merleau-Ponty's remarks about breathing. My task is to explicate and interpret them with the help of Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenological ontology. In my task of beginning philosophy anew as philosophy of breathing or as respiratory philosophy, I will also use the ideas of Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard, Paul Claudel, Luce Irigaray, Edmund Husserl and David Kleinberg-Levin. My dissertation is divided into two main sections. In Section One, I construct within the framework of phenomenological ontology a new notion of breathing as the primacy of breathing. In Section Two, I develop a phenomenological method that I call the method of ontologico-respiratory reduction. This method will lead us back to the primacy of breathing.

Keywords: breathing, phenomenology, ontology, Merleau-Ponty, philosophy, Bachelard, Heidegger, Irigaray, elemental, silence, listening, poetry

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INTRODUCTION

The Topic of My Dissertation: Bodily Phenomenological Ontology of Breathing

The topic of my dissertation is the philosophy of breathing. This means that in my dissertation I will investigate the connection between breathing and philosophy; the connection between respiration and thinking. Traditionally, breathing has been understood physiologically as a mechanistic-materialistic process of gas exchange and cellular respiration. But is the phenomenon of breathing only a physiological process to be studied as a problem of the natural sciences? According to Havi Carel, “breathing has complex and powerful psychological, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.”¹ To follow Carel, one could say that breathing is “a juncture of the physiological, psychological, existential, spiritual, and cultural.”² From the perspective of the prevailing physiological theory of respiration, breathing does not have any essential relation with these other dimensionalities which include, for example, spirituality, mental capacities, experientialism, voluntarism and the practice of philosophy. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of breathing includes such dimensions that are not directly, or at least not entirely only, physiologically causal relations that can be studied by the natural scientific method. Dimensions of breathing that are dimensions of our lived experience could be called the non-physiological dimensions of breathing. For example, the relation between spirituality and breathing can be found both etymologically and practically. Etymologically, the connection between spirituality and breathing is found in the Latin word *spiritus*: the root of English words like “spirit” and “spirituality” stems from the Latin verb *spirare*, “to breathe”. This connection in English between spirit and breathing becomes clearer if one considers words like “respire” and “respiration”, which come from the Latin verb *respirare* (*re-* “again” + *spirare* “to breathe”), meaning etymologically “to

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- 1 Havi Carel, *Phenomenology of Illness* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 108.
 - 2 Carel, *Phenomenology of Illness*, p. 128.

breathe again”, as well as words like “suspire” and “suspuration”, which come from the Latin verb *suspirare* (*sub-* “under” + *spirare* “to breathe”), meaning etymologically “to draw a deep breath, heave a sigh”. What I mean by the practical connection between breathing and spirituality is that many spiritual traditions (Buddhism³, Yoga⁴, Taoism⁵, etc.) use various experiential breathing practices as methods for spiritual growth. Neither the etymological nor the practical (breathing practices for spiritual purposes) aspects of this connection between spirituality and breathing can ever be truly understood or studied by physiology or the natural sciences in general.⁶ Regarding the question of voluntarism, it can be said that breathing is both an involuntary and a voluntary bodily function. In that sense, breathing is like “thinking [which] too is involuntary as well as voluntary.”⁷ Thinking is not only a voluntary activity as most of the time “thoughts simply arise” and ideas “pop into our heads”.⁸ Most of the time breathing seems to happen in an involuntary manner, but we also have a voluntary capacity to vary the way we breathe and even stop it for a moment by holding it. This intertwining of the voluntary and involuntary dimensions of breathing is one of the fundamental aspects of breathing⁹. This makes the phenomenon of breathing exceptional and radically different in comparison to the body’s other vital physiological systems, such as the cardiovascular and digestive systems, or the functions of internal organs like the spleen or liver, as these systems and functions are involuntary, which means that we cannot vary any of them directly by choosing to do so. If physiology defines breathing as the gas exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide, this same respiratory process of ex-

3 See, for example, Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (London: Rider, 1990).

4 See, for example, Richard Rosen, *The Yoga of Breath: A Step-by-Step Guide to Pranayama* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2002).

5 See, for example, Dennis Lewis, *The Tao of Natural Breathing: For Health, Well-Being, and Inner Growth* (Berkeley, CA: Rodmell Press, 2006).

6 There is, of course, many physiological and neurological investigations exploring the connections between breathing practices as forms of spirituality and physiological body (for example, brain functions), but at the same time it is important to be aware that spirituality is a dimension of our *lived experience*. This means that physiology, neurology or any other branch of the natural sciences can never study spirituality or breathing practices as dimensions of lived experience, because the natural scientific approach never grasp the *meaningful* world of the experience. The natural sciences speak of the hormones, the cells, the chemical compositions, etc., but none of us have ever experienced anything like that within our lived experience. On the meaningful experiential level of human life we never experience anything what the natural sciences speak of. We experience meaningful relations and encounters with things, others, atmospheric fields and the world.

7 Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, “The Legacy of William James: Lessons for Today’s Twenty-first Century Neuroscience”, in *Pragmatist Neurophilosophy: American Philosophy and the Brain*, ed. John R. Shook and Tibor Solymosi (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 31.

8 Sheets-Johnstone, “The Legacy of William James”, p. 31.

9 Lenart Škof, *Pragmatist Variations on Ethical and Intercultural Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 13, James Morley, “Inspiration and Expiration: Yoga Practice Through Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of the Body”, *Philosophy East and West*, Jan 2001: 51, 1, p. 76. This article of Morley will be reissued in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).

change can be also be defined very differently in experiential terms because oxygen and carbon dioxide never appear to us within our experience. In experiential terms, breathing as a certain kind of exchange and a cycle of inspiration and expiration could be defined initially as follows: breathing is an experience of the perpetual relation of exchange between ourselves and that which is not ourselves, that is, that which is outside ourselves but which is inhaled into us. In experiential terms, breathing is a constant relation and exchange between us and the world. Breathing, therefore, is the experiential body's relation with the world in contrast to other vital physiological functions, for example the cardiovascular system, which is an internal function of the body. Inspiring questions in my dissertation will be: could breathing in its non-physiological dimensions, that is, in its experiential dimensions, be of philosophical significance, and could some of these experiential dimensions of breathing have particularly philosophical meanings? If this is the case, it would be important to ask what these kinds of respiratory dimensions of philosophy could be, and how they could be interrogated as philosophical questions. In order to proceed with such questions, I suggest that one needs a very particular philosophical research attitude. With this research attitude, one needs to be able to differentiate between the body as a physiological function and the body as we live and experience it. This is the only way one can try to think about and investigate the experiential, non-physiological (e.g. spirituality, mental capacities, voluntarism) and potentially philosophical dimensions of breathing as the body's way of relating with the world. This experiential attitude in my dissertation will be offered by the research tradition of phenomenological philosophy, especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy, which emphasizes the living body's perceptual and experiential openness to and relation with the world, and Being as the foundation and condition of the possibility of our entire existence.

The phenomenon of breathing is quite a rare and exceptional subject of philosophical research. It has been examined in a few studies and articles, but to my knowledge nobody has ever before written a systematic philosophical investigation of breathing from the perspective of the phenomenology of the body (bodily phenomenology) or the phenomenological ontology of Being. This means that my dissertation will be both a bold overture to thinking of breathing as a philosophical question within the contexts of bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology, and a deepening and expansion of the fields of bodily phenomenological and phenomenologico-ontological research on dimensions of the respiratory body's being-in-the-world and relation to Being.

The Background to my Dissertation

The most central theoretical background to my dissertation is Merleau-Ponty's bodily phenomenology and his late phenomenological ontology of Being. In phenomenological philosophy, the philosopher has been understood as a per-

petual beginner.¹⁰ This means that the principal task of the philosopher is to begin philosophizing, thinking, questioning and wondering perpetually from the beginning, without ever being content with ready-made ways of thinking and acting. In phenomenological philosophy, the beginning and foundation of all the thinking and research that the philosopher takes as his point of departure is the human being's experiential relation with the world. Philosophizing begins in phenomenology with our experiential relation—with the world. Philosophers within the movement of phenomenology understand this fundamental experiential relation with the world in different ways, however, depending on what they emphasize as the most important dimensions within our relation with the world. The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (especially early Husserl) *emphasizes* the phenomenon of theoretical and epistemological consciousness in our relation with the world, and the theoretical structures of this consciousness as the beginning of all philosophical investigation.¹¹ Martin Heidegger (especially early Heidegger) *emphasizes* the significance of our practical relation with the world as the beginning and foundation of philosophy.¹² Emmanuel Levinas *emphasizes* the social and ethical relation to the world as he understands the face-to-face relation and the subject's relation to the Other as the beginning of philosophizing.¹³ Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philoso-

10 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. lxxviii and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 130.

11 It is important to notice that I have written the word "*emphasizes*" in italics as I have wanted to make it clear that Husserl during his long philosophical career investigates phenomenologically many other themes (for example, the body, temporality, intersubjectivity, ethics) than only theoretical and epistemological consciousness as way of relating with the world. It could be that this assessment that Husserl's phenomenological explorations are concerned mainly with our theoretical relation with the world is correct if one were only to emphasize his early philosophical period including his book *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901). See, for example, Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 60–191. But what can be said of the main emphasis of the whole of Husserl's philosophical career is that it is always phenomenological philosophy of the "*primacy of consciousness*". Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), p. 198 and Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, 2nd edn., trans. André Orianne (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), p. 34. With this philosophical emphasis it is different compared to Heidegger's, Levinas' and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophies.

12 Like in Husserl's case in the previous footnote this assessment is very much an oversimplification of Heidegger's philosophical career as a whole, but it has a certain truth to it if one looks at the thematic emphasis of his magnum opus *Being and Time*. For example, Joseph P. Fell and William Blattner have emphasized the early Heidegger's phenomenological emphasis of "*the primacy of practice*". Joseph P. Fell writes that in the early Heidegger "the practical takes ontological priority over the theoretical, and everyday experience or comportment takes priority over scientific cognition." Joseph P. Fell, "The Familiar and the Strange: On the Limits of Praxis in the Early Heidegger", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXVIII (1989): 24. See also William Blattner, "Ontology, the *A Priori*, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy", in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

13 See Levinas' two most important works, Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991) and Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso

phy of the body places the lived and experiential body's perceptual relation with the world as the beginning and foundation of all reflection, including philosophical reflection. Merleau-Ponty calls this philosophical beginning the "primacy of perception"¹⁴. This body's perceptual relation to the world has, according to Merleau-Ponty, primacy over these other relations to the world. This means that theoretical, practical and social relations with the world are founded, grounded and constituted upon the body's perceptual being-in-the-world. They begin in the world of perception and could not exist without it. This perceptual relation with the world is the organic intertwining of the subjective perceiving body and the perceived world, in which it is impossible to truly separate the body-subject of perception and the world from each other because, in the first place, the world opens up to us from the perspective of this perceptual body. There would be no world for us if we had no body.¹⁵ All the other conceptions of the world, be they theoretical, practical or social, are based on the body's perceptual level as the condition that makes them possible. According to Merleau-Ponty, this also means that the foundation and constitution of the meaningfulness of the world, in its various levels and dimensions, is principally constituted by this organic perceptual body-world pact.¹⁶ For instance, in the case of the world's fundamental dimensions, such as space, time, freedom and intersubjectivity, they are in the first place experienced as something that one could call perceptual space, perceptual time, perceptual freedom and perceptual intersubjectivity. As Merleau-Ponty faithfully follows the primary phenomenological task of the philosopher as a perpetual beginner, his philosophy is constantly returning to this perceptual body's relation with the world.¹⁷ This means that when, for example, he studies the phenomenon of space, his first move is always to begin his investigation of the space from the point of view of the space as it appears to us within our bodily perception. This kind of phenomenological

Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994). Levinas' philosophy could be called the phenomenological philosophy of "the *primacy of the face-to-face encounter*". Bettina Bergo, *Levinas Between Ethics and Politics: For the Beauty that Adorns the Earth* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), pp. 29n43 and Roger Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002), p. 86. Levinas' phenomenology can also be defined as the ethical phenomenology of "the *primacy of the other*". See, for example, François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 33 and Andrew Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2014), p. 246.

- 14 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964). One can notice by looking at the previous footnotes that if Merleau-Ponty's philosophy has its emphasis on the "primacy of perception", then similarly it can be said that Husserl has it on the "primacy of the consciousness", (the early) Heidegger on the "primacy of practice" or the primacy of the practical and Levinas on the "primacy of the face-to-face encounter" or of "the other".
- 15 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 104 and 431.
- 16 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 168, 261 and 264-265.
- 17 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 57, 99, 247 and 269. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 175.

approach is possible only if one places in abeyance all one's previous knowledge of space, for example the theoretical conception of the objective and geometrical space of the sciences.¹⁸

In my dissertation it will be essentially important that, in addition to this constitution of the perceptual body's relation with the world, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological investigations also include brief and fragmentary remarks about breathing as our body's relation to the world.¹⁹ In these text fragments Merleau-Ponty understands breathing in a phenomenological manner, that is, as an experiential phenomenon. In some of these fragments breathing is referred to in a way that might suggest that it is even more fundamental than perception. These brief remarks on breathing will form the most important textual sources in my dissertation. These fragments on breathing have become almost an entirely neglected part of Merleau-Ponty's *oeuvre*, not only among philosophers in general but also within the community of Merleau-Ponty scholars. An exception to this is David Kleinberg-Levin who, in his article "Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing" (1984) and his book *Before the Voice of Reason: Echoes of Responsibility in Merleau-Ponty's Ecology and Levinas's Ethics* (2008), has briefly studied a few of Merleau-Ponty's fragments on breathing.²⁰ The most exciting thing with regards to my dissertation is that, according to Kleinberg-Levin, some of Merleau-Ponty's remarks on breathing could provide a new beginning and foundation for philosophy, that is, a new beginning of phenomenological thinking. This is because some of these fragments speak very briefly of breathing as something which may even be more primordial than perception. However, nowhere in Kleinberg-Levin's large philosophical corpus or texts in which he explicitly writes about breathing does he systematically articulate what founding philosophy upon a new respiratory beginning, that is, upon a respiratory principle, could mean if it was based on these fragments by Mer-

18 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxii.

19 These Merleau-Ponty's text fragments on breathing can be found from the following sources. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 10, 107, 162, 166, 177, 219, 297, 299, 301, 426,, 427 and 479; Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, pp. 80, 81, 83, 239, 263, 264, 391, 151 and 358; Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 103, 121 and 144; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954–1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), pp. 16, 18, 37, 85n11, 87n25, 106n21, 149, 177 and 215; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*, trans. John O'Neill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 96, 130 and 162; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, trans. Robert Valier (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), pp. 38, 148, 168, 187 and 227; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 82; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 118 and 120; Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 63, 64, 127, 136, 149, 194, 209 and 301.

20 David Michael Levin, "Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing", *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. XIV (1984) and David Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason: Echoes of Responsibility in Merleau-Ponty's Ecology and Levinas's Ethics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008). Also in 2018 will be published a rewritten version of this Levin's "Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).

leau-Ponty. In my dissertation I will seriously consider Kleinberg-Levin's brief remarks concerning the importance of breathing, the primacy of breathing, the fundamentality of breathing and the possibilities of breathing in Merleau-Ponty's bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology. This means that I will try to continue, systematize, extend and deepen the path opened by Kleinberg-Levin to interpret the dimensions and possibilities of Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenological thinking within the context of the phenomenon of breathing. Thus, if one were to call Husserl's philosophy phenomenology of the primacy of consciousness, early Heidegger's philosophy phenomenology of the primacy of practical, Levinas' philosophy phenomenology of the primacy of the face-to-face encounter, and Merleau-Ponty's philosophy phenomenology of the primacy of perception, then with the help of Kleinberg-Levin, I would be able to see that Merleau-Ponty offers seeds for the primacy of breathing. I will take it as my task in this dissertation to try to sow these seeds so that they take root: I will nurture them so that they hopefully begin to grow into a Merleau-Pontian-inspired phenomenological philosophy of the primacy of breathing.

Other philosophers who have investigated breathing, or at least made fragmentary remarks about it within the field of phenomenological philosophy, are Gaston Bachelard²¹, Luce Irigaray²², Emmanuel Levinas²³, Lenart Škof²⁴, Jacques Derrida²⁵, David Abram²⁶, Drew Leder²⁷, Peter Sloterdijk²⁸, Havi Carel²⁹,

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- 21 Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: On the Imagination of Movement*, trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
- 22 Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary Beth Mader (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999); Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West*, trans. Stephen Pluháček (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Luce Irigaray, *To Be Born: Genesis of a New Human Being* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and Luce Irigaray, "To Begin with Breathing Anew", in *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, ed. Lenart Škof and Emily A. Holmes, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- 23 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 180-182 and Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 70, 106, 158-161, 199 and 210.
- 24 Lenart Škof, *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015); Lenart Škof and Emily A. Holmes, "Towards Breathing with Luce Irigaray", in *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, ed. Lenart Škof and Emily A. Holmes, London: Bloomsbury, 2013) and Lenart Škof, "Breath as a Way of Self-Affection: On New Topologies of Transcendence and Self-Transcendence", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).
- 25 See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (New York: Fordham, 2008), pp. 86-87 and 111; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001). See also, Lenart Škof, *Breath of Proximity*, pp. 127-133; Michael Naas, "Pneumatology, Pneuma, Souffle, Breath", in *Reading Derrida's Of Grammatology*, ed. Sean Gaston and Ian MacLachlan (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 28-31; Jones Irwin, "Theater of Breath: An Artaud-Derrida", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. 167-178.

Silvia Benso³⁰, Adriana Cavarero³¹, Timo Klemola³² and James Morley³³ as well as myself³⁴. All of these philosophers of breathing have in some manner (some more, some less) influenced my philosophical understanding of the philosophi-

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- 26 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); David Abram, "Between the Body and the Breathing Earth: A Reply to Ted Toadvine", *Environmental Ethics*, issue 27 (2005), pp. 171-190; David Abram, "The Commonwealth of Breath", in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014). This Abram's essay "The Commonwealth of Breath" will be reissued in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).
- 27 Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) and Drew Leder, "Breath as the Hinge of Dis-ease and Healing", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).
- 28 Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air*, trans. Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009) and Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles. Spheres I: Microspherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011).
- 29 Carel, *Phenomenology of Illness*; Havi Carel, "Invisible Suffering: The Experience of Breathlessness", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018). According to Carel there is "a lacuna in the philosophical literature, which lacks a philosophical – and more specially a phenomenological – analysis of breathing and breathlessness." In her phenomenological investigations Carel does not study so much the question of philosophy of breathing or phenomenology of breathing but her work is focused on phenomenology of breathlessness which she describes as follows: "Trapped. That is what breathlessness feels like. Trapped in the web of uncertainty, bodily doubt, practical obstacles, and fear. The deepest fear you can think of. The fear of suffocation, of being unable to breathe, the fear of collapsing, desaturated to the point of respiratory failure.... You are faced with the shrinking of your world, choices, freedom, and eventually, your spirit. Many illness narratives take on a kind of dualist flavour--the body fails, but the spirit flourishes; the body is tethered to its failing organs, but the spirit rises free. Not true. Our embodiment determines our possibilities and delineates with extreme clarity what one is and is not permitted to do and be." Carel, *Phenomenology of Illness*, pp. 109-110 and 129.
- 30 Silvia Benso, "The Breathing of the Air: Presocratic Echoes in Levinas", in *Levinas and the Ancients*, ed. Brian Schroeder and Silvia Benso (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008). This article of Benso will be reissued in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).
- 31 Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
- 32 Timo Klemola, *Taidon filosofia – filosofin taito* [*The Philosophy of Skill – the Skill of the Philosopher*] (Tampere, FI: Tampere University Press, 2004).
- 33 James Morley, "Inspiration and Expiration".
- 34 Petri Berndtson, "The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being: The Immense Lung and the Cosmic Breathing as the Sources of Dreams, Poetry and Philosophy", in *Thinking in Dialogue with Humanities: Paths into the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Karel Novotný et al. (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010); Petri Berndtson, "The Respiratory Constitution Space and its Connection to the Origin of Space", *Consciousness and Thing, Scientific Papers University of Latvia*, Volume 765, 2011; Petri Berndtson, "The Temple of the Holy Breath as the Place of Conspiracy Between the Respiratory Body and the Space of Open Air", in *Art and Common Space*, ed. Maaretta Jaukkari et al. (Trondheim: Trykkpartner, 2013); Petri Berndtson, "The Primordial Respiratory Peace and the Possibility of Cultivation of Breathing as a Method of Peacemaking", in *The Poesis of Peace: Narratives, Cultures, and Philosophies*, ed. Klaus-Gerd Giesen et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2017) and Petri Berndtson, "The Possibility of a New Respiratory Ontology", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018).

cal and phenomenological possibilities of breathing. Both David Abram and Lenart Škof have briefly referred to “the primacy of breath” without explicitly investigating this expression. Abram’s phenomenological studies have used this notion when he has spoken of the “primacy of breath in oral cultures”³⁵ and Škof has used it in “the primacy of breath and breathing” in Buddhism and Yoga and William “James’ intuitive primacy of breath”.³⁶ This expression of the “primacy of breath” or the “primacy of breathing” has also been used in other contexts apart from phenomenologically-oriented research. A few examples of these include 1) a philosophical music analysis, 2) a study of Hippocratic medicine, 3) a biologically-oriented psychological examination of emotions and 4) a study of actor training and voice practice.³⁷ Even though many of the philosophers (Irigaray, Abram, Leder, Morley, Carel, Klemola) of breathing mentioned above within the phenomenological tradition have investigated Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, none of them (except Kleinberg-Levin and myself) have studied Merleau-Ponty’s remarks on the phenomenon of breathing in their phenomenological investigations of breathing. I feel it is a matter of urgency to investigate Merleau-Ponty’s respiratory remarks in my dissertation because, in

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- 35 David Abram, “The Commonwealth of Breath”, p. 308. Abram’s thinking is very much inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. Abram has investigated the question of breath phenomenologically in relation to the Native American (for example, Navajo) thought and to the Hebrew thought.
- 36 Lenart Škof, *Pragmatist Variations on Ethical and Intercultural Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 14 and Lenart Škof, “Body and Religion: A Phenomenologico-empirical Interpretation of Rorty’s Neopragmatism”, *Sophia* (2011) 50, p. 97.
- 37 In his comparison of Arnold Schoenberg’s and Igor Stravinsky’s music Theodor Adorno uses this expression of “primacy of breathing” once as he writes: “the primacy of breathing over the beat of abstract time contrasts Schoenberg to Stravinsky and all those who, having adjusted better to contemporary existence, fancy themselves more modern than Schoenberg.” Adorno quoted by p. Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 266. In biologico-psychological context Ronald Ley uses this notion of “primacy of breathing” also once as he speaks of the “biological primacy of breathing”. Ronald Ley, “Respiration and the Emotion of Dyspnea/Suffocation Fear”, in *Respiration and Emotion*, ed. Yutaka Haruki et al. (Tokyo: Springer, 2001), p. 66. In the context of Hippocratic medicine Roberto Lo Presti speaks also once of the “physiological primacy of breathing”. Roberto Lo Presti, “Perceiving the Coherence of the Perceiving Body: Is There Such a Thing as a ‘Hippocratic’ View on Sense Perception and Cognition?”, in *Ancient Concepts of the Hippocratic: Papers Presented at the XIIIth International Hippocrates Colloquium*, ed. Lesley Dean-Jones and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 187n65. In the context of actor and voice training Jane Boston uses this notion of the “primacy of breath” also one time as she writes: “Breath’s seminal role in the craft of the actor has been similarly situated over the 20-year period that I have been teaching voice and acting in the British acting conservatories. However, although *the primacy of breath in training the actor* has been widely recognized, I would argue that it has remained an under-theorized area of the work. I would suggest, therefore, that in order to better understand the ways in which breath can help the artist and enable their expressive development, the relationship between breath as inspiration and its outer expression as voice needs to be more closely scrutinized in the training studio.” Jane Boston, “Breathing the Verse: An Examination of Breath in Contemporary Actor Training”, in *Breath in Action: The Art of Breath in Vocal and Holistic Practice*, ed. Jane Boston and Rena Cook (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009), p. 200. My emphasis.

my opinion, they have a true potential to transform our ideas concerning the possibilities of philosophy.

In the history of philosophy, breathing has also been to a certain extent a concern of some of the greatest thinkers in Western philosophy, including Anaximenes³⁸, Heraclitus³⁹, Diogenes of Apollonia⁴⁰, Aristotle⁴¹, the Stoics⁴², Friedrich von Schelling⁴³ and Søren Kierkegaard⁴⁴. With regards to Anaximenes, Antony Preus has also spoken of “the primacy of breath and air in Anaximenes”.⁴⁵ Anaximenes’s most famous fragment of text that expresses the primacy of breath and air states: “As our souls, being air, hold us together, so breath and air embrace the entire universe.”⁴⁶ In addition to these Western philosophers, breathing and the conscious “cultivation of breathing”⁴⁷ has also been a central part of many movements of Eastern philosophy and their spiritual traditions, for example in Yoga, Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. As I already mentioned, Škof has spoken of the “primacy of breath” in Buddhism and Yoga. Predating Yoga philosophy and Buddhist philosophy, Upanishadic thought in India is most famous for its different ideas about the fundamental relation between *Atman* and *Brahman*, which is held to represent the ultimate reality. In some cases in Upanishadic thought this fundamental relation between *Atman* and *Brahman*

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- 38 See phenomenological accounts of Anaximenes’ philosophy of breath and air, Benso, “The Breathing of the Air: Presocratic Echoes in Levinas” and John Sallis, “Doubles of Anaximenes”, in *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, ed. David C. Jacobs (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 145–152.
- 39 Heraclitus fragment 129, for example, states: “According to Heraclitus it is by drawing in this divine reason (*logos*) in respiration that we become intelligent, and <it is by the same principle that> in sleep we become forgetful, but in waking we regain our senses. For in sleep the passages of perception are shut, and hence the understanding (*nous*) in us is separated from its natural unity with the surrounding medium; the only thing preserved is the connection through breathing, which is like a root”. This fragment is from Sextus Empiricus’ *Against the Mathematicians*. See Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 294.
- 40 See, for example, Andrew Gregory, *Ancient Greek Cosmogony* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 133–134.
- 41 Aristotle, “On Respiration” and “On Breath”, in Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, trans. W.S. Hett (Cambridge: MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1935).
- 42 See, for example, John Sellars, *Stoicism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 87–103.
- 43 Škof, *Breath of Proximity*, pp. 33–43.
- 44 See Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, pp. 132–135.
- 45 Anthony Preus, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), p. 206. In relation to this so called “primacy of breath and air in Anaximenes” Hippolytus of Rome (170–235 AD) writes in his *Refutation of All Heresies* that “Anaximenes...declared that the principle is unlimited [*apeiron*] air, from which come to be things that are coming to be, things that have come to be, and things that will be, and gods and divine things. The rest come to be out of the products of this.” Patricia Curd (ed.), *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonies*, 2nd edn., trans. Richard D. McKirahan and Patricia Curd (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), p. 20.
- 46 Anaximenes, Fragment 2, in Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 19.
- 47 Irigaray, *Between East and West*, pp. ix, 7–8, 75, 77 and 90–91.

was understood in terms of “the primacy of breath”.⁴⁸ This means that the primacy of breath could perhaps be the ultimate reality which perpetually grounds everything and is the origin of everything.⁴⁹ This view of *Atman* and *Brahman* is evident in the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, for example. So, what I can say about these brief references to the notion of the primacy of breathing in these different contexts of human life is that they do indeed exist, and that I celebrate this inspiring fact. But even so, nobody has explicitly taken up the challenge to think systematically according to this notion of the primacy of breathing and how it could be understood in a particular aspect of human life or, more generally, in the whole of human existence.

48 William C. Chittick, Abraham Eraly and Christopher Key Chapple refer to “the primacy of breath” in the Upanishadic thought. William C. Chittick, “The Circle of Life in Islamic Thought”, in *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology on the Perennial Issue of Microcosm and Macrocosm*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 212n7. Abraham Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus: The Seeding of Indian Civilisation* (New York: Viking, 2000), p. 197. Christopher Key Chapple, “Yoga and Ecology”, in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature: Volume 2*, ed. Bron Taylor (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 1783. Eraly writes of this Upanishadic primacy of breath as follows: “The primacy of breath, according to the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, was once demonstrated by the great god Prajapati when the various vital powers in man quarrelled among themselves for supremacy and approached him to settle the dispute. Prajapati then asked the powers of speech, hearing, sight and mind to leave the body one after the other, but even after they all left, breath still remained. However, when breath left, all the other faculties departed with it, proving that all else were dependent on breath.” Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 197.

49 *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad* and *Kausitaki Upanishad* all declare that “*Brahman* is breath”. Patrick Olivelle, trans. and ed., *The Early Upanisads: Annotated Text and Translation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 105, 223, 333 and 335. *Atman* is normally translated as “soul” or “self”, but it is important to know that actually the original meaning of this word is “breath”. For this original meaning of *atman* as breath, see Hermann Oldenberg, *The Doctrine of the Upanishads and the Early Buddhism*, trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991), p. 33; P.T. Raju, *Structural Depths of Indian Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 15 and 38n49; P.T. Raju, *The Philosophical Traditions of India* (London: George Allen & Unwind Ltd, 1971), p. 50. This original meaning is very often totally forgotten. Two perfect examples of this forgetfulness are Andrew J. Nicholson’s book *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* and *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* that is edited by Gavin Flood. This book by Nicholson does not mention breath a single time and *Atman* is translated always as “self” (“the very self”, “the absolute and beginningless self”, “the true self”) or as “body”. Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 31, 37, 41, 153 and 194. *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* translates *Atman* every time either as “soul” or “self”. Gavin Flood, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 85, 120, 237, 425 and 473n14. This is not a fault of these books as this forgetting of the original meaning of *Atman* as “breath” is almost universal. If this original meaning of *Atman* as “breath” and the above Upanishadic idea that “*Brahman* is breath” would be taken seriously it would mean that the fundamental *Atman-Brahman* relation as the fundamental reality could be expressed as *Breath-Breath* relation. How should this kind of formulation be interpreted is an important and interesting question which my dissertation will not be able to interrogate. But what I can briefly say is that I agree with Chittick, Eraly and Chapple that this kind of formulation of the fundamental *Atman-Brahman* relation expresses a deep idea of primacy of breath in the Upanishadic thought. It is also important to be aware that even if these three scholars refer to this primacy of breath in Upanishads none of them gives to this issue any kind of systematic investigation. I hope in the future to be able to study this highly interesting matter further.

The Task of my Dissertation: The Primacy or Priority of Breathing

In this dissertation my task will be to investigate the question of the primacy of breathing through Merleau-Ponty's text fragments on breathing and by placing these fragments in the context of his own bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology of Being. My task will also include taking into account those other above-mentioned philosophers of breathing. Out of these philosophers who have studied breathing, Bachelard, Irigaray and Kleinberg-Levin will play important supporting roles in this dissertation. Bachelard's phenomenologically-oriented poetics of air in particular will play a major supportive role in my investigation after Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenological ontology. Bachelard's poetics of air pay particular attention to the poets that he calls the "poets of air" and breathing. The poetry of these "aerial poets" (as he calls them) is inspired by the "creative forces" of the primacy of elemental air and breathing.⁵⁰ According to Bachelard, the phenomenologists could learn a new philosophy if they would listen to and follow the aerial poets.⁵¹ The aerial poet that I will listen to most in this dissertation as a source of inspiration is Paul Claudel, who Merleau-Ponty also uses quite often in his philosophical thinking. I will argue that with Claudel's help it is possible to learn a new philosophy of breathing.

The Goals of my Dissertation

The main goal for me in this dissertation will be to investigate and interpret the philosophical dimensions and possibilities of the phenomenon of breathing within the context of Merleau-Ponty's bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology of Being. My goal, as I have already mentioned, will be to follow Kleinberg-Levin's example as, according to him, Merleau-Ponty's remarks about breathing provide an important field of research and an opportunity to expand and deepen the possibilities of phenomenology. According to Kleinberg-Levin, Merleau-Ponty's text fragments on breathing can be interpreted to mean that breathing, as the respiratory body's openness to the sphere of air, is our first and most primordial relation to the world and to Being. In other words, Kleinberg-Levin is claiming that Merleau-Ponty expresses the idea of the primacy of breathing, even if Kleinberg-Levin does not explicitly use the notion of the "primacy of breathing". In one of his text fragments, Merleau-Ponty says that, at the beginning of the child's life, the lived body is already a respiratory body before any other dimensions of the body have developed and taken hold

50 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 4, 13-14 and 44.

51 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 89, 169, 185 and 220 as well as Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p.1.

on the world.⁵² This respiratory body constitutes, for example, the fundamental experience of space before other regions of the body (for example, eyes, hands, feet) begin to participate in their own ways in the constitution of space. From this text fragment, one initial interpretation could be that the respiratory body's relation to the world is the condition of possibility of space, as it gives us our first experience of space. Other levels of spatiality constituted by the other regions of the body that follow this respiratory level of spatiality are built upon this first experiential level of space as it is constituted by the respiratory body. A few of Merleau-Ponty's other text fragments concerning breathing (totally neglected by Kleinberg-Levin, along with all other philosophers) describe how falling asleep is a return to this respiratory body and the world of respiration.⁵³ In this dissertation my task will be to show how, according to Merleau-Ponty, the process of falling sleep becomes possible only through a certain kind of process of withdrawal from the awakened world, in which one withdraws from theoretical (thinking, objectifying, etc.), practical (action, movement, etc.), social (speech, customs, etc.) and perceptual (seeing, touching, etc.) relations with the world and goes back to the roots or sources of these relations. What is very interesting in Merleau-Ponty's description of this process of falling asleep and the steps that lead to it is, in my opinion, that this withdrawal from these different dimensions or levels of the world to its roots takes place within the explicit atmosphere of breathing, as the one who tries to fall asleep "calls forth sleep" by imitating the slow and deep breathing of the sleeper. The withdrawal process from these awakened worlds that takes place within the respiratory atmosphere leads the sleeper into a more primordial relation to the world. This primordial, respiratory world is the source or the root of the theoretical, practical, social and perceptual worlds. This root-relation is our body's respiratory relation with the world. In this dissertation I will interpret this process of withdrawal from these other relations to the world in the of falling sleep to reveal their condition of possibility, that is, their rootedness in the world of respiration. I will claim that this respiratory rootedness could be called the primacy of breathing.

I will show how, according to Merleau-Ponty, one falls asleep at the sudden moment when the imitation of the breath of the sleeper transforms itself into the actual slow and deep breath of the sleeper. This transformation occurs in the moment that the sleeper's breath is overtaken by something that Merleau-Ponty calls "some immense exterior lung". It is this immense exterior lung that "calls my breath forth and forces it back." At that moment, the "respiratory rhythm" that this immense lung creates "becomes my very being [*mon être*

52 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relations with Others", trans. William Cobb, in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 122. This same text "The Child's Relations with Others" can be also found in Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 151. In addition to this Merleau-Ponty refers to the first breath of the child in following texts, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 426 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 80.

53 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 166 and 219.

même]"⁵⁴. In this dissertation, my important task will be to try to interpret what Merleau-Ponty means by "some immense exterior lung". I will not receive any help from Merleau-Ponty in my interpretation as he never explains what he means by this notion of some immense exterior lung. Neither will I get any help from the community of Merleau-Ponty scholars as nobody has ever, to my knowledge, tried to interpret what Merleau-Ponty might mean by this respiratory notion of the immense lung. This means that I will need to build my own interpretative horizon in order to provide a phenomenological explication of the meaning of "some immense exterior lung".⁵⁵ As sleep, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a return to the lived body's sources⁵⁶ of being-in-the-world, I will interpret this "immense exterior lung" to in some way mean a source of our relation to the world. I will suggest that it must be a depth-dimension of the world that is deeper than our relations with the worlds of theory, praxis, sociality and even perception (at least all the forms of "extroceptivity [i.e., vision, hearing, and all other perceptions relating to the external world]"⁵⁷) that the sleeper has withdrawn himself from to let this immense exterior lung appear and take centre stage. I will suggest that this immense exterior lung could be understood as the *lung of the world*, that is, a root of the world. As the lung of the world it breathes life into us all (including all of our other world-relations) and thus keeps us alive in order that we can see, hear and touch, be and speak with others, and act and think. According to Merleau-Ponty, during sleep we all return to this respiratory depth-dimension of the world as the root of everything.

In my dissertation it will be important to ponder what these Merleau-Ponty's text fragments on breathing (for example, the fragments on child's breath and sleeper's breath) mean to phenomenological philosophy if they are taken seriously. In this dissertation I will propose that they will, if one follows the interpretative path inspired by Kleinberg-Levin, challenge and question the philosophical foundation of Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenology of perception: they will challenge the primacy of the perceptual relation to the world as the grounding background of everything else. Thus, it could be said that breathing, if understood in this way, would be revealed to be an experiential and bodily relation with the world that founds all the other relations to the world, that is, theoretical, practical, social and perceptual relations. As a possible new foundation, breathing would be a radically different relation to the world compared to these other relations to the world. One of the fundamental reasons that it radically differs from all these other world-relations is that it is *not*, in the first place, directed toward objects, things or persons of the world, but towards air, which is a field, horizon, openness or atmosphere of the world. The theoretical

54 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 219.

55 I have written previously the following articles in which I have tried to interpret the meaningful dimensions of Merleau-Ponty's "some immense exterior lung", Berndtson, "The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being"; Berndtson, "The Respiratory Constitution of Space" and Berndtson, "The Primordial Respiratory Peace".

56 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 297.

57 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 151.

attitude is directed toward objects of thinking, research and calculation. The practical attitude is directed toward things and objects in the world that we use, shape, destroy and manipulate for our practical purposes. The social attitude is directed toward persons with whom we communicate, for example, as speaking beings. The perceptual attitude perceives objects, things and persons in the world. This perceptual attitude, for example, sees and touches things and persons. In contrast to these attitudes or relations, breathing is directly related without any intermediation of objects with air as a field or atmosphere which perpetually surrounds these objects, things and persons of these other worlds. It is also always already between them, intermediating them to each other, without itself being any kind of object, thing or person. In my dissertation I will take this phenomenological idea that the atmosphere of air is not an object or a thing at all from Bachelard's book *Air and Dreams*, Irigaray's book *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, and the afore-mentioned texts of Kleinberg-Levin. In my dissertation I will acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference between the things of the world that we are connected to within theoretical, practical, social and perceptual worlds and the atmosphere of the world that we are related to as we breathe air. This will be one of the fundamental insights of my dissertation.

If this return to the respiratory body's openness to the atmosphere of air as a respiratory relation to the world would be taken seriously within bodily phenomenology, as I will intend to do in this dissertation, it could be interpreted to mean that phenomenology as a project of perpetual recommencement would always have to begin its research over and over again from the lived experience of breathing. It would mean that bodily phenomenology would take as its new principle, as its new beginning and foundation the phenomenon of breathing as a respiratory openness to the world. The philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, would then become a philosopher who always begins his reflection from embodied *breathing-in-the-world*, that is, from *the world of we breathe air*. This would mean a radical deepening of the possibilities of bodily phenomenology and the phenomenological tradition in general. Kleinberg-Levin briefly points toward this possibility in a few of his texts, but does not try to accomplish this respiratory project in any systematic way. In my dissertation, my task will be the new respiratory project of recommencement⁵⁸. I will try to initially elaborate and

58 In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes that "philosophy...must recommence everything". Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 130. In this same book he also says that the philosopher's "entire 'work' is [to] recommence". Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125. In my dissertation these words of Merleau-Ponty will be interpreted to mean that philosophy must recommence everything from the world of we breathe air as a new beginning. These words of *The Visible and the Invisible* go hand in hand with the words of *Phenomenology of Perception* that the philosopher is a perpetual beginner as only as a perpetual beginner will the philosopher have any chance of trying to *recommence* everything. A highly interesting question of how this perpetual recommencement of philosophy is *perhaps* possible as a temporal project within the atmosphere of re-spiration (literally breathing again, that is, perpetually breathing again and again and again...) will not be investigated in any explicit manner in my dissertation, but I have initially commenced to ponder this question as I gave a presentation titled "Time and Respiration: The Possibility of a

articulate some of the fundamental dimensions and possibilities of this project. One of the most important things that Kleinberg-Levin says about this project of radicalizing Merleau-Ponty's remark on the respiratory body as a new starting point for thinking of our being-in-the-world is that this "observation [concerning the primacy of the respiratory body is] of great importance, but Merleau-Ponty leaves it to us to draw the ontological implications."⁵⁹ Why does Kleinberg-Levin speak of ontology and the ontological implications in connection to breathing? And what could these ontological implications of the primacy of breathing be? One major ontological implication of Merleau-Ponty's remark on the primacy of the respiratory body in relation to other regions of the body is, according to Kleinberg-Levin, that "[b]reathing is our body's first openness to Being."⁶⁰ What could the meaning of this ontological implication be with regards to my dissertation? I brought it to our attention earlier in this introduction that breathing is not a relation to things, but to atmosphere. The ontological implications that could be drawn from Merleau-Ponty's respiratory body and its connection to Being are essentially connected to this major issue that breathing is not a relation to things. What is important here is that Being is not a thing. In my dissertation I will try to explicate the ontological implications of our respiratory relation to the world and to Being and what they could phenomenologico-ontologically mean. Before I embark on this kind of ontological investigation of breathing, I must explicate the basic ideas of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology of Being, as well as Heidegger's ontological thinking of Being.

Thus, in my dissertation I will ask what is, according to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the phenomenological ontology of Being? Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology is an interrogation that studies the embodied lived experience of Being. This will also lead my investigation of phenomenological ontology to Heidegger's ontological thinking of Being as it has had a great deal of influence on Merleau-Ponty's ontology of Being. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty share the basic insight of phenomenological ontology that Being is not a being, that is, that an experience of Being is not an experience of a being. This insight can be called the "ontological difference" between Being and a being.⁶¹ In this way, phenomenological ontology differentiates Being from beings. What do Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty mean by "a being" or, in plural, "beings"? A being means a thing or an object. So Being is something that is not a thing or an object. Neither is it a person. Experience of Being is, in a fundamental respect, different from our experience of each and every thing and object. So

Merleau-Pontian Inspired Notion of Respiratory Time" at the 2016 Annual meeting of the Nordic Society for Phenomenology in the University of Iceland (Reykjavik, Iceland).

59 Levin, "Logos and Psyche", p. 129.

60 Levin, "Logos and Psyche", 126.

61 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 24, 75 and 119-121 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 270. See also David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 10-11.

what is Being? According to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, it is the “universal dimensionality”, “openness”, “clearing” and the “there is” between things and around things.⁶² Being is the clearing or the field of all fields (the universal dimensionality) in which all things, that is, beings can appear as beings. The experience of Being as the experience of the universal dimensionality and the experience of the openness comes always already before the experience of things. This experience of Being as our openness to Being is the perpetual beginning of phenomenological ontology. There is thus an experiential priority of Being over beings.⁶³ This means that there is no experience of things or beings without the initial experiential opening of Being. The experience of Being is what makes the experience of beings possible.⁶⁴ Merleau-Ponty also defines Being as the dehiscence, the gap or the separation between the perceiver and the perceived.⁶⁵ This distance that yawns as an opening between the perceiving subject and the perceived object is what makes the perception of things possible. Merleau-Ponty also calls Being, as an ontological openness and dimensionality that surrounds and mediates between us and visible things, silence, invisibility and abyssal depth, as it is behind, beneath and between all these beings.⁶⁶ Being is the invisible or hidden atmosphere of visible things, giving them their visibility, that is, their appearance.⁶⁷ As there is the priority of Being over beings, and as Being, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the silent and abyssal background of beings, he calls Being (with the help of poet Paul Claudel) the principle of “*Sigé* [Silence] the Abyss”.⁶⁸ In a similar manner, Heidegger calls Being – Merleau-Ponty’s ontological abyssal depth – “chaos”, following the poet Hesiod. He interprets this Greek word *khaos* (chaos) etymologically as the “yawning abyss” of everything. Everything (all beings) is engulfed or swallowed within the onto-

62 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 170 and 265. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 254–255 and 266. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France 1958–1959 et 1960–1961* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), p. 102.

63 Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 268.

64 Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 324.

65 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), pp. 255 and 375; Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 77, 117, 123, 128, 132, 146, 147, 153, 191, 197, 201, 216, 235 and 267 and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954–1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), pp. 124, 130, 133 and 204.

66 Ohtaki Musubu, “Psychoanalysis and Ontology: Lacan, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty,” in *Immersing in the Concrete: Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the Japanese Perspective*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and Shoichi Matsuba (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1998), p. 210. Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, trans. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 318. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 236.

67 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 215.

68 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 317 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 179.

logical chaos as the yawning-openness.⁶⁹ All of these ontological words (universal dimensionality, silence, dehiscence, invisibility, *khaos*, etc.) are different words of Being, that is, words that name the experience of that which is not a thing (a being), the experience which makes things possible and thus has experiential priority or primacy over all thing-relations.

The insights of Bachelard and Irigaray regarding the ontological difference between Being and beings will be crucially important in my dissertation. In her book *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1983), Irigaray claims, as the title states, that Heidegger's phenomenological ontology of Being forgets the ontologically fundamental experience of air. Irigaray closely connects air and Being as air is not a thing or an object, but an atmosphere and openness which surrounds everything and intermediates between us and things. For Irigaray, the invisible atmosphere of air is Being, that is, the condition of possibility of visible things.⁷⁰ Bachelard, in his elemental poetics of air (*Air and Dreams*, 1943), also makes this same argument as Irigaray forty years earlier, that the air as a *nothing* (that which is not a thing or that which is no-thing) gives the appearance to all phenomena. Bachelard uses his own terminology of aerial poetics to state the ontological primacy of the air over things rather than the explicit terminology of phenomenological ontology.⁷¹

If, according to Kleinberg-Levin, one of the ontological implications of Merleau-Ponty's text fragment on the priority or primacy of the respiratory body is that breathing is our body's first openness to Being, in my dissertation I will interpret this ontological statement with the help of Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's phenomenological ontologies, as well as Bachelard's elemental poetics of air and Irigaray's ontological thinking of air. I will demonstrate that this means that breathing, as our body's first ontological openness to Being, is primordially openness to air in Bachelard's and Irigaray's sense. This will be a challenging task in this dissertation as I will also have to take this perspective of ontological air and our respiratory openness to it (we breathe air) and rethink the different "word[s] of Being".⁷² So what will the Claudelian principle of Silence the Abyss, the universal dimensionality, the dehiscence between the subject and the object, the openness, the clearing, the hidden invisibility and the yawning abyssal chaos as words or wordings of Being mean with regards to the essential connection with the ontological atmosphere of air and within our experiential respiratory openness to Being as air? My dissertation will try to interpret the intertwining of these various ontological dimensions of our respiratory and aerial relation with the world. In order to examine the ontological meaning

69 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes Three and Four*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), p. 77 and Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 85.

70 Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, pp. 1-75.

71 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 135-174. Also Abram refers to the primacy of air as "the primacy of the unseen medium that surrounds and animates all visible things." Abram, "The Commonwealth of Breath", pp. 308-309.

72 Merleau-Ponty quoted by Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Paul B. Milan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 157n26.

of these connections, I will introduce one more highly-important and ontologically-essential remark by Merleau-Ponty about breathing. His cryptic remark from *Eye and Spirit* is the only time that he explicitly conjoins respiration and Being. This ontological remark says: “What is called ‘inspiration’ should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”.⁷³

It will be a major task of my dissertation to try to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement concerning “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” in order to better understand the respiratory possibilities of phenomenological ontology and the primacy of breathing as an ontological theme of philosophy. In his article “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing”, Kleinberg-Levin very briefly refers to Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement without trying to interpret its meaning.⁷⁴ However, if Kleinberg-Levin says that Merleau-Ponty’s remark on the respiratory body has major ontological implications that the followers of this great French philosopher need to chart and interrogate, I would suggest that the words of *Eye and Spirit* must also play an essential role in the task of explicating the ontologico-respiratory implications of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy as this remark concerning inspiration and expiration of Being is the only text fragment in which he explicitly intertwines Being and respiration. In other words, it is the only place where Merleau-Ponty addresses (albeit in a very brief manner) breathing in ontological terms. A major part of my dissertation will be an attempt to interpret the ontologico-respiratory meaning of Merleau-Ponty’s words “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, as I will intertwine these words on Being with all the other themes of my dissertation. As with the earlier case in my dissertation concerning the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “some immense exterior lung”, there have not been any previous attempts by any members of the community of Merleau-Ponty scholars to interpret “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” in any explicit manner. Thus there is no interpretative tradition to be found to help me in my exploration concerning “there is...respiration within Being”. I will have to yet again build my own theoretical framework to provide tools to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s words. The only guidance that I have received from some other Merleau-Ponty scholars, including Kleinberg-Levin, is that the words in Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory phrase must not be taken metaphorically, but truly literally (as Merleau-Ponty himself already says in his words), which means that he is really and truly speaking of the ontological experience of breathing.⁷⁵ Another hint of how to

73 Merleau-Ponty, *L’Œil et l’Esprit*, pp. 31-32. My translation. See the English translation of “Eye and Mind” in Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 358. In this dissertation I will translate the title of Merleau-Ponty, *L’Œil et l’Esprit* as *Eye and Spirit* instead of the traditional translation of “Eye and Mind”.

74 Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, pp. 121, 131 and 134.

75 In addition to Kleinberg-Levin these other Merleau-Ponty scholars include, Galen A. Johnson, Jessica Wiskus, David E. Pettigrew and Emmanuel de Saint Aubert. See Galen A. Johnson, *The Retrieval of the Beautiful: Thinking Merleau-Ponty’s Aesthetics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), p. 201; Jessica Wiskus, “Cohesion

perhaps interpret Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory words can be found from Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, who in my interpretation very briefly suggests that Merleau-Ponty's expression of "some immense exterior lung" anticipates "inspiration and expiration of Being".⁷⁶ This expression of the immense exterior lung appears in *Phenomenology of Perception* some fifteen years before *Eye and Spirit's* explicit ontologico-respiratory words of Being. I will take this Saint Aubert's hint very seriously and follow his advice, and interpret Merleau-Ponty's two respiratory expressions (some immense exterior lung and inspiration and expiration of Being) as speaking of the same depth-dimension of Being.

The Chapter Structure and Content of my Dissertation

As I have already mentioned, the major part of my dissertation will be connected to building a theoretical framework for interpreting Merleau-Ponty's words: "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" (Chapters 1-4 in Section One of my dissertation). In addition to this interpretative framework, the construction of my interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis on "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" will be intertwined with everything else that I will be investigating in this dissertation because this ontologico-respiratory thesis is essentially tied to every concept concerning the phenomenological philosophy of breathing that I will use. This means that my dissertation will be a network of concepts in which the thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" will breathe life into and nourish all the other concepts (for example, "world", "universal dimensionality", "immense lung", "principle of Silence the Abyss", "clearing of air", "beginning"). Thus, as I understand more through my interpretation of what Merleau-Ponty might be trying to express with his ontologico-respiratory thesis of inspiration and expiration of Being, the meaning of the other essential concepts in my dissertation will be immediately affected. My hypothesis will be that this ontologico-respiratory phrase about inspiration and expiration of Being conceals the seed of a new beginning for phenomenological philosophy. I will claim that it is the task of the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, to take this ontologico-respiratory statement as his point of departure, that is, as his new beginning of

and Expression: Merleau-Ponty on Cézanne," in *Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception*, eds. Duane H. Davis and William S. Hamrick (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), p. 72; David E. Pettigrew, "Merleau-Ponty and the Unconscious: A Poetic Vision," in *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World*, eds. Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 65 and Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, "La 'co-naissance Merleau-Ponty et Claudel,'" in *Merleau-Ponty aux frontières de l'invisible*, eds. Marie Cariou, Renaud Barbaras and Etienne Bimbenet (Milan: Associazione Culturale Mimesis, 2003), p. 278.

76 Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, *Du lien des êtres aux éléments de l'être: Merleau-Ponty au tournant des années 1945-1951* (France: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2004), p. 246.

philosophizing. In Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's phenomenological ontology, the beginning of philosophy is Being, which means, in my opinion, that Merleau-Ponty's phrase concerning "inspiration and expiration of Being" states a latent and "unthought-of"⁷⁷ beginning of philosophy which is essentially intertwined with the experience of respiration. What this new beginning of philosophy would be is a question that will be interrogated step by step in my dissertation as my interpretation of this ontological phrase proceeds.

What kind of theoretical framework must I build in order to interpret this phrase "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being"? The first hypothesis of my dissertation, as I have already stated, is that Merleau-Ponty's phrase is really and truly speaking about breathing and respiration in the literal sense of the word. My second hypothesis, as I have also already stated, will be that I believe that Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis conceals a possible way to begin philosophy anew as a respiratory philosophy of Being⁷⁸, or phenomenological ontology of breathing. The third hypothesis of my dissertation, which has also been stated earlier in this introduction, is that Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory phrase speaks of the same dimension of the world and Being as his notion of "some immense exterior lung". The fourth hypothesis of my dissertation will be that the ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" needs to be interpreted as one of so-called the "there is" theses. These "there is" theses are "there is something", "there is the world" and "there is Being". Merleau-Ponty understands these "there is" theses as the point of departure or the beginning of his philosophy, as he writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*: "Our point of departure shall...be: there is being, there is the world, there is something".⁷⁹ Earlier I stated in this introduction that, in phenomenological philosophy, the beginning and foundation of all thinking and research which the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, needs to take as his point of departure is the human being's experiential relation with the world. With these "there is" phrases, in my interpretation, Merleau-Ponty says the same. His thesis "there is the world" states the human being's embodied experiential relation to the world. In a similar manner, his thesis "there is something" states our embodied experiential relation with something, that is, that we are always already in relation to something else. And his thesis "there is Being" once more states our embodied experiential relation with Being. The fifth hypothesis of my interpretative framework will be the idea that Merleau-Ponty's "there is the world" is equal to his expression "relation with the world"⁸⁰, as the beginning of philosophizing. In order to understand the connections between these beginnings of "there is something", "there is the world" and "there is Being", I must examine what each of these theses mean in Merleau-Ponty's phi-

77 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 160.

78 I have coined this Merleau-Pontian inspired notion of "respiratory philosophy of Being" in my article "The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being", p. 291.

79 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 88. The translation has been slightly altered.

80 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 64.

losophy. This also means that I will investigate what the notions of “something”, “the world” and “Being” signify in Merleau-Ponty’s bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology of Being. I will also study what Merleau-Ponty means by the expression “there is” in these phrases. In Chapter Two of my dissertation, titled “The Merleau-Pontian First Principle of Philosophy: the True Cogito, the World Thesis and the Thesis of the Primacy of Perception”, I will examine Merleau-Ponty’s ideas concerning the statements “there is something” and “there is the world”. As the thesis “there is something” states, according to Merleau-Ponty, one of the ways to express the beginning of philosophy, in Chapter Two I will also understand this thesis a way to express the principle of philosophy. The thesis “there is something” expresses the beginning or principle of philosophy in the sense that we cannot avoid an evident truth – that there is always something: to see, to experience, to touch, to think, etc. Merleau-Ponty also expresses the evident truth that “there is something” by writing that “there is consciousness of something”. These expressions are synonymous. Merleau-Ponty calls this evident truth “true *cogito*”.⁸¹ This notion of “true *cogito*” refers to René Descartes’ *Cogito* as the first principle upon which he founded his whole philosophy. Descartes famously arrived at *Cogito* through his method of doubt, in which everything must be doubted. This brought him to the conclusion that the only thing he cannot doubt is the doubter himself, which proved to Descartes that he definitely exists for certain and thus made himself, as a thinking thing, the self-evident foundation of everything. According to Merleau-Ponty, this is not radical enough because, like any act of thinking, doubt always presupposes that there is already something before we can doubt or think it. We cannot doubt without doubting something as we cannot judge without judging something. Thus, “*there is always something*” or “*there is consciousness of something*” before the doubting, affirming, judging or negating of something as an act of thinking can even begin.⁸² This consciousness that Merleau-Ponty refers to as the conscious of something is not yet a thinking consciousness. In Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the primacy of perception, it is perception as the beginning of everything which gives us something. Merleau-Ponty calls perception “perceptual faith”⁸³ because it always comes before any possibility of doubt, so doubt always presupposes it. This perceptual faith is the condition of possibility of doubt. The consciousness of something that Merleau-Ponty speaks of in the wording “there is consciousness of something” is perception as the “perceptual consciousness”.⁸⁴ This means that, for Merleau-Ponty, perception is always perceptual consciousness of something. There cannot be perception if it is not always a perception of *something*. Merleau-Ponty’s wording “there is consciousness of something” as a way to express the beginning of philosophy means to say that there is always perception as a perceptual consciousness of something. It is important to understand that the principal theses of “there is something”

81 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 310.

82 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 343 and 310.

83 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 1–49 and Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 274.

84 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 17, 367 and 416.

and “there is the world” are essentially connected, as “the world” is a universal form of something. This means, for Merleau-Ponty, that the perceptual consciousness of the world as perceptual consciousness of something is the most universal form of something, because perception in his philosophy of the primacy of perception has always the priority over everything else.

In Chapter Two I will investigate the thesis of “there is the world”⁸⁵ as what Merleau-Ponty calls the *Weltthesis* (the world thesis or the thesis of the world).⁸⁶ This world thesis, “there is the world”, is another way of expressing the beginning of philosophy because there is always already the world before anything else. We can withdraw ourselves from different places, surroundings, people, situations, tasks and circumstances, but we can never withdraw ourselves from the world, which will always remain as the latent horizon and field of all our thoughts, actions and perceptions. Everything in our life always presupposes the world. For these reasons, Merleau-Ponty calls the world “the horizon of all horizons” and “the field of all fields”.⁸⁷ The world is the ultimate context of our life. We are always already in relation with the world and our being is always being-in-the-world. This is the initial, constant and final situation which human beings can never escape. This world-context is thus the beginning of everything, and the world thesis (*Weltthesis*) expresses this situation. The world as the background of everything in our life is also, according to Merleau-Ponty, the greatest mystery there is. It is a mystery that can never be solved.⁸⁸

In Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, the world thesis as “there is the world” is essentially connected to his idea of the primacy of perception. The basic thesis of the primacy of perception is that the world thesis, at the most fundamental level, is a thesis concerning perception. For Merleau-Ponty, the world thesis, in his philosophy of primacy of perception, means that “there is...the perceived world”.⁸⁹ Understanding the world thesis in this manner also means that the beginning of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is (as has been already mentioned earlier) the phenomenon of perception as our body’s perceptual relation with the world. As this is the beginning, it means that all philosophical thinking and reflection takes its point of departure from this perceptual beginning.

In the Chapter Three, titled “The Process of Falling Asleep as a Returning Movement toward the World as ‘Some Immense Exterior Lung’ of the World and the Possible Primacy of Breathing”, I will investigate, with the help of Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenon of sleep and the process of falling asleep. As was already stated in this introduction, Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions of the phenomenon of sleep show us how the sleeping subject withdraws from the theoretical, practical, social and perceptual worlds into their root, which is found to be (perhaps surprisingly) our communication and relation with “some immense exterior lung”. As already mentioned, I will interpret this immense lung as a

85 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxii.

86 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 49; Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, pp. 163–4 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 179, 224 and 229.

87 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 345 and 366.

88 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxv.

89 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 171.

depth-dimension of the world (the immense lung of the world). As the phenomenon of sleep is a radical withdrawal from our perceptual relation with the world and a return to the respiratory roots of our being-in-the-world, according to my interpretation, this means that Merleau-Ponty gives us a chance to understand the beginning in a more radical manner than his primacy of perception. What could this be? This more radical beginning of philosophy could, in my suggestion, be called something like the primacy of breathing rather than the primacy of perception.⁹⁰ In this possible primacy of breathing, our relation with the immense lung as the depth-dimension of the world will be understood initially as a new point of departure for all thinking, all rationality and all existence. I will argue that the principal idea of the primacy of breathing would effect Merleau-Ponty's theses "there is something" and "there is the world" in a similar manner as his primacy of perception. Under the rule of the primacy of perception, something and the world are ultimately given to us by perception. I will suggest in my dissertation that, under the rule of the primacy of breathing, *something* and *the world* are ultimately given to us by breathing. For example, we earlier found out that, before anything else, the respiratory body gives the child an experience of space. This means that *there is something* as the spatial something before something else is given to us by perception. I will claim that Merleau-Ponty indicates that, in sleep, *there is the world as some immense exterior lung* or *there is the immense lung of the world* when we have withdrawn from the world of perception.

In Chapter Four of my dissertation, titled "The Fundamental Experience of Being and the Phenomenologico-Ontological Principle of Philosophy: 'There is Being'", I will investigate the phenomenologico-ontological meaning of Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's ontological thesis "there is Being". In this investigation I will build a theoretical framework based upon this interpretation of "there is Being" in order to use it later as an interpretative tool for understanding the phenomenologico-ontological meaning of Merleau-Ponty's ontological thesis, or ontological phrase: "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being". By constructing and using this theoretical framework, I will hopefully be able to reveal Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis as an expression of the beginning of philosophy as a new philosophy of inspiration and expiration of Being. It was already revealed earlier in this introduction that Being is not a being, that is, a thing or an object, but a condition of possibility of beings. As such it was said that Being is the universal dimensionality, openness, the open, clearing and "there is" within which beings/things can appear as beings/things. The ontological thesis or the ontological phrase "there is Being" states that, before anything else, at the beginning we are always in relation with the universal dimensionality, with the clearing or with openness. Thus, we experience, in the first place, this universal dimen-

90 It is important to remember as I earlier already mentioned that Abram and Škof have used this notion of "primacy of breath" earlier for other philosophical purposes. I also mentioned that the "primacy of breathing" is spoken of, for example, in the contexts of Upanishadic thought, Hippocratic medicine and actor training.

sionality, clearing or openness (that which is not a thing) before we can experience things. Both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger say that the experience of Being is the experience of the “there is”. If Being and the “there is” are synonymous, would this not then mean that this principal statement “there is Being” actually expresses that Being = Being? Would this not mean that this ontological principle is an A = A type of tautology? Or is it possible that there is something more interesting and deeper going on with this ontological principle? Indeed there is, and my task will be to demonstrate that. If Being is the “there is”, and Being is “openness” or “the open”, it would follow that the “there is” is “openness” or “the open”. As this is the case, one way to interpret the meaning of the ontological thesis of “there is Being” is to say that it expresses the idea of “openness openness”, “openness the open” or “openness Being”. Would this make any sense? Earlier I said that these “there is” phrases or theses (“*there is something*”, “*there is the world*”, “*there is Being*”) express the fundamental level of our relation to the world. Now, if I would add the preposition “to” between these two opennesses of “openness openness”, “openness the open” or “open openness” as “there is Being”, then this ontological thesis could be interpreted to say, “openness to openness”⁹¹, “openness to the open”⁹² or “open to the openness”⁹³, as well as “openness to Being”. I will argue in my dissertation that the ontological thesis of “there is Being” states the fundamental level of our relation to the world as openness to openness, that is, it states our relation to the world as our *openness to the openness* of the world. With this ontological interpretation of “there is” as openness, the two other “there is” theses (“there is something” and “there is the world”) could be understood as *openness to something* and *openness to the world*. In Merleau-Ponty’s primacy of perception, these principal phrasings are interpreted as phrases concerning perception. This means that “there is something” as openness to something would speak of our bodily *perceptual* openness to something, and “there is the world” as openness to the world would speak similarly of our bodily *perceptual* openness to the world”⁹⁴. This ontologico-conceptual framework, which reveals the possible meaning of the three “there is” theses that I laid out in Chapters Two and Four of my dissertation will, according to my understanding, give me a chance to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s respiratory-ontological thesis in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Five, titled “Merleau-Ponty’s Ontologico-Respiratory Thesis of ‘There is Really and Truly Inspiration and Expiration of Being’ and the Possibility of a New Respiratory Principle of Philosophy”, I will try to give an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory phrase or thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. My hypothesis is that this phrase or thesis potentially expresses a new principle, or a new beginning, of philosophy. In my interpretation, I will use the phenome-

91 This kind of formulation can be found in Stephen A. Erickson, “The Space of Love and Garbage”, *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* Spring (1992): pp. 33 and 35.

92 This formulation can be found in Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 83.

93 This formulation can be found in Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 82.

94 This exact formulation can be found in Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 212. My emphasis.

nologico-ontological ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger that I have investigated in the previous chapter of my dissertation. My hypothesis is based on the idea that I understand Merleau-Ponty's respiratory-ontologico thesis as one of the "there is" theses. It is important to remember that, according to Merleau-Ponty, these three previous "there is" theses ("there is something", "there is the world" and "there is Being") function as the beginnings of phenomenological philosophy. As I will understand Merleau-Ponty's respiratory-ontological thesis as one of the "there is" theses, this will hopefully give me a chance to interpret this thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" as an expression of a possible new point of departure for philosophy.

In Chapter Five I will also use Bachelard's elemental poetics of air, Irigaray's ontology of air and Kleinberg-Levin's ontological primacy of breathing (breathing as our first openness to Being) in my exploration of the phenomenon of breathing. One important hypothesis in my interpretation of this ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" will be that Merleau-Ponty has taken all the extra elements in this ontologico-respiratory thesis (other than the plain wording of "there is Being") from Bachelard's book *Air and Dreams*. The extra elements in this thesis which have come from Bachelard are the wordings "really and truly", "inspiration", "expiration" and "respiration".⁹⁵ If (as I have tried to show in the Chapter Four) the principal thesis "there is Being" can be interpreted to mean "openness to openness", "openness to Being" or "openness to the universal dimensionality" as the depth-dimension of our relation to the world, that is, as our relation of openness to the openness of the world, then what would these Bachelardian, Irigarayan and Kleinberg-Levinian respiratory and aerial insights bring to my interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis concerning "inspiration and expiration of Breathing"? First of all, if Being (the universal dimensionality, the open) (as I will claim) would be understood as the *universal dimensionality* of air or as the atmosphere of *the open* air in an Irigarayan manner, and as "there is" equals "openness", then "there is Being" would express the following: *openness to the universal dimensionality of air or openness to the atmosphere of open air*. In my interpretation I will read Kleinberg-Levin's wording concerning breathing as our first openness to Being together with Merleau-Ponty's "respiration within Being". This will mean, according to my understanding, that "respiration within Being" is our first way of being-in-the-world, and as such it means that, in the first place before anything else, we are always already respiration within the atmosphere of open air or the universal dimensionality of air. If all of this is taken into account, I will be able to claim in Chapter Five that the ontologico-respiratory depth-dimension of our

95 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes: Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Librairie José Corti, 1943), pp. 312-313. See the English translation Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 241-242. The English translation does not capture these extra elements in a proper manner.

relation to the world is our respiratory openness to the open air of the world, as our first relation to the world.

What could these different opennesses (respiratory openness, the open air, the openness of air) mean? In my dissertation, the wording “respiratory openness” will mean that our breathing is not closed, but is constantly open in some manner to the atmosphere of air. We can close it for short periods of time by holding our breath, but already this holding of the breath as an act of closing is possible only because, originally, breathing is always openness. Its openness is twofold (inspiration and expiration of Being) as it is openness to be receptive, that is, to receive⁹⁶ or to take air into the lived body (inspiration), and openness to return or give air (expiration) back to the atmosphere of air.⁹⁷ This “respiratory openness” means also that, as breathing bodies, we have access to this atmosphere of air. This respiratory access is really and truly an open access in which there are no restrictions between us and the atmosphere of air. This means that we are not excluded from the open air. The air is itself openness as it is experientially limitless, boundless and without outlines in comparison to the limits, boundaries and outlines of things. Air is open like the open road as it does not obstruct our freedom of movement, but actually encourages it. The open road is really open only because its openness is the openness of the air. Beings as things and objects limit and obstruct our movement, block our vision and hearing, and hamper our speech. The open air is the condition of possibility of movement (for example, on the open road), of perception and of speech. The open air gives us the required distance between the perceiver and the perceived that we may, for example, see a car on the other side of the street. It offers the auditory field within which speech becomes possible. The atmosphere of open air, that is, the openness of the air, is the free field of open possibilities. Our first relation, that is, our first opening to this elemental openness of air, according to Kleinberg-Levin, is breathing. In my interpretation I will show how the respiratory “there is Being” expresses our respiratory openness to the open air as we perpetually breathe air, and how this fundamental phenomenon of *we breathe air* as our respiratory openness is the root, the principle or the beginning of our other relations to the world. These other relations include our perceptual relation to the world, and for this reason my dissertation will challenge the primacy of perception in the name of the primacy of breathing.

In Chapter Six of my dissertation, titled “The Principle of Abyss of Air: A Phenomenologico-Ontologico-Aerial Interpretation of Merleau-Pontian Dehiscence of Being and of Hesiodic-Heideggerian *Khaos*”, I will investigate more explicitly the phenomenon of atmosphere of the air as a question of phenomenological ontology. The basis for this chapter will be the ontological understanding of Being as the open air or the openness of the air. Earlier in this introduction it was said that Being is also, according to Merleau-Ponty, dehiscence, and in Heidegger’s words Hesiodic *khaos* (chaos) as the yawning abyss in which everything is engulfed. In this chapter I will conjoin these ideas in an interpreta-

96 David Michael Levin, *The Body’s Recollection of Being*, pp. 54, 178–179, 243 and 290.

97 David Michael Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, pp. 124, 129 and 135.

tive manner as, in my reading, the dehiscence of Being and chaos as the fundamental experience of Being will be phenomenologico-ontologically understood in terms of the atmospheric open air. Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence means the opening or the gap between the seer and the seen, between the perceiver and the perceived, between the subject and the object and between the self and the other. This dehiscence of Being is the condition of possibility for the existence of perception at all. According to Merleau-Ponty, without this dehiscence as opening, gap, separation or difference there is no possibility of perception. As I will seriously consider the idea that Being is the atmosphere of open air (as Irigaray and Bachelard say), this means that, according to my reading of Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence of Being, I will understand it in an aerial manner as the dehiscence of the ontological open air. Thus the opening, the gap or the separation between the perceiver and the perceived will be understood in my interpretation in Irigarayan and Bachelardian ontologico-aerial terms.

In this chapter I will also execute an etymological investigation of the word "dehiscence", as well as of the word "chaos". The reason for this etymological analysis will be that it will allow me to show how the Heideggerian-Hesiodic chaos or *khaos* and the Merleau-Pontian dehiscence perhaps speak of the same, or at least of a very similar, ontological phenomenon. How is this so? In this chapter I will demonstrate that, etymologically, the word "dehiscence" means "yawning" and "gaping" and that it has its root in the Latin *hiare*, which means "to yawn". Furthermore, it is important to understand that this Latin word *hiare* stems from the Greek word *khaos*. This Greek word, from which the English word "chaos" is derived, does not originally mean "confusion, disorder", but "yawning" and "abyss". *Khaos* means that which gapes wide open. Heidegger understands Hesiodic chaos as the fundamental experience of Being.⁹⁸ Heidegger also interprets this chaos in an etymological sense as the yawning abyss, as I already mentioned earlier in this introduction. For Heidegger, chaos is the first opening which intermediates between all beings and is at the same time the yawning abyss within which everything is engulfed. I already said that I will interpret Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence in an ontologico-aerial manner as the open air. I will do the same to the Heideggerian-Hesiodic *khaos*, and will thus understand both dehiscence and chaos as the atmosphere of the open air which yawns and gapes between all beings. The invisible atmosphere of air is the yawning of the world as the dehiscence which makes perception of the visible world possible because it provides the necessary transparent and permeable distance, intermediation, separation and gap as the wide open gape between the seer and the seen. This invisible atmosphere of air is that chaotic abyss which surrounds all beings and wherein everything (all beings) is engulfed.

I have mentioned many times during this introduction that I will be searching for a new beginning or a new principle of philosophy in terms of the phenomenon of breathing and the phenomenon of air. To say this same thing in other words is to say that I will be seeking for a new philosophical principle in

98 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 77.

terms of the experience of we breathe air. I have also said earlier in this introduction that one of the ways that Merleau-Ponty names the experience of Being is with Claudel's principle of Silence the Abyss. In *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty also refers to Claudel's principle when he once calls it "Silence, Abyss".⁹⁹ In my dissertation I will choose to use Merleau-Ponty's wording "Silence, Abyss" for this new principle more often than Claudel's original wording "Silence the Abyss". This means that I will be speaking of the principle of Silence, Abyss. I will interpret this Merleau-Pontian-Claudelien principle of Silence, Abyss to represent the experience of Being. My interpretation will raise a highly important question in my dissertation: *what would the ontological meaning of this principle of "Silence, Abyss" be if it would be interpreted in terms of experiential respiratory openness to aerial Being as well as in terms of chaos or dehiscence as the fundamental experience of the aerial yawning abyss of the world?* It will be one of the fundamental tasks of my dissertation to try to investigate this question concerning the respiratory-ontological and the aerial-chaotic meaning of this Merleau-Pontian-Claudelien principle. Earlier in this introduction I wrote that Merleau-Ponty also calls Being that surrounds and intermediates us and the visible things *silence*, *invisibility* and *abyssal depth*, as it is behind, beneath and between all these beings in a hidden and latent manner. All beings are engulfed within the openness of Being. Being is the invisible, silent or hidden atmosphere of the visible things, giving them their visibility, that is, their appearance, in a way that we do not normally notice at all. The beginning of philosophical, or ontological, reflection, according to Merleau-Ponty, can thus be said to be the principle of Silence, Abyss. This principle says that, from the very beginning, we are within the silence of Being and abyss of Being, within which all beings appear to us. Our deepest relation to the world as respiratory openness to the invisible open air takes place in a silent and hidden manner. In this relation, the breath as the depth-dimension of our being-in-the-world is, according to Bachelard, the premier phenomenon of silence.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the silence, invisibility and hiddenness of we breathe air as our respiratory openness to the open air is the reason why our Western tradition has, in Irigaray's words, almost universally forgotten breathing.¹⁰¹ It is very easy to forget that which manifests itself in a silent, invisible and hidden manner. As our lived experience of breathing is the most silent and hidden relation to the world, and as the experience of air that we breathe is the abyssal depth that yawns between all beings (including all breathing beings) and wherein everything is engulfed, I will interpret the Merleau-Pontian-Claudelien principle of Silence, Abyss according to these respiratory and aerial terms as a new principle that I will call the principle of *Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air*.¹⁰² The

99 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 317.

100 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 242.

101 Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Communitality*, trans. Stephen Pluháček (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 77.

102 I will be capitalizing the first letter of each of these words in this respiratory principle throughout my dissertation. The reader might wonder why do I do this. For some, it might give a strange feeling that I am trying to fill these words with a quasi-religious content. This is not my intention. The reason I do this capitalization is that with it I am, in my opinion, following the Merleau-Pontian intent. How is this so? As this

abyss of air part of this principle I will also call equally the *Yawn of Air*. In this interpretation I will understand the Silence part of the Merleau-Pontian-Claudelian principle of Silence, Abyss as *Silence of Breath*. I will deeply ground this interpretation on what I just said about Bachelard's understanding of breathing as the deepest level of silence. Regarding the Abyss part of this Merleau-Pontian-Claudelian principle, I will interpret it as the abyssal Air that yawns, or the aerial Yawn between the subject and the object, between the self and the other. I will base this interpretation on what I said earlier about the intertwining of air and dehiscence/chaos. All of this means that this new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air will be my respiratory and chaotic interpretation and mutation of the Merleau-Pontian-Claudelian principle of Silence, Abyss. It could be said that my interpretation will deepen the principle of Silence, Abyss into its respiratory, aerial and chaotic depth-dimensions as the new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air. This new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air will name the fundamental experience of my dissertation, which is we breathe air as our body's respiratory openness to Being ("respiration within Being" [Merleau-Ponty]), or as our respiratory relation to the "immense lung" (Merleau-Ponty) of the world. This is the experiential atmosphere or field within which all beings (including all theoretical, practical, social and perceptual beings) appear and within which all other experiential horizons, for example perceptual horizons of vision, hearing and touching, spatial horizons, temporal horizons, linguistic horizons and sexual horizons, are engulfed. Philosophical thinking that takes its point of departure from the ontologico-respiratory thesis of "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", that is, from this new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, will return all questions and phenomena to the ontologico-experiential field of our respiratory openness of inspiration and expiration of Being, as it will be the beginning or source of all of these questions and phenomena. These questions and phenomena include, for example, all questions concerning space, time, freedom, community, language, sexuality, art, poetry, music, culture, science, religion, politics, spirituality, rationality, embodiment and ethics, as they all appear within this ontologico-experiential atmosphere of we breathe air. For this reason, all of these phenomena need to be rethought, re-examined and re-experienced as questions concerning the principle of Silence of Breath, yawning Abyss of Air. They need to be studied within the ontological atmosphere of we breathe air as our fundamental root-relation with the world. In my dissertation I will clarify and explicate this ontologico-experiential field or atmosphere of we breathe air, but I will not be able to investigate how these different questions or phenomena appear within this respiratory-aerial atmosphere, and how they need to be rethought and re-examined within this new

principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Yawn is my mutation of Merleau-Ponty's principle "Silence, Abyss" I am just following Merleau-Ponty's lead in my capitalization of the first letter of these words. As Merleau-Ponty capitalizes the first letters, I do the same. During this dissertation, I only capitalize those expressions that Merleau-Ponty capitalizes. I also capitalize the first letter of the word "Being" in the same manner as Merleau-Ponty does in *The Visible and the Invisible*.

ontological atmosphere. These kinds of investigations will hopefully become some of my future tasks of respiratory philosophy based on the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air after this dissertation.

In Section Two of my dissertation I will investigate the phenomenologico-ontological method of my dissertation. In this section I will try to render my ontologico-respiratory discoveries in explicit methodological terms. This means that I will try to give the method of phenomenological reduction a respiratory-ontological interpretation. I will call this mutation of phenomenological reduction *ontologico-respiratory reduction*. This phenomenological method of ontologico-respiratory reduction will lead us back to the ontological experience of the breathing of air (we breathe air) as “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, as aerial “dehiscence of Being” and as aerial Chaos. In other words, this ontologico-respiratory reduction will return us to the new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air. In order to better understand what this methodological return to the ontological experience of we breathe air could mean, and how it could take place, I will study poets that Bachelard calls “aerial poet[s]”.¹⁰³ I will do this as, according to both Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard, philosophy can learn a new way of thinking by studying poets. I will argue that a new way of thinking that we could learn from the aerial poets could be called *thinking in breathing*. I will especially study Paul Claudel as an aerial poet who could teach the philosophers this thinking in breathing. After studying Claudel’s aerial poetry I will try to give it an ontological interpretation with the help of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Bachelard to better understand what this new way of thinking could mean in connection to ontologico-respiratory reduction. Finally, in this methodological section I will give a new interpretation to phenomenological *epoché* as an act of placing in abeyance. In my new interpretation of *epoché* (as an essential dimension of phenomenological reduction) I will interpret it within the atmosphere of yawning and the fundamental experience of aerial dehiscence and Chaos.

First of all, as Section Two is the methodological section, I will give *my interpretative synthesis* of the essentials of phenomenological method as the method of beginning. This I will do in Chapter Eight (the first chapter of Section Two), which is titled “The Method of Phenomenologico-Ontological Respiratory Philosophy: Phenomenologico-Ontological Reduction and Its Depth-Dimension as Ontologico-Respiratory Reduction”. In my synthesis I will conjoin methodological themes from Merleau-Ponty’s, Heidegger’s, Bachelard’s and Husserl’s phenomenologies. The essence of phenomenological method is phenomenological reduction. It is a “method of beginning”¹⁰⁴, and as such is a method that tries to lead thinking back to the beginning, origin, source or principle of thinking, as well as to the root of everything. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, this beginning is understood in phenomenology as our experiential relation to the world. But as the reduction means a return to *our relation*

103 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 44.

104 Juha Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction* (Vaasa, Finland: Tummavuoren kirjapaino Oy, 2000), p. 38.

to the world as the beginning, it does not only mean a return to the world *per se*, but also to a certain kind of way of relating that is original for us as human beings. This original way of relating, as the original attitude of human beings, according to Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Bachelard and Husserl, is the experience of wonder or of astonishment.¹⁰⁵ The idea that the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, exists originally in the state of wonder is deeply rooted in the ancient philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, for whom the beginning of philosophy was the experience of wonder.¹⁰⁶ For example, according to Merleau-Ponty, wonder is the source of all philosophical questioning. It can also be said that the more ready-made answers and even ready-made questions from our cultural and scientific traditions one has about the world, the less one wonders and has a truly questioning attitude. For this reason, the perpetual beginner (the philosopher) as the true wonderer, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know."¹⁰⁷ The ready-made answers and customs of our cultural and scientific traditions narrow the human being's perspective on the world, that is, they make us more closed-minded. In contrast to this, wonder is openness. To stand in wonder before the world means to be open to the world and to question it. True questioning is always openness to the world. The method of phenomenological reduction means a return to the beginning, a return to wonder and openness before the world as our original relation to the world.¹⁰⁸ For Merleau-Ponty, this original wonder as the beginning is perception.¹⁰⁹ This is possible because perception is, according to Merleau-Ponty, perceptual *openness* to the world and perceptual *questioning* of the world.¹¹⁰ Thus perception perpetually stands in wonder before the world. The method of reduction in Merleau-Ponty's case means leading our thinking back to the beginning as our perceptual relation with the world.¹¹¹ In his phenomenological ontology of Being, Merleau-Ponty gives this methodological return to perception an ontological interpretation as a return to the perceptual openness of Being.¹¹²

105 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 236 and Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxvii and lxxxv.. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 140-149. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 285. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 93.

106 Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A 2, 982b12.

107 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxviii.

108 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxvii.

109 Patrick Burke, "Listening at the Abyss", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), p. 94.

110 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 103-104 and 212. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 333.

111 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 156-160 and 175.

112 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 88-89. See also Renaud Barbaras, "Perception and Movement: The End of the Metaphysical Approach," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, eds. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, p. 84.

As the task of my dissertation will be to phenomenologico-ontologically investigate the question of breathing, in Chapter Eight I will also explore the methodological question of what the phenomenological method of reduction means in connection to the experience of breathing, if breathing is understood as a fundamental experience of Being. This means that I will try to accomplish a certain kind of phenomenological reduction that returns or leads us back to our body's respiratory openness to Being of the world as a wondrous point of departure of all thinking. What kind of phenomenological reduction this will be? This will be a fundamental question of this methodological section (Section Two) of my dissertation. By applying the general idea of the phenomenological method of reduction as the method of leading back to the beginning, I will call my phenomenological method of reduction *ontologico-respiratory reduction*, as it will be a method that will hopefully lead my investigation back to the atmosphere of the ontologico-respiratory experience of inspiration and expiration of Being, and of aerial dehiscence of Being as the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. This ontologico-respiratory reduction will be a deepening and a radicalization of Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's phenomenological reduction, which leads them back to the experience of Being as the origin of everything, including the origin of thinking, in their phenomenologico-ontological investigations.¹¹³ This phenomenological reduction that Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger have accomplished as a return to Being as the universal dimensionality, and as openness, has been called "ontological reduction" by Renaud Barbaras and Richard Kearney.¹¹⁴ In my methodological notion of ontologico-respiratory reduction, I will deepen and transform Barbaras' and Kearney's notion of ontological reduction as my investigation not only returns to Being, but to inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being.

Chapter Nine of my dissertation will be titled "The Question of Thinking as a Question of Thinking in Breathing: The Possibility of Rebirth of Philosophy as a New Respiratory Philosophy Inspired by the Aerial Poets". In this chapter I will investigate how poets could perhaps help to deepen the method of respiratory-ontological reduction. Merleau-Ponty calls the phenomenological reduction that leads philosophy back to Being an "absolutely new way of thinking".¹¹⁵ It will be the task of my dissertation to investigate what this idea of an "absolutely new way of thinking" would mean in connection to Merleau-Ponty's inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being and to his dehiscence of Being. I emphasize that my task will be to explore this question

113 Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger perform a phenomenological reduction that leads them back to Being. See Merleau-Ponty quoted by Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, p. 157n26 and Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 21.

114 Renaud Barbaras, "Perception and Movement", p. 82 and Richard Kearney, "Epiphanies of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology," in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, eds. John Panteleimon Manoussaki (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 5.

115 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), p. 177.

concerning the intertwining of dehiscence of Being and respiration within Being because it has never been investigated before. Merleau-Ponty never raised this intertwined question in any explicit manner. Instead of raising this question concerning respiration of Being, he investigated the question of Being in connection to perception and especially to the phenomenon of vision. He understood vision in an ontological manner as interrogative thinking of Being, in which the gaze interrogates the visible things within the horizon of Being. In his philosophy it is the vision that teaches us an ontology.¹¹⁶ If the philosopher truly wants to return to the depths of vision in order to learn this new ontology in the most radical manner possible, he should then follow the painters who are, according to Merleau-Ponty, the masters of vision.¹¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty also calls this “new philosophy”¹¹⁸ or “new ontology”¹¹⁹ of the vision, as an absolutely new way of thinking, the rebirth of philosophy. Even if Merleau-Ponty finds this rebirth of philosophy in collaboration with the painters, as the masters of the vision, he has said that this rebirth can also happen to philosophy through poetry, for example.¹²⁰ In Chapter Nine I will ask: what is the rebirth of philosophy in collaboration with the painters that Merleau-Ponty speaks of an absolutely new way of thinking? Merleau-Ponty calls this absolutely new way of thinking of the painters as the masters of vision a thinking that “thinks in painting”.¹²¹ He borrows this expression “to think in painting” from his most beloved painter Paul Cézanne. In Chapter Nine I will also ask: what would this absolutely new way of thinking and the rebirth of philosophy as thinking in painting have to do with my dissertation on bodily phenomenology and phenomenological ontology of breathing? In order to answer this question I will receive help from Bachelard who, in his book *Air and Dreams*, investigates a rare group of poets that he calls the “poets of air” or the “aerial poets”.¹²² These aerial poets create aerial and respiratory poetry. In my dissertation I will connect these aerial poets to Merleau-Ponty’s idea that philosophy will be reborn in collaboration with the poets and the painters. If Merleau-Ponty emphasizes in his philosophy that painters who “think in painting” can help him learn a new ontology of vision as an absolutely new way of thinking, then I will try in my dissertation, in a Merleau-Pontian inspired manner, to seek an absolutely new way of thinking and rebirth of philosophy in collaboration with Bachelard’s aerial poets. My task will be to interrogate the possibility of a new philosophy or new ontology which does not “think in painting” (Cézanne), but perhaps somehow, in an aerial-poetic way, could *think in breathing*. The aerial poets follow and lis-

116 Merleau-Ponty, *Nature*, p. 40.

117 Richard C. McCleary, translator’s preface to *Signs*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. xvii.

118 Merleau-Ponty, “Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: Preface to Hesnard’s *L’Oeuvre de Freud*”, in *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p. 81.

119 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 169.

120 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France 1958–1959 et 1960–1961* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), p. 39.

121 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 368.

122 See Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 4 and 44.

ten, according to Bachelard, “the very life of the cosmic breath”.¹²³ This means that they live with their whole being within the “respiration of the world”, or within the “respiratory” and the “aerial world”.¹²⁴ This cosmic breath, as the respiration of the world, according to Bachelard, breathes, dreams, imagines and thinks itself within us all.¹²⁵ Most people are almost universally unconscious of this very life of the cosmic breath. It is this rare group of poets, the aerial poets, who listen and follow this dreaming and thinking of the respiratory world within themselves. The dreams and thoughts of the cosmic breath speak within the poet in the voices of silence, and it is the task of these aerial poets to give a creative or poetic expression to this respiratory silence, as a silent speech, in a form of aerial and respiratory poetry.¹²⁶ In order to express the task of the aerial poets, I will interpret in the respiratory-ontological vocabulary of Section One that the aerial poets are able to hearken the inspiration and expiration of Being as the principle of Silence of Breath. In my interpretation I will show that the task and the method of the aerial poets is twofold. First of all, their task is to listen to the silent speech of breath dreaming and thinking within themselves, and then they must put the dreams and thoughts of the respiratory silence that they hear into words as aerial and respiratory poetry. This twofold task of listening as *listening in breathing* and speaking as *speaking in breathing* is what I will call in my dissertation the *aerial poet’s task of thinking in breathing*. I will be investigating the aerial poets’ methodological task in Chapter Nine.

In this chapter I will argue that this thinking in breathing, as a new way of thinking, is something that the philosopher can learn from the aerial poets. I will demonstrate the importance of the fact that this thinking in breathing has a similarity with Merleau-Ponty’s and Heidegger’s understanding of the method of ontological reduction. This similarity is that also Merleau-Ponty’s and Heidegger’s method of ontological reduction, as the thinking of Being, is a return to Being, in which the philosopher listens Being, as the silence of Being speaks within him or her, and after that his or her task is to say Being, that is, put the silent speech of Being into words.¹²⁷ The difference between the aerial poets and these two phenomenological ontologists is that the aerial poets speak of cosmic breathing and the respiration of the world, to which they perpetually return, while Merleau-Ponty’s and Heidegger’s ontological reduction is the philosophical path that returns to Being. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty do not ever understand their method of ontological reduction in any *explicit* manner as a method of returning to the ontological atmosphere of the respiration of the

123 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 234.

124 Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), p. 154. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 179. The translation has been altered. Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 40.

125 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press), pp. 179–180 and Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 14 and 150.

126 See Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*.

127 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 125 and 197. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, pp. 233, 236–237, 241 and 252.

world.¹²⁸ My task will be to try to methodologically intertwine the path of the aerial poets and the method of phenomenological ontology.

In order to gain a better understanding of how this methodological intertwining could take place I will especially study Paul Claudel's poetic thinking. In my dissertation I will show how Claudel (from whom Merleau-Ponty incorporated the principle of Silence, Abyss) can help me in my task of trying to give philosophy a rebirth as a new philosophy/ontology founded upon the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. I will explore Claudel's transformative role in my dissertation in Chapter Ten. This chapter is called "Paul Claudel as an Aerial Poet of the Sacred Respiration: The Claudelian Principle of Silence the Abyss as the Respiring God and the Claudelian Adoration in Respiration as Thinking in Breathing". In Chapter Ten I will understand Claudel as the aerial poet *par excellence*. I have already referred to him and his principle of Silence the Abyss many times during Section One of my dissertation as I have appropriated and adapted his principle with the help of Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard and Heidegger to form a new respiratory principle as the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. In Chapter Ten I will read the Catholic poet Claudel again as an aerial poet of the sacred respiration with the help of these same philosophers: Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard and Heidegger. I will interpret Claudel's aerial and respiratory poetics through the idea that he could teach the philosopher how to think in breathing. My hypothesis will be that Claudel can teach us how listening and speaking can take place in collaboration with the experience of breathing, and how they exist within the atmosphere of breathing air. In my reading of Claudel's poetry I will emphasize in his *oeuvre* the question of the Holy Spirit as a sacred respiration and God as a respiring God. Claudel's principle of Silence the Abyss, for himself, means God. God is the principle or beginning of everything. The principle of Silence the Abyss, for Claudel, is one way to name God. In connection to this, it will be important from the perspective of my dissertation that, according to Claudel, God is always "a respiring God".¹²⁹ This means that the principle of Silence the Abyss, which plays such an important role in my dissertation, is not only a respiring principle for myself but for Claudel too, even if Merleau-Ponty never acknowledges this in his studies of Claudel. As Claudel is a deeply Catholic poet, the true meaning of poetry, for him, is that it is a deeply religious and mystical practice, and as such it is a way or method to worship or adore God, that is, to "adore a God who breathes".¹³⁰ My task in Chapter Ten, as well the chapter that follows it (Chapter Eleven: "A Phenomenologico-Ontological Interpretation of the Claudelian Respiring God

128 Here it is, of course, important to point out that Merleau-Ponty once points toward "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" without ever explicitly interrogating in any manner what is the meaning of this expression and what could this mean in relation to phenomenological method.

129 Paul Claudel quoted by Saint Aubert, "La 'co-naissance.' Merleau-Ponty et Claudel," p. 271n118.

130 Paul Claudel, *Commentaires et exégèses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 72. See also Saint Aubert, "La 'co-naissance.' Merleau-Ponty et Claudel," p. 271n118 and Paul Claudel, *The Essence of the Bible*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 54.

and the Intertwining of Claudel's Aerial Poetry and the Method of Phenomenological Ontology of Breathing"), will be to interpret 1) how Claudel's religious and mystical (as well as methodological) practice of poetry as adoration of respiring God could be understood, 2) what is the relation of his aerial poetic thinking as adoration of respiring God to the idea of thinking in breathing, and 3) how Claudel's aerial poetry of the sacred respiration could be intertwined with the method of phenomenological ontology of breathing. This three-fold task will be essentially connected to what I said earlier about poets helping the philosopher rebirth philosophy, which in my dissertation means rebirthing philosophy as a new philosophy of thinking in breathing. This new philosophy could also be understood as a new phenomenological ontology of breathing.

My initial suggestion was that the aerial poets could help the philosophers discover an absolutely new way of thinking as something that could be called thinking in breathing. In Claudel's poetic or creative activity as adoration of respiring God, I will be seeking to discover how the poet thinks in breathing. I will call Claudel's poetic way of thinking in breathing by the name *adoration in respiration*. In my interpretation, Claudel's poetry as adoration of respiring God (or as adoration of the principle of respiring Silence the Abyss) will be understood as adoration in respiration. I will claim that this adoration in respiration could teach the philosopher an absolutely new way of thinking as thinking in breathing. What is essential in this Claudel's poetic method of adoration of respiring God as adoration in respiration is that listening and speaking are intertwined within it. This means that Claudel's aerial poetry, as adoration in respiration, is the intertwining of listening in respiration and speaking in respiration. This expression "in respiration" means that something takes place within the divine atmosphere of breathing and that, according to Claudel, all acts (for example listening and speaking) are, as capabilities of the soul, already respiratory capabilities. I will show that the fundamental reason for this is that, according to the Bible, God breathed into the nostrils of man and thus he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). It follows that all capacities of the soul (for example, adoration or worship as listening and speaking), from the Biblical perspective are, in Claudel's interpretation, essentially respiratory. All of this means, according to Claudel, that poetry, adoration, listening and speaking all take place within the respiring God, and none of them would exist without this first principle (respiring God as the principle of Silence the Abyss). All of these capabilities of the soul exist only in respiration of God. I will interpret this to mean that they are all atmospheres or dimensions of God as the sacred respiration and thus they are all respiratory phenomena. They are all respiratory phenomena because they are all characteristics of human being and, as according to the Bible, as I already mentioned, God gave human beings a living soul by breathing into man's nostrils. In Claudel's interpretation this means that: "[t]he whole character of man is within respiration."¹³¹ I will argue that all of this would mean that poetry as adoration, like every human enterprise, takes place in sacred respira-

131 Paul Claudel quoted by Saint Aubert, "La 'Co-naissance.' Merleau-Ponty et Claudel," p. 271n118. See also Saint Aubert, *Du lien des êtres aux éléments de l'être*, p. 253n6.

tion. This means if philosophy would be reborn in collaboration with Claudel's aerial poetry, that philosophy would also take place in respiration.

After exploring Claudel's poetic thinking of respiring God, my task in Chapter Eleven of my dissertation will be to investigate the possible meaning of Claudel's aerial poetry for my project and method of phenomenological ontology of breathing. A highly important question in this investigation will be how to phenomenologico-ontologically interpret the meaning of Claudel's "God who breathes" as the first principle of his aerial poetry of the sacred respiration. In order to carry out such an interpretive investigation I will turn to Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Claudel. Merleau-Ponty interprets Claudel's God ontologically to mean that which is universal.¹³² For Merleau-Ponty, the most universal is Being.¹³³ I will argue that this means that Claudel's God could be ontologically interpreted as the universal Being. It is also important to remember that, in Section One of my dissertation, I have already shown that Merleau-Ponty ontologically interprets Claudel's principle of Silence the Abyss as Being. With the help of Merleau-Ponty's ideas about Claudel's, I interpret Claudel's respiring God as *respiring universal Being*. In my interpretation I will claim that if Claudel's respiring God is interpreted in this kind of Merleau-Pontian manner, it could be said that this notion of respiring universal Being deeply reminds us of Merleau-Ponty's "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", as well as of his notion of "some immense exterior lung". With this train of thought I will interpret Claudel's aerial and respiratory poetry as adoration in respiration in a way that it could rebirth philosophy as an absolutely new way of thinking. Claudel could thus teach the philosopher a new ontology as thinking in breathing, which would mean an adoration (adoring listening and speaking) of Being in respiration. This will mean in my dissertation that Claudel's words "the whole character of man is within respiration" would turn to mean that the whole character of man is within inspiration and expiration of Being, and within immense lung as the beginning and as the principle of philosophy. And within this respiratory principle the task of the philosopher is to learn to listen in respiration and to speak in respiration.

In the last chapter of my dissertation (Chapter Twelve: "The Methodological Act of Placing in Abeyance: A Chasmological *Epoché* as an Essential Dimension of the Ontologico-Respiratory Reduction"), which is part of this methodological section (Section Two of my dissertation), I will investigate one essential dimension of the method of ontologico-respiratory reduction. I will call this methodological dimension the *chasmological epoché*. I will use this notion of "chasmological *epoché*" to give the phenomenological *epoché* a new interpretation within the ontologico-respiratory reduction. First of all, in order to understand what this "chasmological *epoché*" means, it is important to know that I have taken this very rare notion of "chasmological" from Wolter Seuntjens. The

132 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 218.

133 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 371 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170, 236, 257 and 265.

notion of *chasmology* means the “study of yawning.”¹³⁴ To form this notion, Seuntjens joins the Greek word *khasmo* (to yawn) with *-logy*. In my dissertation I will use this term in the context of phenomenological philosophy. Within the method of phenomenological reduction *epoché* means literally “check” or “cessation”. The act of yawning also occurs as a check or cessation. I will claim that yawning as a check or cessation is already a very brief form of “natural *epoché*”.¹³⁵ *Epoché* is an essential step of the phenomenological reduction in which the philosopher places in abeyance¹³⁶, and brackets or puts aside “what men or scientists believe they know.” In phenomenology the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, needs to place in abeyance “all scientific and prescientific traditions”¹³⁷ in order to see and experience the world in its original or nascent state, that is, to experience the world as beginning. My chasmological interpretation becomes possible as the word “abeyance” is a chasmological word. The word “abeyance” is etymologically connected to “yawning” and “gaping” as it means “to gape/yawn toward”. “Abeyance” also has an important etymological connection to the French wording “à béance” (to/at/in gap, to/at/in yawning, to/at/in gape, to/at/in wide opening). In my dissertation I will interpret Merleau-Ponty to be using this wording à béance in a chasmological manner when he writes in *The Visible and the Invisible* that there is a moment when all past knowledge “is led or ends up to/at/in gape or to/at/in yawning [à...béance]”.¹³⁸ In my etymologico-chasmological interpretation I will understand placing in abeyance (*epoché*) to mean etymologically “to place into the yawn or into the gape”, in a similar way as Merleau-Ponty uses the wording à béance in the previous sentence of *The Visible and the Invisible*. Similarly, as I interpreted the yawning (dehiscence and *khaos*) of the world in an aerial manner in Section One of my dissertation, in Chapter Twelve I will also interpret this chasmological idea of abeyance as *epoché* in an aerial manner. My aerial interpretation of chasmological abeyance becomes explicit as I will intertwine it with the aerial expression “to leave up in the air”, which figuratively means “to leave a matter undecided”. I will claim that this is exactly what happens in phenomenological *epoché* when the philosopher places matters in abeyance or leaves them up in the air. This means that at that particular moment the philosopher puts all mat-

134 Wolter Seuntjens, “The Hidden Sexuality of the Yawn and the Future of Chasmology,” in *The Mystery of Yawning in Physiology and Disease*, ed. Olivier Walusinski (Basel: Karger, 2010), p. 55.

135 Edmund Husserl quoted by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, “The Hermeneutic Slumber: Aristotle’s Reflections on Sleep”, trans. David Payne, in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Claudia Baracchi (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 140.

136 Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 57. In my examination of the methodological step of *epoché* I am following Maurice Natanson’s suggestion to translate the notion of *epoché* as “placing in abeyance”.

137 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 199.

138 The original French text says: “c’est un passé d’expérience et de savoir qui aboutit un jour à cette béance.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964), p. 140. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 105.

ters, that is, all scientific and prescientific traditions, out of play or brackets them.

I will also claim in Chapter Twelve that placing in abeyance, as a methodological step of the phenomenological reduction, is also connected to the philosopher's need to take distance in order to see and understand the world better.¹³⁹ The *epoché* can be understood as a position in which one takes distance to everything that human beings and scientists believe they know. According to Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher is defined by this distance that he is able to take to everything in order to see and understand more clearly.¹⁴⁰ In Merleau-Ponty's words, "to see is *to have at a distance*".¹⁴¹ In this final chapter of my dissertation I will aerially and chasmologically interpret this defining distance of the philosopher as it is the yawning air that provides this needed distance between the seer and the seen and thus makes the event of seeing as having at a distance possible. In my investigation I will conjoin this chasmological "placing in abeyance" and aerial "leaving up in the air" with aerial distance as the condition of possibility of seeing that, according to Merleau-Ponty, defines the philosopher. In my interpretation I will claim that if it is true that it is the distance that the philosopher takes to the world that defines him as a philosopher, and if it is true that the yawning air provides, in the primordial sense, this needed distance, then the ontological meaning of the philosopher, as a certain kind of being, must be reinterpreted in chasmological and aerial terms as a being who is defined by the yawning air (the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air). I will then suggest that the philosopher is a being who places himself *à béance* (at the yawn, to the yawn, in the yawn), in abeyance.

139 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 381.

140 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues: On Philosophy, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and James Barry (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1992), p. 124.

141 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 357.

SECTION ONE

RESPIRATION AND YAWNING OF AIR AS FUNDAMENTAL EXPERIENCES OF BEING AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SILENCE OF BREATH, ABYSS OF AIR

“Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. *Place is as requisite as the air we breathe*, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have.”¹⁴²

— Edward S. Casey —

“[C]ulturally sedimented language is a *field*, not unlike the perceptual field. It surrounds us and goes beyond us; we intellectually ‘reach out’ into it as we try to ‘find words’. We draw upon it, *just as we breathe air*.”¹⁴³

— Lawrence Hass —

“[L]anguage is the real medium of human being, if we only see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding, or ever-replenished common agreement – *a realm as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe*.”¹⁴⁴

— Hans-Georg Gadamer —

142 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p. ix. My emphasis. Also Mary F. Rogers uses analogously the expression “as surely as we breathe air” in order to clarify the phenomenon of place. Mary F. Rogers, “The Personal is Dramaturgical (and Political): The Legacy of Erwin Goffman”, in *Goffman’s Legacy*, ed. A. Javier Trevino (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p. 79.

143 Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 187. My emphasis.

144 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 2nd edn., trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008) p. 68. My emphasis. In his book *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* David Paul Parris defines Gadamer’s concept of language also with these respiratory terms as he writes: “Language surround us *like the air we breathe* and is what allows us to be at home in or familiar

“[O]ur engagement with the world is *so basic*, so intense, so thoroughgoing, that it is ordinarily invisible to us, *like the air we breathe*....Previous philosophers and scientists had ignored the life-world because it was so familiar as to be invisible, *like the air we breathe*.”¹⁴⁵

— David Detmer —

with the world.” David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), p. 17. My emphasis. Also in his article on Gadamer’s hermeneutics Rüdiger Bubner refers to this relation between language and air as he writes: “language, which we use and take as much for granted as the *air we breathe*” Rüdiger Bubner, “Looking Back on Gadamer’s Hermeneutics,” trans. Jim Scott, in *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, ed. Santiago Zabala (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), p. 223. It is not only Hass or Gadamer who compare language to the air we breathe as, for example, the poet William Wordsworth in one of his Essays did so as well. See Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Augmented edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 166-167.

145 David Detmer, *Phenomenology Explained: From Experience to Insight* (Chicago: Open Court, 2013), pp. 144 and 163. My emphasis.

CHAPTER 1

The Basic Barbaric Conviction of We Breathe Air and the Possible Idea of a New Philosophical Principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air

In all of these above philosophical and phenomenological quotations, the phrases “as the air we breathe,” “like the air we breathe” and “just as we breathe air” are used analogically or comparatively to describe or clarify some other phenomenon: in Casey’s investigation the phenomenon of place, in Gadamer’s and Hass’ case the phenomenon of language, and in Detmer’s phenomenological analysis our engagement with the life-world. None of these four examinations investigate the question of what it means that “we breathe air”. Neither is this question concerning the meaning of “we breathe air” examined in any other works by these four philosophers.¹⁴⁶ This means that, in all of these four cases, it is taken for granted that these philosophers, as well as their readers and human beings in general, have an intuitively implicit understanding of the meaning of the phrase “we breathe air”, as otherwise it would be impossible to compare these phenomena to *the air we breathe*. But do we really understand what this conviction “we breathe air” means? In this dissertation, I study the basic conviction “we breathe air” and explore the phenomenon of breathing and its connection to human existence and Being.

Let us imagine for a moment, in order to expand the field of our understanding, what a completely different kind of impact on academic philosophical

146 As I mentioned that none of these four philosophers study the question of “we breathe air” in any of their works. Casey, Hass and Detmer do not study the phenomenon of breathing in any form in any of their works. Gadamer raises the question of breathing in his investigation of Paul Celan’s poetry as for Celan poetry is a “turn of breath” (*Atemwende*). Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer on Celan: “Who Am I and Who Are You?” and Other Essays*, trans. Richard Heinemann and Bruce Heine- mann and Bruce Krajewski (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 73, 149 and 162. See also, for example, Donatella Di Cesare, *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait*, trans. Niall Keane (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 167–168.

discourse these four books would have made if, instead of their primary investigations concerning the phenomena of place, language and life-world, which are all counted as real philosophical themes of exploration¹⁴⁷, Casey, Hass, Gadamer and Detmer would have all studied the meaning of “we breathe air” and only used the analogies of “place,” “language,” and “life-world” to make this shared respiratory commonality of human existence more intelligible. Hypothetically, Casey might have written: “We are immersed in the air we breathe and could not do without it. To be at all – to exist in any way – is to breathe air. The air we breathe is as requisite as the place we are, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have.” Hass would have perhaps written: “The air we breathe is a *field*, not unlike the perceptual field. It surrounds us and goes beyond us; we bodily reach out into it to stay alive and to exist. We draw upon it, just as we speak language.” Gadamer could have given us the following wording: “The air we breathe is the real medium of human being, if we only see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding, or ever-replenished common agreement – a realm as indispensable to human life as the language we speak.” Finally, Detmer would have perhaps said: “Our engagement with the air we breathe is so basic, so intense, so thoroughgoing, that it is ordinarily invisible to us....Previous philosophers and scientists ignored this air we breathe because it was so familiar as to be invisible, like our life-world.”

With these hypothetical thoughts expanding my horizon of understanding and thinking of the possibilities and dimensionalities of “we breathe air”, I have begun my investigation. My interrogation of the *basic* conviction “we breathe air”, (that Detmer implicitly calls “so *basic*...that it is ordinarily invisible to us”), is deeply inspired by the opening words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s second magnum opus *The Visible and the Invisible*, in which he states:

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher – the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute “opinions” implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.¹⁴⁸

147 There is plenty of philosophical investigations made of these topics of language, place and life-world. See, for example, in the branch of philosophy of language, John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and Andrew Inkpin, *Disclosing the World: On the Phenomenology of Language* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2016). See, for example, in the branch of philosophy of place, Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Andrew Benjamin, *Place, Commonality and Judgment: Continental Philosophy and the Ancient Greeks* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010). See, for example, philosophical investigations on the theme of life-world, Sebastian Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld in Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011) and Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

148 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 3. In a somewhat similar manner to

Merleau-Ponty begins his magnum opus with the words: "We see the things themselves, the world is what we see." In a similar manner to Merleau-Ponty, I begin with the following formulae: *we breathe air, the aerial world is what we breathe*. I form my dissertation's formulae by conjoining the implicit respiratory thinking of Casey, Hass, Gadamer and Detmer concerning "we breathe air" with Merleau-Ponty's perceptual formulae. Inspired by Casey, Hass, Gadamer and Detmer I mutate Merleau-Ponty's perceptual formulae into a respiratory form to create a formula concerning "we breathe air". Merleau-Ponty understands his statement to express our common faith shared by everyone. The same can be said of the formula "we breathe air" which I understand as our basic "conviction" and a "faith common" to all of us. When I call "we breathe air" our basic conviction, I am using the word "conviction" in the same sense as Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Merleau-Ponty's usage of this term "conviction" differs from our normal everyday way of using this term or how, for example, Edmund Husserl uses the term in a philosophical way. In everyday usage, "conviction" means "a firmly held belief or opinion." This kind of conviction might be, for example, a religious or moral conviction which deeply shapes one's way of life. For Husserl, conviction is similar to this everyday meaning of the word, but the difference is that, in the words of Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, a "conviction requires an active deciding on the part of the believer and an original taking of a stance" before this active decision "becomes incorporated into the ego as a habit."¹⁴⁹ The difference here is that in everyday life, a conviction does not need an active decision or philosophical reflection, as people most of the time grown through their upbringing to particular kinds of deep beliefs and opinions that become incorporated into their way of life and behavioural structure. In Husserl's case these convictions are the results of conscious judgments that become possible through philosophizing. Merleau-Ponty's way of using the word "conviction" in *The Visible and the Invisible* differs from both of these as for him, in a deep sense, there are convictions which are neither the convictions of the upbringing nor the convictions of the judgment, but are rather something more primordial and fundamental than these other convictions. The convictions that Merleau-Ponty speaks of are the "convictions of the perceptual faith."¹⁵⁰ He writes of these "convictions of the perceptual faith" as follows: "the perceptual faith: the conviction that there is something, that there is the world."¹⁵¹ He also calls this kind of conviction "barbaric convic-

what Merleau-Ponty writes here about "we see the world" as "we see the things themselves, the world is what we see" I will in my examination write about "we breathe air" with the important exception that in my examination I do not take into account only "the moment he opens his eyes" and keeps his eyes open but also the moment he closes his eyes and keeps them closed. The moment of closing one's eyes especially in the process of falling asleep is an important topic in this first chapter as falling asleep, in Merleau-Ponty's account, is in an essential manner a respiratory event.

149 Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 74.

150 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30.

151 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30.

tion.”¹⁵² As barbaric convictions, these “convictions of the perceptual faith” precede the convictions of the upbringing and of judgments as civilized convictions, and make these civilized convictions possible. Barbaric convictions are always earlier and more primordial than civilized convictions. Perception, as the perceptual faith, firmly believes that there is something and that there is the world. To see is to see something, for example, a tree or a chair. To see is to see that there is something. In seeing, “something” means any visual thing or anything we can see. To see is to see the world. To see is to see that there is the world. In the case of seeing, this “perceptual conviction” or “barbaric conviction” is the conviction of the eyes. It is the eye, or my whole perceptual body, that is certain, confident or convinced that there is something and that there is the world. This kind of “barbaric conviction” is the condition of possibility of all civilized convictions, as every civilized conviction is based on the perceptual body’s perceptual faith or perceptual conviction that we are in relation with things and with the world. We could not have, in Merleau-Ponty’s view, any kind of civilized convictions without first having perceptual confidence or faith that there is something and that there is the world. In this perceptual conviction, something and the world are given to us by our senses and our whole perceptual body. Everything is given to us, according to Merleau-Ponty, in the first place in this kind of perceptual way. In this way, there is a priority or primacy of perception over other ways of relating with something and the world. For instance, in the sense of Husserl’s conviction, one can only make judgments about things and the world if things and the world have already been perceptually given to us as perceived things and the perceived world. In the next chapter (Chapter Two of my dissertation) I will more thoroughly investigate what Merleau-Ponty means with the notions of “something”, “the world” and “primacy of perception”.

In a similar manner to Merleau-Ponty, I will use the word “conviction” as I speak of “we breathe air” as our “basic” (Detmer) or “barbaric conviction.” I will call this barbaric conviction, or common faith, regarding breathing a *respiratory conviction* and a *respiratory faith*.¹⁵³ I will use these terms in a similar way to Merleau-Ponty when he talks about “we see things” in the opening lines of *The Visible and the Invisible* as our common faith. According to Merleau-Ponty, this common faith is similar to the barbaric conviction or perceptual faith that “we see the things”. In my dissertation this common faith is given a basic respirato-

152 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30. The notion of “barbaric” plays important role in Merleau-Ponty’s later philosophy, that is, in his phenomenological ontology of Being and the Flesh. He also speaks of “the barbaric Principle,” “the barbarous source” and “the barbarian in us.” See Patrick Burke, “Creativity and the Unconscious in Merleau-Ponty and Schelling,” in *Framing a Vision of the World; Essays in Philosophy, Science and Religion*, eds. André Cloots and Santiago Sia (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), p. 183. There is also a whole anthology dedicated to the notion of “barbaric” in Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, see *The Barbarian Principle: Merleau-Ponty, Schelling, and the Question of Nature*, ed. Jason M. Wirth with Patrick Burke (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013).

153 With Lenart Škof I am cultivating a terminology of *respiratory philosophy* in the introduction of *Atmospheres of Breathing*. Škof and Berndtson, “Introduction”, in *Atmospheres of Breathing*.

ry meaning as the barbaric conviction of the respiratory faith that we breathe air. Common faith as respiratory faith is the basic barbaric conviction that Casey, Hass, Gadamer, Detmer and the rest of us always take for granted before there is any possibility of forming any kind of civilized convictions, such as moral, philosophical or religious convictions. We breathe air before we make moral, philosophical or religious judgments.¹⁵⁴

For Merleau-Ponty, the fundamental philosophical question, as the fundamental theme of philosophy, is to interrogate this perceptual faith that is common to all of us. His fundamental quest is to investigate the meaning of the formula “we see the things themselves, the world is what we see.” In order to follow this fundamental task of thinking, one must understand the meaning of the words “we,” “seeing,” “thing,” and “world” in this formula, as Merleau-Ponty writes: “we [must] ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is.” Instead of perception as the perpetual faith, I philosophically interrogate our basic and barbaric conviction of respiratory faith in a Merleau-Pontian fashion: *we breathe air, the aerial world is what we breathe*, so in this respect it is essential to ask what is this *we*, what is this *breathing*, and what is this *air* or this *aerial world* that I speak of? I hope that my interrogation will bring me to a deeper understanding of what the words “we breathe air” mean.

We all know that breathing is a vital condition of and for our human existence, that is, for our survival¹⁵⁵ as human beings, as Casey naturally acknowledges in an implicit way in the words that I quoted at the very beginning of this chapter: “to be at all—to exist in any way” we must breathe air, as Gadamer also acknowledges by calling “the air we breathe” “indispensable to human life.” There is no human existence without breathing, that is, we “could not do without it.” In this sense it can be said that breathing is a fundamental and “indispensable” condition “to be at all—to exist in any way,” that is, a fundamental and absolutely necessary requirement for and of being. This raises the following important question: how are we to understand the essential connection between “we breathe air” and “to be at all—to exist in any way,” that is, the intertwining between *breathing* and *existence*, *breathing* and *being*?

154 Merleau-Ponty in one of his text fragments about breathing in *Phenomenology of Perception* refers, in my interpretation, to this priority of breathing as he writes: We “breathe prior to perceiving and reaching a relational life [the life of human relations]”. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 162. This life of human relations is deeply connected to speech and language and language is the condition of possibility of making any kind of conscious judgments, for example, on matters concerning morality, religion and philosophy.

155 Normally this survival is understood only as what can be called “physiological survival” but it is possible to understand this survival also in more expanded manner. Could it be that the life of our heart, thought and speech, or in more general terms our whole human existence can survive only as we breathe air and if this the case what would it mean in general as well as on different particular levels of existence? See, in relation to this question of different levels of respiratory survival, Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, trans. Stephen Pluháček (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 76. Irigaray writes in this same book, for example, of this: “It is...necessary to understand the relations between respiration and other acts, in particular the act of speaking.” *Ibid.*, p. 50.

In my investigation I interrogate this self-evidently taken for granted barbaric conviction “we breathe air” that is “indispensable to human life”. My examination will be part of neither the respiratory physiology nor the natural sciences in general: rather I will formulate a philosophical question concerning breathing. This means that I will not understand breathing or air in a natural scientific way. The phenomenon of breathing will not be understood at all in my dissertation as a physiological exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide that takes place in the physiological body, controlled by the respiratory centre in the brainstem. I do not understand the phenomenon of air in a natural scientific manner as a mixture of gases (nitrogen, oxygen, argon, carbon dioxide). But what does it mean to formulate a philosophical question of breathing? How can breathing be a question or a problem in a philosophical investigation?¹⁵⁶ Have any philosophers investigated breathing in a philosophical manner or a philosophical context, and have there been any investigations concerning the connection between breathing and existence, breathing and being?¹⁵⁷ Traditionally,

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- 156 In *Signs* Merleau-Ponty says that “philosophy lives from everything which happens to the philosopher and his times.” Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 128. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty says: “The philosopher attempts to think the world, others, and himself, and to conceive of their relations” as well as “the thinking of a philosopher is merely a way of making explicit his hold upon the world, which is all he is.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxxiv and 482. The translation has been modified by myself. As I ask *how can breathing be a question or a problem of philosophical investigation* it is important to understand this question in relation to these quotations from Merleau-Ponty. If it is true that “philosophy lives from everything which happens to the philosopher” this means that philosophy lives also from breathing as it perpetually happens to the philosopher and as breathing is one of the ways in which we are related to the world. All of this would mean that one of the tasks of the philosopher would be to make explicit by thinking our perpetual breathing-in-the-world.
- 157 Friedrich Nietzsche has briefly connected the question of Being and the phenomenon of breathing. Nietzsche writes: “The concept of being! As though it did not show its low empirical origin in its very etymology! For *esse* [‘to be’] basically means ‘to breathe.’ And if man uses it of all things other than himself as well, he projects his conviction that he himself breathes and lives by means of a metaphor, i.e., a non-logical process, upon all other things. He comprehends their existence as a ‘breathing’ by analogy with his own.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1962), p. 84. In *Writing and Difference*, Jacques Derrida has referred shortly to these Nietzsche’s words on the connection of Being and breath. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 173. I am grateful to Michael Lewis for making me aware of these Nietzsche’s remark about Being and breathing as well as Derrida’s reference to it. See Michael Lewis, “A Voice that is Merely Breath”, Unpublished paper, 2018, accessed September 2, 2018, <https://eprint.ncl.ac.uk/fulltext.aspx?url=246320%2F28362F2C-6334-45C0-882A-26AB307E0BAE.pdf>. In my dissertation, I am not able to investigate the meaning and significance of these words of Nietzsche and Derrida. Hopefully, in my future explorations on ontology of breathing I will have a chance to interrogate these Nietzsche’s insights concerning the relation of Being and breathing. In addition to Nietzsche and Derrida, in reference to the relation of breathing and Being, or existence, Carl Braig, who deeply influenced early Heidegger, writes: “...restful breathing, uniformly continuing existence....” Both David Michael Levin and John D. Caputo briefly refer to these words of Braig while pointing towards the connection between Being and breathing. Caputo writes: “[In his book *Vom Sein: Abriss der Ontologie*, Braig] offer[s] an etymology of the verb ‘to be’ which traces *sein* [Being] back to the Sanskrit *as* which he takes to mean well-being. The third person singular *ist* is traced back to *athmen*, to breathe, and hence means life. Together, *as*

questions concerning being and existence have been understood in philosophy as metaphysical or ontological questions. Would it follow that a metaphysical or ontological investigation of breathing as a question connected to the questions of being and of existence is possible? My philosophical investigation will try to clarify some of these questions as it examines the ontological meaning of “we breathe air.” But how should I begin my inquiry into this barbaric conviction “we breathe air”? What could be the leading clue with regards to investigating this respiratory conviction in connection to the ontological questions concerning being and human existence?

My philosophical dissertation is dedicated to a new philosophical principle that I will call the principle of *Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air*. This dedication to this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air is deeply connected to “we breathe air” as our basic and barbaric conviction and our common faith, as understood in a Merleau-Pontian manner. This abyss is a yawning abyss, and just as I will be speaking in this dissertation of the principle of Abyss of Air, I will also speak of the principle Yawn of Air. Abyss of Air and Yawn of Air will be equal. In this first section of my dissertation, titled “Respiration and Yawning of Air as Fundamental Experiences of Being and the Principle of Silence of Breath,

and *athmen* suggest ‘restfull breathing, uniformly continuing existence’ (p. 20, App II). All this is familiar to the reader of the second chapter of Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Braig offers other etymologies which Heidegger later uses: *ratio* from *ar*, to put in order”. John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 55. See also, Levin, “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing”, p. 121. Neither Caputo nor Levin study the possible ontological dimensionalities or possibilities of Braig’s sentence on the relation between breathing and existence. In the future, it would be interesting to take under a serious consideration these Caputo’s words about the relation between “*ist*” and “*athmen*” and connect this with Nietzsche words: “For *esse* [‘to be’] basically means ‘to breathe.’” For example, how the second chapter “On the Grammar and Etymology of the Word ‘Being’” of Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* could be reread if this Braig’s etymological intertwining of “*ist*” and “*athmen*” would be taken as the interpretative horizon. This would mean that Heidegger’s grammar and etymology of the word “Being” would be interpreted within a respiratory atmosphere. This kind of rereading of great works of philosophy is proposed as one of the fundamental tasks of new respiratory philosophy that I am initially mapping out with Lenart Škof in our *Introduction to Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Škof and Berndtson, pp. xi-xiii. In his article “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing”, Levin begins to initially think the connections between Being and breathing in Heidegger without referring to *Introduction to Metaphysics* or to Braig’s respiratory sentence. Levin writes: “Heidegger devotes much thought, in *Being and Time*, to the ontological significance of our experience of anxiety. But his interpretation is seriously incomplete, for it leaves unthought the deep relationship between anxiety and breathing. And, *a fortiori*, it leaves unthought the ontological significance of breathing itself, as an experience of our primordial openness to Being.” Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, pp. 131–132. These suggestions of Levin are truly important and they will offer inspiring new possibilities to think Being in a respiratory manner. And if they would be connected to Nietzsche’s, Derrida’s, Braig’s and Caputo’s respiratory seeds one could begin to cultivate a new ontology of breathing with Heidegger’s Being. In this process of ontologico-respiratory cultivation of Heideggerian Being one may receive enormous help from Luce Irigaray who intertwines Being in an essential manner with air and breathing in her book *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. As we shall see, my ontological approach in this dissertation will be different from what I have proposed in this footnote as I will draw my main source of inspiration from Merleau-Ponty’s implicit phenomenological ontology of breathing.

yawning Abyss of Air”, I will develop this new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air from several sources that I will show to be essentially interrelated if one is able to connect them in a rightful creative manner, even though they might at first glance appear unconnected. I also call this new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air (Yawn of Air) the *respiratory* and *chasmological principle* of philosophy. The adjective “respiratory” refers to “Breath” and the adjective “chasmological” refers to “Yawn” with regards to the principle of Silence of Breath, Yawn of Air (Abyss of Air). The noun form of “chasmological” is “chasmology.” I have taken this almost unknown term “chasmology” from Wolter Seuntjens, who formed it by joining the Greek word *chasmo* (to yawn) with *-logy*. He says that “Chasmology is the scientific study of yawning.”¹⁵⁸ In my dissertation I will use this term in the context of phenomenological philosophy.¹⁵⁹ This means that I will not study yawning in a natural scientific manner, but rather phenomenologically as an experiential phenomenon. In my dissertation the term “yawn” refers mainly to the phenomenologico-ontological investigation of the principle of Silence of Breath, *Yawn of Air*, which will be developed in an essential relation to the barbaric conviction of “we breathe air.” By way of a warning, I must point out that the reader needs to understand that the phenomenon of the yawn that will be investigated phenomenologico-ontologically in this first section of my dissertation is not in the first place the phenomenon of human yawning, but rather something that could be called the yawning of the world, as the abyss of world or the yawning of Being as the abyss of Being. In his dissertation *On Yawning or the Hidden Sexuality of the Human Yawn*¹⁶⁰, Seuntjens studies the phenomenon of yawning in humans and animals, but not the phenomenon of the yawning of the world. In my understanding, it is the yawning of the world, or the yawning of Being, that makes human and animal yawning possible. Later in the first section of my dissertation I will show how the ontological yawning of the world as the yawning of Being is essentially connected to the aerial world as the Yawn of Air.

To develop and to explicate this new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air (Yawn of Air), I will conjoin themes from Merleau-Ponty, Paul Claudel, Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger. The basis for this new philosophical principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air is Claudel’s principle of “*Sigè* [Silence] the Abyss.”¹⁶¹ In my interpretative explication I will interpret the “Silence” (Gr. *Sigè*) dimension of Claudel’s “Silence the Abyss” as Silence of Breath and the “Abyss” dimension as Abyss of Air. The creation of a new principle of Si-

158 Wolter Seuntjens, “The Hidden Sexuality of the Yawn and the Future of Chasmology,” in *The Mystery of Yawning in Physiology and Disease*, ed. Olivier Walusinski (Basel: Karger, 2010), p. 55.

159 It is not completely odd that I give Seuntjens’s term “chasmology” a philosophical context as the editor of the book Olivier Walusinski actually already claims in his foreword that “Seuntjens uses the word ‘chasmology’ ...[p]erhaps more [in a] philosophical than [in a] scientific” manner. See Olivier Walusinski, “Foreword”, in *Mystery of Yawning in Physiology and Disease*, p. xii.

160 Wolter Seuntjens, *On Yawning or the Hidden Sexuality of the Human Yawn* (Amsterdam: F&N Boekservice/Eigen Beheer, 2004).

161 Paul Claudel, *Poetic Art*, trans. Renee Spodheim (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 35.

lence of Breath, Abyss of Air from Claudel's "Sigè [Silence] the Abyss" becomes possible with the help of Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard and Heidegger.

This new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air is my respiratory, chasmological and aerial interpretation of Paul Claudel's principle of "Silence the Abyss." Claudel explicitly refers to this principle of "Silence the Abyss" only once, according to Merleau-Ponty, as well as my own knowledge.¹⁶² The reference to this principle can be found in his work *Poetic Art* (*Art poétique*), where he writes:

Time is the means offered to all that will be to be no longer. It is the *Invitation to die*, to every phrase to decompose itself in the explicative and total accordance, to consummate the speech/word [*la parole*] of adoration in/to the ear of Sigè [Silence] the Abyss [*à l'oreille de Sigè l'Abîme*].¹⁶³

I will interpret the possible deeper meanings and implications of Claudel's dense quotation in Chapter Ten, Section Two, titled "Paul Claudel as an Aerial Poet of the Sacred Respiration." What I can say initially, however, is that in *Poetic Art* the principle of "Silence the Abyss" refers to the ultimate principle of everything. Claudel, as a Catholic poet, also calls this principle by the name God as the beginning of everything. It is extremely interesting and important in the context of my dissertation that, for Claudel, God is always "a God who breathes."¹⁶⁴ Claudel's respiring God is one of the essential reasons I will initially interpret his principle of Silence the Abyss in a respiratory manner. As I have previously said, I will investigate Claudel's idea of the divine breath in connection to "Silence the Abyss" in Chapter Ten, in which I will try to interpret the whole of this quotation from Claudel's *Poetic Art* concerning the task of the adoring poet who worships God as Silence the Abyss in respiratory terms. In this chapter, "Silence the Abyss" is essentially intertwined with "a God who breathes." Before Chapter Ten, I will only focus on the principle of "Silence the Abyss" without considering the whole of this citation from *Poetic Art* and its essential connection to God in Claudel's poetic thought.

It is Merleau-Ponty who brings Claudel's principle of "Silence the Abyss" into the context of philosophical inquiry.¹⁶⁵ He refers on two different occasions to this Claudelian principle. The first of these can be found in *Signs*, which includes a short text, "On Claudel", which is dedicated to Claudel and his poetic thinking.¹⁶⁶ It cites these above-quoted words of *Poetic Art*:

162 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 317.

163 Paul Claudel, *Art poétique* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1949), p. 57. My translation. See English translation of this Claudel's text, Claudel, *Poetic Art*, trans. Renee Spodheim (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 35. See also especially Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 317 but also pp. 21 and 43.

164 Paul Claudel, *Commentaires et exégèses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 72.

165 Jean-Louis Chrétien refers to this connection between Claudel and Merleau-Ponty. See Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 45.

166 Merleau-Ponty, "On Claudel", in *Signs*, pp. 314-8.

Time is the means to offered to all that will be to be no longer. It is the *Invitation to die*, to every phrase to decompose itself in the explicative and total accordance, to consummate the speech/word [*la parole*] of adoration in/to the ear of Sigè [Silence] the Abyss [*à l'oreille de Sigè l'Abîme*].

The other reference to Claudel's "Silence the Abyss" can be found from the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible*, where Merleau-Ponty writes that "ontology" is a "return to Sigè [Silence] the abyss."¹⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty's idea of the ontological return to Silence the Abyss in my dissertation will be mutated into a form in which ontology is understood as a return to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. As has already been said above, the rest of the quotation from Claudel's *Poetic Art* that Merleau-Ponty also quotes in *Signs* will be studied in Section Two of my dissertation, especially in Chapter Ten.

In addition to these two references to the principle of "Silence the Abyss" in *Signs* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, Claudel plays an influential role throughout Merleau-Ponty's philosophical career from *Phenomenology of Perception* to *The Visible and the Invisible*.¹⁶⁸ For instance, Claudel's influence can be seen in Merleau-Ponty's thinking concerning "the essence of time and space"¹⁶⁹, religion and the question of universal.¹⁷⁰ Claudel is one of the important creators of poetry that Merleau-Ponty has in his mind when he writes of the relationship between arts (poetry, painting, etc.) and philosophy as follows: "[p]hilosophy will find help in poetry, art, etc., in a closer relationship with them, it will be reborn."¹⁷¹ This relationship between art and philosophy will be investigated in the second section of my dissertation, where I will also interrogate how Merleau-Ponty's words could be applied to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air so that the relationship between poetry and philosophy could perhaps help us rebirth philosophy as a new respiratory and chasmological-aerial philosophy.¹⁷²

167 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 179. According to Patrick Burke: "Merleau-Ponty defines his indirect ontology as an invocation to Sigè, to silence, the abyss." Patrick Burke, "Creativity and the Unconscious in Merleau-Ponty and Schelling", p. 187. Burke also writes about Merleau-Ponty's ontology as follows: "Ontology is the interrogative word of adoration in the ear of Sigè [Silence] the Abyss." Patrick Burke, "Listening at the Abyss", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), p. 83.

168 There is already one small reference to Claudel in Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour*. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 197 and 247n30.

169 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 121. See also p. 103. In addition, on the question of temporality, see especially Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 432 and 442. Mauro Carbone writes about Claudel's influence on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intertwining of space and time in Mauro Carbone, *An Unprecedented Deformation: Marcel Proust and the Sensible Ideas*, trans. Niall Keane (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 29. See also Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 47, 62, and 169.

170 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 71. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 218.

171 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 39.

172 I have originally introduced the notion of "respiratory philosophy" in the following article, Petri Berndtson, "The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being: The Immense Lung and the Cosmic Breathing as the Sources of Dreams, Poetry and Philosophy,"

If, according to Merleau-Ponty, ontology is a return to “Silence the Abyss,” then what does this mean to him? It means an ontological return to Being as, for Merleau-Ponty, “Silence the Abyss” is equal with Being. Being is “silent Being” and “abyssal Being”.¹⁷³ Here it is important to understand that Being is also equal with “the perceived world.”¹⁷⁴ Merleau-Ponty’s “phenomenological ontology”¹⁷⁵ returns, to borrow Edmund Husserl’s wording, from “all [the ready-made] scientific and prescientific traditions”¹⁷⁶ of our everyday life to their ontological origin, or source, which is the perceived world or silent and abyssal Being as the principle of Silence the Abyss. This ontological investigation takes its point of departure from the principle of Silence the Abyss as that is the starting point of the interrogation. We live our everyday lives within these culturally ready-made scientific and prescientific traditions without being aware of the root, origin and source of these traditions, that is, of their condition of possibility. This root always comes before everything else. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes returning to this root or origin as

[a] return to [the perceived] world prior to knowledge, this [perceived] world of which knowledge always *speaks*, and this [perceived] world with regard to which every scientific determination is abstract, signitive, and dependent, just like geography with regards to the landscape where we first learned what a forest, a meadow, or a river is.¹⁷⁷

In the ontological vocabulary of Being, one could change the notion of “the perceived world” to the notion of “Being”: thus Merleau-Ponty’s return would be a return to Being prior to knowledge, that is, to Being of which knowledge always speaks. This notion of “knowledge” can be understood to refer to both scientific knowledge and prescientific knowledge, that is, to “all scientific and prescientific traditions”. Merleau-Ponty also calls this perceived world “the sensible world”. In reference to this, he says in *The Visible and the Invisible* that “the sensible world is ‘older’ than the universe of thought” and “it is this unjust-

in *Thinking in Dialogue with Humanities: Paths into the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Karel Novotný et al. (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), p. 291.

173 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 367 and 376. Also Heidegger understands Being as silent and abyssal Being. See, for example, Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 233.

174 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170.

175 Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), pp. 131 and 133. According to Alphonso Lingis Merleau-Ponty’s book “*The Visible and the Invisible* was to be [his] phenomenological ontology.” See Lingis, “Translator’s Preface”, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty, p. xl. See also M.C. Dillon pp. 52-3, 86, 92 and 156-7; Hass, *Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 147; Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, pp. 54 and 187.

176 These words in the quotation marks are borrow from Edmund Husserl who was one of the most important influences of Merleau-Ponty’s thinking. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 199.

177 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxii.

tifiable certitude of a sensible world common to us that is the seat of truth within us.”¹⁷⁸

In my dissertation, Merleau-Ponty’s idea of phenomenological ontology as a return to ontological origin is given a respiratory and chiasmologico-aerial interpretation as I say that phenomenological ontology is a perpetual return to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, and as its point of departure is the principle of Silence of Breath, yawning Abyss of Air. Shedding light in how this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air can be understood, and how it is connected to Merleau-Ponty’s Claudelian-inspired principle of Silence, Abyss as Being or the perceived world is an important task in Section One of my dissertation.

In my interpretation, it is in *Eye and Spirit*¹⁷⁹ (*L’Œil et l’Esprit*) that Merleau-Ponty expresses this new respiratory principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air with a thesis: “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” (“il y a vraiment inspiration et expiration de l’Être, respiration dans l’Être”)¹⁸⁰. I claim this because the wording “inspiration and ex-

178 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 11-12.

179 This Merleau-Ponty’s text is known in the English speaking world by the title of *Eye and Mind*, but throughout my dissertation I am going to translate the title of this work as *Eye and Spirit*, because the English word “spirit” as well as the French “esprit” have their etymological root in the Latin “spiritus” meaning “breath, spirit, wind, courage, soul”. In this sense I want to keep *spirit’s* etymological connection to *breath* which the word *mind* does not hold. This *respiratory* connection of spirit and breath is crucial in my dissertation as I understand *spiritus* rooted words *inspiration*, *expiration* and *respiration* as the words naming the basic conviction we breathe air.

180 Merleau-Ponty, *L’Œil et l’Esprit*, pp. 31-32. My translation. The first and the most well known English translation of *L’Œil et l’Esprit* is by Carleton Dallery titled “Eye and Mind” (pp. 159-190) in the book *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964). In this Dallery’s translation this respiratory phrase is translated imperfectly as “There really is inspiration and expiration of Being” (p. 167). This means that Dallery leaves completely out from his translation “*respiration dans l’Être*” The improved translation of “Eye and Mind” (pp. 121-149) by Michael B. Smith was published in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Galen A. Johnson, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993). The “improved translation” means that it is improved version of Dallery’s translation. This improved translation also improves the translation of this Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis as now also “*respiration dans l’Être*” has been translated as “respiration in Being”. The improved translation runs “There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being” (p. 129). The most recent translation of “Eye and Mind” (pp. 351-378) by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor is the improved translation of Michael B. Smith’s translation. This translation is published in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, eds. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007). Even if this translation differs extensively from Smith’s translation still Merleau-Ponty respiratory phrase (p. 358) stands exactly the same as in Smith’s translation. I follow Rudi Visker and Véronique M. Fóti as I translate “*dans respiration*” as “within respiration” instead of “in respiration” as both of the “improved translations” do. See Rudi Visker, *Truth and Singularity: Taking Foucault into Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), p. 212 and Véronique M. Fóti, *Tracing Expression in Merleau-Ponty: Aesthetics, Philosophy of Biology, and Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), p. 46. The word *vraiment* is translated in all three English translations as “really”. In his book *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays, 1976-2006* Richard Kearney translates *vraiment* as “truly” (p. 447n13) when quoting this respiratory phrase in form: “There is truly inspiration and expiration of Being”. See Richard Kearney, *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays, 1976-*

piration of Being, respiration within Being” can be understood as a respiratory dimension of Silence the Abyss, because, for Merleau-Ponty, Being is the Claudelian principle of Silence the Abyss. So if Being equals Silence the Abyss, one could equally speak of inspiration and expiration of Silence the Abyss and of respiration within Silence the Abyss as one speaks of “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. In addition to these ontologico-respiratory claims concerning the principle of Silence the Abyss I will also argue in my dissertation that Merleau-Ponty implicitly refers to this same respiratory principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air in *Phenomenology of Perception* in his discussion about the process of falling asleep. According to Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, the following words on sleep have deep Claudelian undertones¹⁸¹: “I was breathing slowly and deeply to call forth sleep, and suddenly, one might say, my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back, a certain respiratory rhythm desired/wanted by me just a moment ago, becomes my very being.”¹⁸² In this quotation I interpret “some immense exterior lung” to state the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air to which the sleeper returns when he abandons the world of awakesness and becomes a being defined by “a certain respiratory rhythm.” Thus, I would say that Merleau-Ponty’s notions of “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” and “some immense exterior lung” are expressions of the new respiratory principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air that I am developing in this dissertation.

In my interpretation Martin Heidegger, while writing about the Greek *khaos*, also implicitly refers to this principle of Silence of Breath, yawning Abyss of Air (Yawn of Air) that I am developing in *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry* and in *Nietzsche*. In *Elucidation of Hölderlin’s Poetry* he writes: “*Khaos* signifies first of all the yawning, gaping chasm, the open that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed.”¹⁸³ In his book *Nietzsche* Heidegger writes about *khaos* that it “points in the direction of a measureless, supportless, and groundless

2006 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006). In my own translation of *vraiment* I have chosen to translate it as “really and truly” as it is, in my opinion, important to emphasize both of these meanings of *vraiment* in Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis. This choice also follows Colin Smith as he translates in *Phenomenology of Perception* “*vraiment*” few times as “really and truly” (p. 330 and p. 436). I translate “*il y a vraiment*” as “there is really and truly” instead of “there really is” as all the three translations do. I choose to do so, because placing the word “really” between “there” and “is” breaks the important ontological meaning of the “there is” (*il y a*). One could have already noticed that Kearney in his *Navigations* also kept “there is” together without breaking “there” and “is” apart from each other as he translated *il y a vraiment* as “There is truly...”.

181 Emmanuel de Saint Aubert has studied Paul Claudel’s influence to Merleau-Ponty’s thought in his book *Du lien des êtres aux éléments de l’être: Merleau-Ponty au tournant des années 1945–1951* (France: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2004) as well as in his article “La ‘co-naissance’ Merleau-Ponty et Claudel”, in *Merleau-Ponty aux frontières de l’invisible*, eds. Marie Cariou, Renaud Barbaras and Etienne Bimbenet (Milan: Associazione Culturale Mimesis, 2003).

182 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 219. The translation is slightly modified.

183 Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 85.

yawning open. (See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 116.) A discussion as to why *the fundamental experience* that this word names did not and could not become dominant lies outside the present task."¹⁸⁴ Merleau-Ponty also refers to yawning when, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, he speaks of the connection between philosophy and yawning as follows: "Philosophy does not raise questions and does not provide answers that would little by little fill the lacunae/gaps [*lacunes*]...in any case, one day [these questions and answers] end up/lead to this gap/yawning/gaping/wide opening [*béance*]." ¹⁸⁵ It could be said that these questions and answers end up into "a dehiscence of Being",¹⁸⁶ to use another important chasmological expression of Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy.¹⁸⁷ Dehiscence of Being is a chasmological expression as the word "dehiscence" originally means "gaping" or "yawning", and thus Merleau-Ponty's notion of dehiscence of Being could be said to mean, if understood in this original manner, gaping of Being or yawning of Being.

One important task in my dissertation is to try to make this fundamental experience of gaping as Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air a new dominant principle of philosophy. This means that I will take these fundamental wordings of "inspiration and expiration of Being," of "*khaos*," and of "a dehiscence of Being" as the inspiring sources of my philosophical quest. Following Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's advice, I contend that "[p]hilosophy is universal phenomenological ontology"¹⁸⁸, and that phenomenological ontology "is nothing else than the radicalization"¹⁸⁹ of a fundamental experience of Being, that is, in the case of my dissertation, fundamental experiences of inspiration and expiration of Being, dehiscence of Being and *khaos*. According to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, ontology "springs from a 'fundamental experience'"¹⁹⁰ of Being. This means that it "is nothing else than" the thematization¹⁹¹ of this fundamental experience of

184 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes Three and Four*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), p. 77.

185 The whole quotation: "Philosophy does not raise questions and does not provide answers that would little by little fill the lacunae/gaps. The questions are within our life, within our history: they are born there, they die there, if they have found a response, more often than not they are transformed there; in any case, it is a past of experience and of knowledge that one day ends up/leads to this gap/yawning/gaping/wide opening [*béance*]." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 105. The translation has been modified.

186 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *Primacy of Perception*, p. 187.

187 There is definitely an important intimate interconnection between *béance* and *dehiscence*. For example, Jacques "Lacan...uses the term 'dehiscence' in a way that makes it practically synonymous, in his discourse, with the term 'gap' [*béance*]." Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 72. Merleau-Ponty and Lacan influenced on each other's thought.

188 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1962), p. 62.

189 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

190 Ted Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1996), p. 90.

191 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology: Including Texts by Edmund Husserl*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Bettina Bergo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), p. 49.

Being. Thus, it can be said that my dissertation takes its point of departure from the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air as a fundamental experience of Being, and is nothing other than a radicalization of it in its wish “to put [it] into words”¹⁹².

The grounds for developing the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air (Yawn of Air) from Claudel’s Silence the Abyss lie especially in few crucial textual sources. These can be found in texts by Gaston Bachelard and Heidegger. Firstly, let us conceive how to initially develop the Silence of Breath dimension of the Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air principle. In *Air and Dreams*, Bachelard states that “breath...is...the premier phenomenon of silence of being,” that is, there is “the silence that breathes.”¹⁹³ This dissertation aims to clarify the nature of this “silence that breathes,” that is, to consider and think through breath as “the premier phenomenon of silence of being.” I also argue that Merleau-Ponty’s “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” is profoundly inspired by Bachelard’s ideas on breathing in *Air and Dreams*. Secondly, my interpretation of Abyss as yawning Abyss or Abyss that is equal to Yawn is especially based on what Heidegger says about the interconnection between abyss and *khaos* as yawning. In *Mindfulness*, he argues that “*χᾶος* [*khaos*], the gaping-opening, is...ab-ground [abyss]”¹⁹⁴, while in *Nietzsche* he similarly writes: “[w]e conceive of *khaos* [yawning] in most intimate connection with...the self-opening abyss”.¹⁹⁵ Merleau-Ponty also understands “a dehis-

192 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125.

193 Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay On the Imagination of Movement*, trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), p. 242. Translation has been altered. See also Gilles Deleuze who writes that there is “simply a silence with only the sound of my own breathing”. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 176. According to Kearney “the so-called voice of silence is nothing more than ‘the voice’s breath’”. Richard Kearney, *Navigations*, p. 175. Or what about Michel Foucault who writes: “silence is the immeasurable, inaudible, primal breath from which all manifest discourse issues.” Michel Foucault, “Neither One Nor the Other”, in Michel Foucault, *Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside* and Maurice Blanchot, *Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), p. 53.

194 Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 85. In this book Heidegger also writes: “ab-ground [abyss] as the chaos [*khaos*] (the gaping opening)” p. 38. Also, for example, Pierre Klossowski writes of “an abyss which in Greek is called Chaos.” Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 140.

195 Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, p. 170. There are many writers in the phenomenological tradition who speak about “yawning abyss,” that is, “abyss [that] yawns” or “yawning gap.” Almost all of the usage of this chasmological terminology is though metaphorical. See, for example, John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 89; Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 59; Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), p. 111, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 297. Also on Jacques Derrida’s notion of “*béance*” see Sean Gaston, *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* (London & New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 3-4 and p. 15.

cence of Being" as being intertwined with "the abyssal Being"¹⁹⁶. Heidegger also speaks of "ab-ground [abyss] of be-ing [Being]"¹⁹⁷. These "most intimate connection[s]" between *khaos* (yawning), abyss, Being and dehiscence will be unfolded step by step in my ontological interrogation of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Yawn.

In order to investigate the barbaric conviction we breathe air through the ontological return to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, I will provide an interpretation of this principle by unfolding it as a thematization of the fundamental experience of Being. This is the task of the Section One of my dissertation, in which I will illuminate this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air in two different but essentially interconnected ways. First, I will explicate the wording Silence of Breath through Merleau-Ponty's respiratory descriptions of falling asleep and through his thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being." In order to try to accomplish this task explicating Silence of Breath, I must build a conceptual framework to interpret Merleau-Ponty's respiratory insights within a phenomenologico-ontological context. In the course of this conceptual construction process I will clarify Merleau-Ponty's principal theses of "there is..." as expressions of the "constant thesis of my [or our] life."¹⁹⁸ These "there is..." theses express the principle or the point of departure of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. These "there is..." theses include "there is something," "there is the world," "there is the perceived world," "there is not nothing" and "there is Being." In my initial interpretation I will understand Merleau-Ponty's thesis "*there is* really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" as one of the principal "there is" theses. In order to understand the possible meaning of this respiratory thesis I need to understand the meaning of the "there is", as well as the meaning of "something," "world" and "Being" in the "there is" theses, and how they are connected and intertwined with each other. I must also interrogate the meaning of the "perceived world", so that I might understand the meaning of "some immense exterior lung" as a possibly more fundamental and primordial level of the world than perception. My basic question in this build-up process is how Merleau-Ponty understands the principle, that is, the beginning or the point of departure of philosophical thinking. After this examination of the "there is..." as the starting point of philosophy, I will turn to the other side of this respiratory and chasmological principle, that is, to the Abyss/Yawn of Air, by exploring the chasmological, chaotic or gaping "abyss of Being" or "dehiscence of Being" as the fundamental experience of Being. In my dissertation I try to provide a thematization of the fundamental experience of this gaping respiratory principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Yawn in the name of we breathe air.

196 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 177/58.

197 Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, pp. 18, 28, 31, 39, 62, 85 and 186.

198 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 64.

CHAPTER 2

The Merleau-Pontian First Principle of Philosophy: the True *Cogito*, the World Thesis and the Thesis of the Primacy of Perception

Aristotle defines philosophy in *Metaphysics* as the science of the first principles or beginnings.¹⁹⁹ Since Aristotle, philosophy has been “a search for what is first and grounds everything else, the *proton* or the *arche*.”²⁰⁰ This definition of philosophy makes one perpetually ask, for example, the following questions: What comes first? What is the beginning that makes all things possible? What are the first principles that open things for us? What are the general principles which give us the possibility to grasp particularities of the world? What is the first opening which opens everything else? What is the source or the root upon which everything else is built? Or what is the first truth that makes all the other truths possible and what grounds them as true?

In this dissertation I will argue that the new principle of philosophy is the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air in the name of we breathe air. I base my argument in the first place on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenologico-ontological theses of “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being” and there is “dehiscence of Being”. In order to explain how I could draw this respiratory and chasmological principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy to serve my dissertation, I will first investigate how Merleau-Ponty himself understands the question of the first principle or the beginning of philosophy. In the “Preface” of *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes about this beginning in the following way:

199 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982 b.

200 Gary Brent Madison, *Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty: A Search for the Limits of Consciousness* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981), p. 153.

the philosopher is a perpetual beginner. This means that he accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know. This also means that philosophy itself must not take itself as established in the truths it has managed to utter, that philosophy is an ever-renewed experiment/experience of its own beginning, that it consists entirely in describing this beginning, and finally, that radical reflection is conscious of its own dependence on an unreflective life that is its initial, constant, and final situation.²⁰¹

What is this beginning that is before everything else? In this quotation, the beginning is defined as “an unreflected life that is...[the] initial, constant, and final situation” of philosophy as “radical reflection”. During his philosophical career, Merleau-Ponty has defined the beginning in many different ways, for instance by calling the first principle or the beginning of our life, as well as philosophy, by the name “true *cogito*.”²⁰² This notion refers to René Descartes’ famous *Cogito* argument (“I think”), but Merleau-Ponty gives the *cogito* a completely new character. Descartes took *Cogito* to be the first principle, that is, the first self-evident truth of philosophy.²⁰³ He established this principle through the method of radical doubt, which led him to the conclusion that the only thing that cannot be doubted in the act of doubting is the doubter himself as a thinking and doubting being.²⁰⁴ In his principle the truth “I doubt therefore I am” is rephrased into a more general form: “I think therefore I am.”²⁰⁵ Descartes wanted to found a new philosophy that would function as a fundamental basis for all science upon this principle. When Merleau-Ponty wrote in relation to the beginning of philosophy that “the philosopher is a perpetual beginner [which] means that he accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know”, he included philosophers in this group of “men or scientists” and for this reason said that “philosophy itself must not take itself as established in the truths it has managed to utter”. Merleau-Ponty does not accept Descartes’ self-evident truth of *Cogito*. The reason for Merleau-Ponty’s refutation is that, in his view, the absolute foundation cannot be found from Descartes’ *Cogito* as “I think therefore I am” or “I doubt therefore I am” because, when one doubts or thinks the existence of something, one already understands it as *something* or one could never doubt or think it in the first place.²⁰⁶ For this reason “the true *cogito*”, according to Merleau-Ponty, is not Descartes’ *Cogito*, but the truth that precedes thinking and doubting, that is, thinking and doubting something. The true beginning is simply: “there is consciousness of something, something shows itself, there is a phenomenon”²⁰⁷ or “something appears to

201 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxviii.

202 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxvii and 310–311.

203 René Descartes, *Key Philosophical Writings*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth, 1997), p. 92.

204 Descartes calls this thinking and doubting being famously the “thinking thing.” See Descartes, *Key Philosophical Writings*, for example, pp. 159, 181 and 187.

205 René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume II*, trans. John Corringham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 417.

206 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 377.

207 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 296. All references, in the case of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, are to Donald A. Landes’ translation (2012) unless stated otherwise.

me”²⁰⁸. The “consciousness of something” that Merleau-Ponty speaks of here is not athetic, predicative or reflective consciousness of something, however, but rather a “non-thetic”²⁰⁹, “pre-predicative”²¹⁰ and “pre-reflective”²¹¹ consciousness of something. Thinking and doubting are dimensions of consciousness that are thetic, predicative and reflective. The beginning or principle as “there is consciousness of something” or “there is a phenomenon” is what Merleau-Ponty earlier called in the above quotation “an unreflective life that is [philosophy’s] initial, constant, and final situation.” The philosopher as a perpetual beginner must always begin from this first principle: “there is consciousness of something”, “there is something” or “something shows itself”.

This “true *cogito*” as the beginning is not on the level of choices, decisions and conscious meaning-giving acts, but beneath them. It is the level of consciousness that is more primordial than the thetic consciousness as a propositional and cognitive consciousness. In my opinion, the best formulation of Merleau-Ponty’s absolutely certain first principle of life and philosophy is the phrasing: “there is always something facing/confronting [me or us]”²¹². What does this mean? Does this phrasing mean that Merleau-Ponty is saying that all phenomena stand before us, confronting us? That is a possible way to understand this phrasing of his first principle of philosophy. If somebody would make this kind of interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s phrasing, a counterargument could be that not all phenomena stand in front of us (*Gegen-stand*). That which confronts us can be understood in the sense of the German term *Gegen-stand*, which means “object”.²¹³ The literal meaning of this German word is “standing against”. Does Merleau-Ponty say with this phrase “there is always something facing/confronting [us]” that all phenomena always stand against us as objects? If the phrasing would be understood in that kind of way, then the counterargument would run that not all phenomena stand against us as objects as, for example, in an elemental context, the atmospheric element of air or water and, in a religious context, God, appear to us in a very different ways than objects appear to us. However, if one carefully reads this thesis “there is always something facing/confronting [us]”, then an interpretation saying that all phenomena always stand against us as objects (*Gegen-stand*) becomes highly unlikely. The reason for this is that the thesis “there is always something facing/confronting [us]” does not mean that all phenomena stand in front us. The wordings “always something” and “all phenomena” are not at all equal. Additionally, it is not at all sure that Merleau-Ponty means that this thesis needs to be taken in the *Gegen-stand* sense as an Object or a Thing standing in front of us as his notion “something (*quelque chose*)” is not automatically always a thing or

When I refer to Smith’s translation, I will always refer to it as follows: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992).

208 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 400.

209 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 50.

210 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxix.

211 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 311.

212 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 328.

213 Alphonso Lingis, “Imperatives”, in *Merleau-Ponty Vivant*, ed. M. C. Dillon (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 106.

an object. It may be a thing or an object, but it does not have to be. In reference to this, I must now say that, even in the case of something like the elements surrounding us, we are also at the same time facing or confronting them while they surround us. They can only surround us if they are also in front us. For example, while swimming one is surrounded by the element of water and at the same time one is face to face with the water or confronting it in a different sense than what is meant by the *Gegen-stand*.

Merleau-Ponty's *there is thesis* "there is always something" or "there is consciousness of something" can also be phrased as follows: "there is something and not nothing,"²¹⁴ that is, there is always something and never nothing. We are always confronted, faced and surrounded by something, and we have no choice at all in the matter. We can never face nothing. It is impossible. There is always something. This is one of the ways, according to Merleau-Ponty, to express the most general truth that grounds all the other truths, such as scientific truth. This most general truth in these forms of the *there is thesis* is what makes doubt, affirmation and judgment possible. Acts of doubt, affirmation and judgment are dimensions of thetic (predicative and reflective) consciousness. We always doubt, affirm or judge *something*. Since this first principle, as the "true *cogito*" (pre-predicative and pre-reflective consciousness of something), is the condition of the possibility of any kind of doubt, affirmation and judgment, Merleau-Ponty also calls it by the name "originary opinion"²¹⁵ and "fundamental faith."²¹⁶ He also calls this originary opinion "a fundamental and original opinion" and "primordial opinion."²¹⁷ He also calls fundamental faith "a primordial faith."²¹⁸ This originary, fundamental or primordial opinion is Merleau-Ponty's translation of Husserl's notion of *Urdoxa*. Similarly, the fundamental or primordial faith is his translation of Husserl's notion of *Urglaube*. Merleau-Ponty describes this "originary opinion" in the following way in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

originary opinion...is what makes something in general appear suddenly in front of us, to which thetic consciousness [*pensée thetique*] -- either doubt or demonstration -- can subsequently be related in order to affirm or deny it. There is sense, something and not nothing [*Il y a du sens, quelque chose et non pas rien*].²¹⁹

From this quotation it can be seen that, according to Merleau-Ponty, the "originary opinion" that "makes something appear" to us is synonymous with the "true *cogito*" as pre-predicative consciousness of something appearing to us,

214 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 330 and also p. 397. Or as Merleau-Ponty says in *The Visible and the Invisible*: "what is not nothing is *something*". See *The Visible and Invisible*, p. 109n*.

215 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. 418. See also p. 343 in Colin Smith's translation of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992).

216 In the Chapter One I already spoke of Merleau-Ponty's "fundamental faith" in relation to the "perceptual faith" and "barbaric conviction".

217 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 359.

218 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 105, *Signs*, p. 163 and *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), pp. 359-60 and 483.

219 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 417-418 and *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 397. The translation has been altered.

which the thetic consciousness can then judge in an either affirmative, doubting or refuting manner. This “primordial” or “originary opinion” is an opinion which precedes all other opinions, such as personal and public opinions. Another name of the “true *cogito*” was also, according to Merleau-Ponty, fundamental, or primordial, faith (*Urglaube*), which he defines in *The Visible and the Invisible* as follows: “a fundamental faith: there is something.”²²⁰ We always have a fundamental faith that there is something. This fundamental faith has nothing to do with a certain kind of religious faith or a faith of any other kind, like a faith in values, beliefs or people. Merleau-Ponty says this fundamental faith “is not faith in the sense of decision but in the sense of what is before any position.”²²¹ The thetic consciousness can decide to affirm, doubt, demonstrate or refute something, and in the context of religious faith one can lose one’s faith and decide not to be part of a certain religious faith any more. This is not the case with regards to fundamental faith. As originary opinion precedes all opinions in the traditional sense of the word, so fundamental faith precedes faith in the traditional sense. One cannot live without fundamental faith as one always already believes that there is something. It can be said that this *Urglaube* is the primordial faith or trust in the presence of something and is not an explicit cognition or a propositional truth at all. This fundamental faith is thus “a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher,”²²² to the theist and the atheist, to the moralist and the amoralist. In Merleau-Ponty’s work, these expressions of “fundamental,” or “primordial faith” (*Urglaube*) and “originary opinion” (*Urdoxa*) are synonyms. The structure of both of these expressions, *fundamental faith: there is something* and the *originary opinion: there is something* is the same, as one of Merleau-Ponty’s above-mentioned quotations stated. Here we can see that the *there is* thesis, as “there is something” or “there is consciousness of something” is not, in the first place, a predicative or reflective statement of thetic consciousness, but rather a pre-predicative and pre-reflective statement of the true *cogito* as the fundamental faith or the originary opinion.

But what does Merleau-Ponty mean by “something” of this thesis that “there is something” or “there is consciousness of something”? The “something” is quite a complex term, and it is used constantly in phenomenological philosophy. At the beginning of *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes about “something” as follows: “all consciousness is consciousness of something. This something is not necessarily identifiable object.”²²³ He also says: “The perceptual ‘something’ is always in the middle [*milieu*] of something else, it always forms part of a ‘field’.”²²⁴ “Something” refers here to anything that *is*, so it does not need to be any “identifiable object” to be understood as something. It can be an identifiable object, but it does not have to be. Things, objects, thoughts, colours, qualities, human beings, animals, happenings, places, dreams, illusions, hallucinations, beliefs, emotions, distances, proximities, levels and dimensions

220 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 105 and *Primacy of Perception*, p. 82.

221 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 3n1.

222 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 3.

223 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. 5.

224 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 4.

and so on are all something. Merleau-Ponty calls “somethings” which are for sure not identifiable objects or things of any sort “not nothing.”²²⁵ This “not nothing” is Merleau-Ponty’s special term. I already mentioned it a little bit earlier in this chapter when I quoted Merleau-Ponty’s words (as one of the *there is* theses) from *Phenomenology of Perception* that stated, “there is something and not nothing.” That which he calls “not nothing” are not things of any sort, but although they are not things or any kind of “identifiable objects”, they are something. As he writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “What is not nothing is *something*”.²²⁶ According to Merleau-Ponty’s book *Signs*, “the reflections, shadows, levels, and horizons between things...are not things and [yet they] are not nothing”.²²⁷ If they would be really and truly nothing we would have no way of grasping speaking of them. But even if we do not perceive them as visible things that we can clearly see and hold in our hands, we can still understand and perceive in some hidden and latent manner that there is something that is not nothing. We experience something, even if it is difficult to understand exactly what it is that we are experiencing. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, these reflections, shadows, levels and horizons between things are something.

An important feature of any something (things, objects, shadows, horizons, etc.) is that it is “always in the middle of something else.” It can never appear or exist to us without a field. Every something belongs to a field or, put a slightly differently way: every something has always a context which surrounds it. This means, for example, that every identifiable object belongs to something else, which is its field. At the same time this field is also something, as although a field is not a thing, at the same time it is not nothing either and, as *not nothing*, it is something. If the field would be nothing we could not experience or speak of it at all. It would be totally ungraspable. Let us speak, for example, of a dog as something. This dog is always somewhere as it always belongs to some field. Let us say that this dog is in a park which is its field at that moment. This park as a field is also something in the middle of something else, for example, in the middle of a city. This city is the field of the park as well as the field of the dog. Then again, this city belongs to some bigger whole which surrounds it and so on. Each field is itself part of some larger field. Finally, for Merleau-Ponty, there is the field that includes all the other fields, that is, what he calls “the field of all fields.”²²⁸ This “field of all fields” is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the world. As the field of all fields, the world is neither a thing nor “a collection of objects”²²⁹ as it surrounds all things and every collection of objects. “The world [as the field of all fields] is an open and indefinite unity in which [we are] situated.”²³⁰ As the world is not a thing, and certainly *not nothing*, it makes one ponder if it is then something? If one takes Merleau-Ponty’s words seriously when he states

225 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), pp. 330 and 397, *Signs*, pp. 14 and 160 and *The Invisible and the Invisible*, pp. 9*, 37, 84, 106-7, 109* and 127.

226 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 109*.

227 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 160.

228 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 366. See also p. 345 where Merleau-Ponty defines similarly the world as the “horizon of all horizons”

229 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 359.

230 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 317-8.

that “what is not nothing is *something*,” then the world would be something. This is actually what Merleau-Ponty, in my interpretation, says in his Heidegger lectures in 1959 when he states that Being “is that which is *not nothing*; it is...the open ‘*etwas*’ [‘something’].”²³¹ In Merleau-Ponty’s late phenomenological ontology, the world and Being are often interchangeable.²³² So if Being is “not nothing” and the “open something”, and the world is interchangeable with Being, then it would also make sense to say that the world is also not nothing and open something. This would mean that the world, as the open and indefinite field of all fields, is that which is *not nothing* and, as not nothing, it is the open something. As the world is an open world it can include all things, horizons and fields within it. It is also open in the sense that we are never excluded from it. It is always already open to us. We are always excluded and can be excluded from certain perspectives of things, from certain things and certain horizons and dimensions of the world. I am always excluded from seeing the things with other person’s eyes. When a certain perspective to the thing opens, other perspectives are excluded from us. When certain things are open to us other things are not available to us, so they are excluded from our perceptual experience at that moment. This is similarly true for various horizons and dimensions of the world, but we are never excluded from the world as the field of all fields which includes everything. It is always open to us.²³³

As there is never any something without the field within which it appears, and as the world is the field of all fields, it means that something and the world are essentially intertwined. Also, as the world as *not nothing* is something, I must ask if this would somehow change the way one could understand Merleau-Ponty’s formulations of the *there is* thesis as the first principle “there is consciousness of something” and “there is always something facing/confronting [me or us]”? Would this mean that I could then also say that the first principle of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is that *there is consciousness of the world* and that *there is always the world facing/confronting me or us*?

If Merleau-Ponty’s “true *cogito*” as the self-evident truth is “there is consciousness of something” or “there is always something facing/confronting [me or us]” that appears in the middle of something else as a part of a field, and as the world is the field of all fields, then would not the world also be the self-evident truth, as it is always there simultaneously with the appearance of something, and as it is itself also something which enables the appearance of something else. This is actually what Merleau-Ponty says in the following *there is* wording from *Phenomenology of Perception*, which states: “There is the absolute certainty of the world in general, but not of any one thing in particular.”²³⁴ But how does this go together with “there is always something facing/confronting [me or us]” as the principle of philosophy if Merleau-Ponty now says that there is no absolute certainty of “any one thing in particular”? Did the earlier princi-

231 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 102.

232 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 119, 165, 170, 219 and 254.

233 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 345.

234 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 297.

ple not state the opposite? Well, it depends on the relation between the notions of “something” and “any one thing in particular”. If they are synonymous in their meaning then that is the case indeed. But it is important to understand that this is not the case. These two notions are not at all synonymous. “Any one thing in particular” is indeed something, but as I pointed out earlier, according to Merleau-Ponty, something is not necessarily an “identifiable object” or thing: it can also be, for example, an open and indefinite field, and a field is not a thing at all.

There is also never any absolute certainty of any thing in particular, as each and every thing and object can at first glance appear to be something other than what it is, or it might even turn out to be an illusion, a dream, a shadow or a hallucination²³⁵ depending on the lighting²³⁶, perspective²³⁷, background²³⁸, horizon²³⁹, lived body²⁴⁰, one’s mental state²⁴¹ etc. For example, lighting affects the colours of things, as well as which things can generally be perceived as separate things. Merleau-Ponty says that in the absence of light, during a pitch dark night, the normal experience of any thing in particular is abolished. Also, for Merleau-Ponty, night itself is never either an identifiable or non-identifiable object or thing, as he writes: “The night is not an object in front of me; rather, it envelops me, it penetrates me through all of my senses, it suffocates my memories, and it all but effaces my personal identity.”²⁴² In general I can say that the meaning of any thing depends on what kind of field, horizon or atmosphere surrounds it, and as the field changes the meaning of the thing changes too. The particularity of the thing is thus completely dependent of the field within which the certain thing appears. Things do not have any independence from their fields or horizons.²⁴³ For example, a thing like a book appears very differently within the elemental horizons of water, air and fire, and it is only the horizon of air that safeguards books as both fire and water destroy them, each in their own way and at their own speed. All of this means that Merleau-Ponty can say that we are absolutely certain that there is always something in general and that there is always the world in general, but we are never absolutely certain about any thing in particular.

So the true *cogito*, there is pre-predicative consciousness of something, or fundamental faith: there is something, belongs essentially together with the world. Merleau-Ponty calls this absolute certainty of the world in general with

235 Merleau-Ponty on hallucination, see *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 349–360.

236 Merleau-Ponty on lighting, see, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 318–326.

237 Merleau-Ponty on perspective, see, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 69–74.

238 Merleau-Ponty on background, see, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 4, 13–14, 24–26 and 103–105.

239 Merleau-Ponty on horizon, see, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 326 and 345–349.

240 Merleau-Ponty on lived body, see, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 92–95.

241 Merleau-Ponty on mental state, see, for example, see *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 299–300.

242 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 296.

243 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 4, 13–14, 23–26, 69–71, 103–105 and 293–294.

Husserl's notion of *Weltthesis* "the world thesis": "there is the world". The *Weltthesis* is the "general thesis of the existence of the world."²⁴⁴ The "world thesis" is synonymous with what Husserl calls the "General Thesis." The "world thesis" or the "General Thesis" means that "[t]he world is *always there* as reality".²⁴⁵ We cannot escape from the world. Wherever we go and whatever we do, it all takes place in the world and in correlation with the world. The world thesis as the general thesis is truly "general" as, whatever the case, the world is always already there to be found as the ultimate background of everything. From practical to theoretical, from personal to social, from perceptual to linguistic, everything takes place, without any exception, within the world and in relation to the world. Every scientific, religious, artistic, educational or everyday project is a certain kind of project of the world, happening in this or that world. But even if the world is divided into different kinds of worlds, for example into the "cultural world," "social world," "visual world," "auditory world" and "natural world", and into more subdivisions of these, for instance as various cultural and social worlds, still all of these worlds have generalities that make us understand them all as worlds. According to Sebastian Luft, Husserl's General Thesis can be summarized as follows: "The 'content' of this General Thesis is that '*the world is*'... All attitudes implicitly and tacitly bear the belief that the world they are in, or dealing with in some way or the other, exists. They might believe in it in different ways, as this or that world, but they always believe *that it exists*."²⁴⁶ That the world *is* ("the being of the world") is the same thing as saying, "there is the world" (the *Weltthesis*), and this being of the world is, according to Eugen Fink, "the greatest mystery of all".²⁴⁷ What Fink says about the world is highly important and worth repeating: "being of the world" is the "greatest mystery of all". Merleau-Ponty takes this idea extremely seriously and thus follows Fink as he also understands the world as "mysterious", so much so that, in the "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception*, he actually says that the most fundamental task of philosophy as phenomenology is "to reveal [this] mystery of the world".²⁴⁸ Why would Merleau-Ponty say this? The reason is that the mystery of the world, as "the mystery of a *Weltthesis* [world thesis]"²⁴⁹ or General Thesis, is one of the ways of expressing the beginning or principle of philosophy. It is important to remember that the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, always begins from the beginning and if the mystery of the world that is always there is the beginning, then the perpetual beginner's most fundamental task is "to reveal the mystery of the world". It is also important to

244 Jugoslav Vlaisavljević, "The Interrogation of Perceptive Faith," in *Man within His Life-World: Contributions to Phenomenology by Scholars from East-Central Europe*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 65 and Sebastian Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld*, p. 48.

245 Edmund Husserl quoted by Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld*, p. 47. My emphasis.

246 Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld*, p. 47.

247 Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings*, ed. and trans. R.O. Elveton (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 109.

248 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxxv.

249 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 163.

remember that the beginning, as unreflected life, is our initial, constant and final situation. This means that the world, as the beginning and as our constant situation, always remains the fundamental theme of the perpetual beginner. Merleau-Ponty describes the world as follows: "The world is not what I think, but what I live. I am open to the world, I communicate indubitably with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. 'There is a world,' or rather 'there is the world'; I can never completely account for this *constant thesis of my life*."²⁵⁰ This "constant thesis of my life" is the mystery of the world thesis. Here again, with this "constant thesis of my life", Merleau-Ponty states the beginning of philosophy with the *there is* thesis, as he also did in the case of true *cogito* as *there is* consciousness of something or, more simply, just *there is* something. It is also important to notice that, as Merleau-Ponty calls the beginning the "constant...situation" of life, he also calls the *Weltthesis* the "constant thesis of my life".

It is also important to notice that, in this previous quotation, Merleau-Ponty uses two slightly different formulations of the *Weltthesis* as he writes: "'There is a world,' or rather 'there is the world'". What is the difference between the two formulations of "there is a world" and "there is the world" and why is it that Merleau-Ponty prefers the formulation "there is the world" as a more suitable expression of the mystery of *Weltthesis* as the "constant thesis of my life"? First of all, it can be said that the difference between "a world" and "the world" is the difference between a non-specific and a specific world. If this is the case, then one can ask which one of these notions refers to a non-specific world and which one to a specific world. At first glance one could think that "the world" refers to a specific world which has been already introduced, and "a world" refers to a non-specific world which has only been mentioned now for the first time without any further explications. The relation between Merleau-Ponty's notions of "a world" and "the world" could be interpreted in this manner, but I suggest that the difference between "a specific" and "a non-specific", in reference to this matter, is exactly the opposite, that is, "a world" refers to "a specific world" and "the world" refers to "a non-specific" world. "A world" refers to "this or that world"²⁵¹ so it allows a plurality of particular worlds. "The world" does not refer to this plurality of particularity as it refers to a generalized world instead of various particularized worlds. So I suggest that "a world", as a particular world, is a specific world and "the world", as the general world, is a non-specific world. Even if Merleau-Ponty himself prefers the formulation of "there is the world" instead of "there is a world", it is important to understand that, in the French philosophical scene during the time of the publishing of *Phenomenology of Perception*, the formulation of "there is a

250 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 64. My emphasis. I have chosen to use here *The Merleau-Ponty Reader's* translation of the "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception* instead of the translation either of Landes or Smith as, in my view, it is way better in this case than either of the two other translations. See Landes, p. lxxxi and Smith, p. xvii. The original French says: " « Il y a un monde », ou plutôt « il y a le monde », de cette thèse constante de ma vie je ne puis jamais rendre entièrement raison." Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. xii.

251 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 160.

world” was much more common as Jean-Paul Sartre’s famous book *Being and Nothingness* had made the “there is a world” phrasing well known only a few years earlier. In this book, Sartre never uses the phrasing of “there is the world,” but he says many times “there is a world [*il y a un monde*]”.²⁵² One of the important philosophical “problems” that Sartre gives himself in this book is “to explain how *there is a world*”.²⁵³ Merleau-Ponty also sees this philosophical task as fundamentally important, but in his view the question can be radicalized to concern, in the first place, *the world* in the most general manner. The plurality of particular worlds have their “origin” in something more general that Merleau-Ponty calls “*the world in general*”.²⁵⁴ In reference to this “the world in general”, he writes: “this could not be a *particular world*, a *particular* spectacle, since we have placed ourselves at the origin of everything.”²⁵⁵ It seems that Merleau-Ponty understands this notion of “the world in general” as the “origin of everything.” In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty explicitly speaks three times of “the world in general”. I have referred to two of them now in relation to “a *particular world*.” Earlier in this chapter I quoted the following words: “There is the absolute certainty of the world in general, but not of any one thing in particular.” In the third instance Merleau-Ponty writes: “one can conceive of a subject without an auditory [or visual] field, but not of a subject without a world. Just as the absence of sound for the hearing subject does not break the communication with the sonorous world, so too the absence of the visual or auditory world for the subject who is blind or deaf from birth does not break the communication with the world in general”.²⁵⁶ In this last quotation we can see that Merleau-Ponty once more understands “the world in general” as something deeper than the particular worlds of “the visual or auditory world” as we may conceive of a subject without either a visual or an auditory world, but not “without a world.” As a counterargument one could easily say that, in connection to these particular worlds, or fields, of vision and hearing, Merleau-Ponty is speaking of “*a world*” rather than “*the world in general*”. This is true if one looks only at the first sentence of this quotation, but that kind of counterargument forgets that in this citation Merleau-Ponty ultimately speaks of the subject’s “communication with the world in general”. Taking both of these points seriously would raise the question of what is, in this quotation, the relation between “a world” and “the world in general”. First of all, we cannot conceive of a subject without a world. Even if the visual and auditory worlds are themselves particular worlds, a subject who is cut off from either of these worlds, or even from both of these worlds, is not cut off from the various other kinds of particular worlds. If the plurality of particular worlds does not include the vis-

252 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943), pp. 92, 237, 254, 296, 310, 327, 346, 357, 432 and 505. See also the English translation, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), pp. 189, 345, 371, 406, 419, 509, 577 and 593.

253 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 189. My emphasis.

254 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 265. My emphasis.

255 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 264.

256 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 343.

ual and auditory worlds, the subject still enjoys a vast amount of possible worlds in which the subject may exist. These could include, for example, the plurality of carnal, tangible, olfactory, linguistic²⁵⁷, emotional, personal, social, cultural, sexual, kinetic, historical, professional and religious worlds. The contingent mixture of these various worlds is a particular world of a subject. In that sense “there is a world”. But if one seriously considers Sartre’s words “[t]he problem is...to explain how there is a world” from the Merleau-Pontian perspective, one needs to try to place oneself “at the origin of everything”, which is the “communication with the world in general.” So each particular world of each and every subject as *there is a world* is rooted in the subject’s communication with the world in general as *there is the world*. Let us remember that it has already been said that Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl’s idea of the General Thesis as the world thesis, and the content of this General Thesis is not that “a world is,” but more generally that “the world is”.

“There is the world” as the General Thesis, or the *Weltthesis*, is the “constant thesis of my life,” the constant first principle or beginning of my life. My whole existence is based on this constant thesis: “there is the world.” But this world thesis is “not what I think, but what I live.” This is an extremely important point. So the world thesis, as the constant thesis, is not the thesis of thinking or of doubting, but of living. The world thesis is neither a predicative nor a reflective, but a “pre-predicative”²⁵⁸ and pre-reflective thesis which makes all predicative and reflective theses possible. Thus, it is not based on any act of speech, proclamation or intellect. As such the *Weltthesis* is, according to Merleau-Ponty, “prior to all [the other] theses.”²⁵⁹ Here it is important to return to what I said earlier in the Chapter One of my dissertation about different forms of convictions. There are at least the convictions of one’s upbringing and judgments, as well as what Merleau-Ponty called the barbaric conviction. The world thesis or the General Thesis is not a conviction based on upbringing or intellectual judgment, but is a barbaric conviction. In Chapter One I already quoted Merleau-Ponty as saying that the barbaric conviction is “the conviction that...there is *the world*.” I also said earlier that the “barbaric conviction” is the condition of possibility and the foundation of all civilized convictions, that is, both the convictions of upbringing and judgment.

As the world is the field of all fields, or the horizon of all horizons, we face the world in a very different manner than we confront an object which we find in front of us as a particular and limited shape, form, size, height, breadth, depth, contour, etc. The world is not a thing or an object in front of us, but the field of all fields, and Merleau-Ponty emphasizes this essential truth by saying in *Eye and Spirit* that “the world is around me, not in front of me.”²⁶⁰ We cannot

257 Even if a subject is both deaf and blind he or she can live enthusiastically in the linguistic world. Helen Keller is a great example of a such a person.

258 See the notion of “pre-predicative” in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxix, lxxxii, 74, 131, 336 and 359.

259 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 163.

260 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 367.

escape the world that is around us; “we are [always] *condemned to*”²⁶¹ *the world*. This means that we are *always* communicating with “the world in general” and open to something in general, that is, we are in relation to something and the world in general as the field of all fields. As such “the [lived] relation to the world [the world thesis: there is the world]...tirelessly [and ceaselessly] pronounces itself within us [*en nous*].”²⁶²

The World Thesis as the Thesis of the Primacy of Perception: Perception as the Fundamental Experience of Being-in-the-World

As I said previously, for Merleau-Ponty, the mystery of the *Weltthesis* as “there is the world” means that “the world is not what I think, but what I live. I am open to the world, I communicate indubitably with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.” This mystery of the world thesis is the beginning of philosophy from which the philosopher, as the perpetual beginner, begins. But what does Merleau-Ponty mean with these words? What does it mean that “I am open to the world”? What about the meaning of the words: “I communicate indubitably with” the world? First of all, these words must be understood, as Merleau-Ponty states, in the context of the lived world. Earlier this lived world was understood as unreflected life. At the most primordial level, the lived as unreflected life, that is, the life which is not reflected or thought, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the lived perception of the world. The lived world is the perceptual world and this openness, indubitable communication and relation to and with the world, is perceptual in its nature, which means that, according to Merleau-Ponty, at the most primordial level, this openness is perceptual openness, this communication is perceptual communication and this relationality is perceptual relationality. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy is a constant return to this primordial level of our relation to the world as the perceptual relation to the world, as “the perceptual openness to the world.”²⁶³ Philosophy as this kind of return always “recommence[s] perception”²⁶⁴ as the original source and beginning of all philosophical interrogation. This means that the world thesis “there is the world”, as the constant pre-predicative thesis of our life, according to Merleau-Ponty, speaks on a fundamental and primordial level before anything else about perception as perceptual openness to the world. In the terms of the *Weltthesis*, for example, this can be stated as follows: “there is...the perceived world”.²⁶⁵

Earlier I found out that the barbaric conviction, or the fundamental faith that *there is something*, belongs essentially together with the *Weltthesis*: there is the world. So if the most primordial level of our relation to the world, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the perceptual relation to the world, does this not mean

261 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. xix.

262 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. lxxxii.

263 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 212 and 193. See similarly *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 317.

264 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 175.

265 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 171.

that the fundamental faith, or the barbaric conviction, should also be understood in perceptual terms? I believe that the answer is yes because in both *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty calls this fundamental faith “perceptual faith.”²⁶⁶ In *The Visible and the Invisible* the barbaric conviction is also called the “conviction of the perceptual faith.”²⁶⁷ Perception as the perceptual openness to the world is essentially the fundamental faith: there is something. This fundamental faith, or the originary opinion, equals perception, so Merleau-Ponty can say equally at the fundamental, or primordial, level that “the originary opinion...is what makes something in general appear” and that “the perception...makes something appear.”²⁶⁸ One of the ways that Merleau-Ponty expressed the “true *cogito*” was that “something appears to me”. All of these three ways to express that “something appears” belong essentially together as perception is the pre-predicative and pre-reflective originary opinion, the fundamental faith and the true *cogito*. At this same primordial level “the true *cogito*” was understood as “there is consciousness of something”, and within Merleau-Ponty’s perceptual context and perceptual terminology this phrasing could be understood as follows: there is “perceptual consciousness”²⁶⁹ of something. Perception is always perceptual consciousness of something. For Merleau-Ponty, at the primordial level of perception, the “true *cogito*”, originary opinion, barbaric conviction and fundamental faith as perceptual faith are all the same. Perception as the originary opinion, or the fundamental faith, makes something appear. The interconnectedness of the fundamental faith as the perceptual faith (perception), the barbaric conviction as the “conviction of the perceptual faith”, the appearance of something, and the appearance of the world are clear to Merleau-Ponty, as seen in his words from *The Visible and the Invisible* that I have already quoted: “the perceptual faith: the [barbaric] conviction that there is something, that there is the world”.²⁷⁰

Now, if the primordial level of the world thesis is essentially perceptual, what does this mean according to Merleau-Ponty? It means that there is a primacy of perception in relation to all the other relations to the world. Perception is the primary relation to the world. All other relations to the world come afterwards, and according to Merleau-Ponty this means that all these other relations to the world are grounded upon this perceptual relation to the world, that

266 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 274 and *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 3-104.

267 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30.

268 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 418 and 483.

269 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 315, 360, 364, 367, 407 and 507n53 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, pp. 5, 13, 38, 95 and 454n54. See also Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, p. 105; Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, pp. xiii, 49, 64, 145-146, 153, 167-168, and 222-224 and James Phillips, “From the Unseen to the Invisible: Merleau-Ponty’s Sorbonne Lectures as Preparation for his Later Thought”, in *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic life and the World*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 71, 78-80 and 82.

270 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30. This means that the “true *cogito*” as “something appears to me” which was earlier stated as the first principle of our existence and of philosophy, is actually the perceptual faith.

is, they are founded upon perception. The world thesis is interpreted then as the “thesis of the primacy of perception”²⁷¹ which announces itself as follows: “The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence.”²⁷² This formulation of the world thesis as the “thesis of the primacy of perception” is from his essay *The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences* (*Le primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques*, originally published in 1947). Rendered in the strict *Weltthesis* phrasing of “there is the world”, it would state that *there is the perceived world* that is the always-presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. The world thesis as “there is the perceived world” is the beginning or principle of everything. All other relations to the world are founded upon this perceptual relation to the world. In the “Preface” section of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty states this “thesis of the primacy of perception” as follows: “Perception is not a science of the world, nor even an act or a deliberate taking up of a stand; it is the background against which all acts stand out and is thus presupposed by them.”²⁷³ In both of these formulations of the thesis of the primacy of perception, Merleau-Ponty uses the wording “presupposed”, which is a key term in defining this *primacy* or *priority* of perception. One might wonder if Merleau-Ponty is speaking about the same matter in these two sentences as in the first one he speaks of “the perceived world” and in the second one of “perception.” Are they not two different matters, even if they are connected? This is not the case as, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is impossible to separate perception and the perceived. They have the “same existential modality” because to perceive is always to perceive something, and in the case of perception that something is always a perceived something.²⁷⁴ This is the necessary intentional structure of perception as perceptual consciousness. This necessary intentional structure is that perceptual consciousness is always directed towards something as the perceived something. And to speak of the perceived something or the perceived world always requires the one who perceives. This means that these two statements of Merleau-Ponty speak of the same matter, that is, of the primacy of perception.

So what does it mean that the perceptual openness to the world, as the perceived world or the perceptual relation to the world, is the always-presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence, and that it is the background from which acts stand out and is presupposed by them? It means that there would not be any forms of rationality, values or existence without our perceptual relation to the world. Without our primordial “perceptual experience”²⁷⁵ of the world, there would not be any kind of scientific knowledge or philosophy as forms of rationality, and neither would there be

271 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 27. See also M.C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 2nd edn. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. 51.

272 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 13.

273 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxiv.

274 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 393.

275 See, for example, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 4, 11, 48, 72-4, 191-2 and 211.

any kind of development of various moral codes as value-structures nor any kind of existence, including the existence of things, thoughts, space and time. All of these matters become possible against the background of the perceived world.

It is this experience of the perceptual relation to the world that gives us our first chance to understand what is rationality, what is value and what is existence. Perception as perceptual experience, according to Merleau-Ponty, is always already before everything else our first and most "fundamental experience"²⁷⁶ of rationality, value and existence. Ultimately, perception as the primacy of perception is our most fundamental experience of the world as there is the perceived world. Rationality, value and existence are dimensions of the perceptual world. If one emphasizes the phenomenon of rationality it can be said that it is grounded in the perceptual experience of the world. "All forms of knowledge," says Merleau-Ponty, "are supported by a 'ground' of postulations, and ultimately upon our communication with the [perceptual] world as the first establishing of rationality."²⁷⁷ What does this mean? It means that all forms of rationality, from reasoning to understanding, from calculation to argumentation and from knowledge to interpretation ultimately receive their meaning and grounding from our perceptual relation to the world. Merleau-Ponty writes how knowledge, as one of the dimensions of rationality, is founded upon the perceptual world as follows: there is the perceptual "world prior to knowledge, this world of which knowledge always *speaks*, and this world with regard to which every scientific determination is abstract, signitive, and dependent, just like geography with regard to the landscape where we first learned what a forest, a meadow, or a river is."²⁷⁸

This primacy or priority of perception or the perceptual world as the beginning also means that all corrections in the process of knowing (the gathering of knowledge, for example the development of scientific knowledge) and reasoning take place and are carried out in reference to the perceived world. As this is the case, Merleau-Ponty calls the perceived world as our shared common ground "the homeland of all rationality."²⁷⁹ We share together the same common world as perceiving beings.²⁸⁰ The perceptual experience of this shared world as the pre-predicative thesis of the primacy of perception is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the fundamental experience of human existence as it enables all the other levels of our existence, from science to art and from morality to politics. Thus the thesis of the primacy of perception "does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth."²⁸¹ The earth, or the ground, that he is speaking about is the perceptual relation to the world as the fundamental experience of human existence.

276 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 34.

277 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxv.

278 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxii.

279 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 454.

280 Merleau-Ponty states this as follows: we "are gathered together in a single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 369.

281 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 13.

In order to understand what Merleau-Ponty means by perception as the perceptual openness to the world, it is extremely important to interrogate his notion of the body and how perception and the body are essentially interconnected. The body that he speaks of is the lived body, that is, the body as we live and experience it. It is the body as it appears to us in our lived experience. This essential interconnectedness of perception and the lived body means that the lived body is primordially a perceiving body, and as perception is perceptual openness, or relation, to the world as well as perceptual communication with the world it also means that the body is fundamentally embodied openness, or relation, to the world and embodied communication with the world. This living and perceiving body is my fundamental way of existing. It is my primordial way of being-in-the-world as it gives me "access to the world."²⁸² Without the body there would not be any world for any of us.²⁸³ "The body," according to Merleau-Ponty, "is our general means of having a world."²⁸⁴ The perceiving body is thus "the mediator of a world."²⁸⁵

It is very important in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the intertwining of perception and the body that neither of them is understood in natural scientific terms, but phenomenologically, that is, experientially²⁸⁶ in terms of the lived experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body as the experiential openness to the world is, in the first place, perceptual body, so this openness, or opening, to the world is primordially perceptual. Body's primary way of being is, thus, perceptual openness to the world. For example, the eyes are open to the world. We can close them, but when we open them their way of being is that they are not only open: they are open to the world and their openness gives us access to the world. Now, if the lived body is our openness to the world which gives us access to the world, it means that the body cannot be, in the first place, an object, that is, a body-object. As the general means of having a world, or as the mediator of the world, the lived body, rather than being an object, is a subject, that is, a body-subject.²⁸⁷ This means, according to Merleau-Ponty, that I do not have a body, even if we are in our every language very much used to speaking of the body in such a manner. Instead of this kind of way of speaking, one should say that "I am my body"²⁸⁸ or "I am a body."²⁸⁹ These kind of ways of

282 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 225.

283 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 104.

284 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 147.

285 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 146.

286 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 260.

287 David Michael Levin, "Visions of Narcissism: Intersubjective and the Reversals of Reflection", in *Merleau-Ponty Vivant*, ed. M. C. Dillon (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 75; Stephen Priest, *Merleau-Ponty* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 56, 65, 72-77 and 89-94 and Monika M. Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. xvii, 61, 74, 79, 85, 91-92 and 97-98.

288 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 151 and 205. This formulation of "I am my body" Merleau-Ponty is taken from Gabriel Marcel who writes: "I do not make use of my body, I am my body," Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Rockcliff, 1952), 332-333. Almost ten years before the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty wrote an review of Marcel's book *Being and Having* in which he acknowledged his debt to Marcel for this formulation "I am

expressing the relationship between the selfhood, or subjectivity, and the body already mean that, in the first place, the lived body cannot be an object, even if we are very much used to objectifying the body as an object. For example, the natural scientific concept of the body as the anatomical and physiological body is not the lived body as it appears to us in our own experience, and as it appears to us while we relate perpetually with the world, but an objectified body, that is, a body-object. Nobody can experience the body as the natural sciences explain it. According to Merleau-Ponty, this means that the objective body of the sciences, for example the body as an object of physiology or biology, is not the true reality of the body.²⁹⁰ As was already mentioned, in our experience the body is not in the first place an object of any sort, but a subject. It is our primary way of being-in-the-world. There is no world for us without the body. The body gives us our first access and opening to space and time, as well as to other people and things. There is no perception without the body, as each and every perception depends on the body's organs of perception. The lived body, as the intertwining of perceptual organs, opens itself to the world. As the eye sees, the ear hears and the hand touches the world, in these perceptual movements the body opens itself to and directs itself towards the world and its things. This kind of opening of the perceptual organs is a constant happening of our existence. For example, there is no visual perception without the organ of the eye. It is "[t]he eye [that] sees the world."²⁹¹ Perception as perceptual openness to the world is, in the case of vision, visual openness to the world. This perceptual openness in seeing means that eyes open themselves literally to the world. The opening of the eye to the world takes place, for example, in the morning when one wakes up and the closed eyes open themselves to see the world. This perceptual openness also means that the organs of perception are receptive, that is, they are always ready to receive²⁹² things and the world. This "perceptual openness" also means that we have access as perceptual bodies to the perceptual world. This perceptual access is really and truly an open access in which there are no restrictions be-

my body." In addition to this 1959 Merleau-Ponty wrote an essay titled "The Philosophy of Existence" in which he writes: "In philosophy, the body, my body, is usually considered to be an object, for the same reason that the bodies of others, animals, and, all told, even a table, are only exterior objects. What Gabriel Marcel maintained was precisely that this is not so, and that if I attentively regard my body, I cannot pretend that it is simply an object. In some respects it is me: 'I am my body,' he said," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues: On Philosophy, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and James Barry (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1992), pp. 102 and 132.

289 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 78.

290 Merleau-Ponty writes of this as follows: "the objective body is not the truth of the phenomenal body, that is, the truth of the body such as we experience it. The objective body is merely an impoverished image of the phenomenal body, and...the objective body...has merely a conceptual existence". Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 456. He also writes: "The physiological event is but the abstract outline of the perceptual event." *Ibid.*, p. 366. This means that, for example, the physiological body is only a conceptual abstraction of the lived body.

291 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," p. 356.

292 David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*, pp. 54, 178-179, 243 and 290.

tween us and the perceived world. This means that we are not as perceiving body-subjects excluded from the world.

What can I say of the perceptual body as the body-subject and the perceptual world? This body as “a natural self”²⁹³ is “the subject of perception”.²⁹⁴ Perceptual communication is actually communication between the perceiving body-subject and the perceived world. This perceptual communication is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the beginning of philosophy. In relation to the principle of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy as the *there is* thesis, this perceptual communication between the body-subject and the perceived world can be stated, for example, as “there is always something confronting” me. This “me” is the body-subject as the “natural self”. In this body-world relationship the body is never in the first place an objective body of the natural sciences since the objective body is always an abstraction of the living body as a natural self’s communicative movement towards and openness to the world. The perceived world in this originary body-world “pact”²⁹⁵ is never a thing or a “sum of determinate objects”²⁹⁶, but “an immense”²⁹⁷ and ever-present field as the “field of all fields” or a “latent horizon of our experience”.²⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty calls the world “one single being” and “an immense individual” as he beautifully writes: “from the very beginning [of my life] I am in communication with one single being, an immense individual from which my experiences are drawn, and who remains on the horizon of my life, just as the constant hum of a large city serves as the background for everything we do there.”²⁹⁹ The perceptual world as the primordial “perceptual field”³⁰⁰ of our existence is the intertwining of different fields and horizons such as the spatial and temporal horizons, the visual and auditory fields, the sexual and linguistic atmospheres, and the social and intersubjective dimensions. The perceived objects and things appear within these different contextual dimensions of the world and only within this fundamental world-horizon or world-context does *anything* have any meaning and significance for us. According to Merleau-Ponty, the grounding principle and beginning of any meaningful³⁰¹ life is our embodied perceptual relation with the world as *there is* the perceived world.

293 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 174 and 213.

294 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 213–214 and 234.

295 Merleau-Ponty, *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 261 and 265.

296 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 95.

297 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 343 and 431.

298 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 95.

299 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 343. The translation has been slightly altered.

300 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 346.

301 It is important to understand that “meaningful life” means here a life that has any meaning, that is, even absurd meaning. This notion of “meaningful life” does not mean only then a life that is understood or experienced as an important life or a life of worth living. Even so called “meaningless”, “absurd” or “nonsensical” life is full of meaning as otherwise one could not interpret such a life in such terms. It is the perceptual body-world pact that is the ground of all meaning. Also it is important to understand that this primordial perceptual meaning of one’s life is not a meaning that is actively given by a conscious and voluntary subject. We are always already living as perceptual beings in a meaningful world that is constituted by perceptual

CHAPTER 3

The Process of Falling Asleep as a Returning Movement toward the World as “Some Immense Exterior Lung” of the World and the Possible Primacy of Breathing

In this chapter I will investigate Merleau-Ponty’s view on the phenomenon of sleep and the process of falling asleep in connection with the phenomenon of breathing. It is crucially important to my dissertation with regards to the world thesis as the principle of philosophy to explore what happens, according to Merleau-Ponty, to perception during the phenomenon of sleep, and the process that leads to the event of falling asleep. The crucial importance of sleep and falling asleep in my investigation comes from the fact that during sleep our perceptual relation to the world goes through a radical change in which it is almost entirely abolished. In the previous chapter, perception was defined as perceptual openness to the world. In sleep, the doors of perception close themselves almost entirely. On the other hand, breathing plays a principal role, according to Merleau-Ponty, in the process that leads to the event of falling asleep. In addition to this, as we will come to see in this chapter, breathing becomes a central relation to the world during the entire phenomenon of sleeping .

Before we go into my explication and interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s description of the process that leads one to fall asleep and the phenomenon of sleeping itself, I need to say something about the “forgetting of breathing”³⁰² in philosophical and psychological (that is in non-physiological) investigations of the phenomenon of sleep. One of the most influential descriptions of what sleep is, psychologically or non-physiologically, can be found from Sigmund Freud’s

life before we ourselves can begin to give meanings to things as speaking and thinking beings.

302 This notion of “forgetting of breathing” is from Luce Irigaray. According to Irigaray, “[t]he forgetting of breathing in our [Western] tradition is almost universal.” This forgetting of breathing is indeed almost universal also in most of the non-physiological investigations of the phenomenon of sleep. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, p. 77.

A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis. His description is a perfect example of the forgetting of breathing, and most non-physiological investigations follow Freud's influential account of "what...sleep is". Freud's description of what sleep is and how one could fall asleep sets a standard for a total forgetting of breathing in connection to these matters. Merleau-Ponty's own descriptions of sleep also follow Freud's words, but without the forgetting of breathing, as we shall see later on in this chapter. This is how Freud describes the psychological or non-physiological phenomenon of sleep, and the possibilities that lead to sleep:

What, then, is sleep? That is a physiological or biological problem concerning which there is still much controversy. We can form no decision on the point, but I think we may attempt a psychological characterization of sleep. Sleep is a condition in which I wish to have nothing to do with the external world, and have withdrawn my interest from it. I put myself to sleep by withdrawing myself from the external world and by holding off its stimuli. I also go to sleep when I am fatigued by the external world. Thus, by going to sleep, I say to the external world, "Leave me in peace, for I wish to sleep."...The biological intention of sleep thus seems to be recuperation; its psychological character, the suspension of interest in the external world. Our relation to the world into which we came so unwillingly, seems to include the fact that we cannot endure it without interruption. For this reason we revert from time to time to the prenatal existence, that is, to the intra-uterine existence.³⁰³

The essential feature in how Freud defines sleep is that it is a withdrawal from the external world "by holding off its stimuli" into "the prenatal existence", into "the intra-uterine existence." I will show in this chapter how Merleau-Ponty agrees with Freud on the question of withdrawal and that through this withdrawal in sleep one returns to some earlier dimensions of existence, without going so far as calling it "prenatal existence" or "intra-uterine existence". But what Freud misses is the positive side of sleep that Merleau-Ponty emphasizes as the return to the breath or opening to the primacy of breathing. This is also almost universally missed by scholars who have interpreted Merleau-Ponty's ideas about sleep.³⁰⁴ In my view, the founding father in the West-

303 Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. G. Stanley Hall (New York: Horace Liveright Publisher, 1920), p.67.

304 In his book *The Poetics of Sleep: From Aristotle to Nancy* Simon Morgan Wortham has subchapter titled "Merleau-Ponty: 'There is a moment when sleep comes...and I succeed in becoming what I was trying to be'". In this subchapter Wortham quotes a large passage from *Phenomenology of Perception* in which Merleau-Ponty explicitly says that "I call up the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing and posture of the sleeper". What is interesting from my respiratory perspective is that Wortham does not pay any attention to these words of Merleau-Ponty in his interpretation. Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Poetics of Sleep: From Aristotle to Nancy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.65. But Wortham is not at all alone with his total forgetting of breathing as Peter Schwenger in his book *At the Borders of Sleep: On Liminal Literature* begins the chapter one of this book by quoting these exact same words by Merleau-Ponty as Wortham does and in a same way he does not say a single word connected to breath's relation to sleep. Peter Schwenger, *At the Borders of Sleep: On Liminal Literature* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. p. 1. In addition to these scholars also in his otherwise wonderful phenomenological text "On Falling

ern philosophy of this idea that sleep is a return to the breath is Heraclitus. In his book *Against the Mathematicians*, Sextus Empiricus writes about this as follows: “According to Heraclitus it is by drawing in this divine reason (*logos*) in respiration that we become intelligent, and <it is by the same principle that> in sleep we become forgetful, but in waking we regain our senses. For in sleep the passages of perception are shut, and hence the understanding (*nous*) in us is separated from its natural unity with the surrounding medium; the only thing preserved is the connection through breathing, which is like a root” (Fragment 129).³⁰⁵ As we shall see in this chapter there are important similarities between this fragment of Heraclitus’s and Merleau-Ponty’s account of sleeping and the respiratory process that leads to sleep.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes: “During sleep...I keep the world present only in order to hold it at a distance, I turn myself back

Asleep” Jan Linschoten quotes yet again these same words of Merleau-Ponty about how the subject “call[s] up the visitation of sleep by imitating breathing and posture of the sleeper”, but does not say a single word about the relation between falling asleep and “imitating the breathing...of the sleeper”. Jan Linschoten, “On Falling Asleep”, in *Phenomenological Psychology: The Dutch School*, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), p. 106. In his text “The Sleeping Subject: Merleau-Ponty on Dreaming” James Morley does not quote Merleau-Ponty’s words concerning the calling up of sleep by “imitating the breathing...of the sleeper”, but he quotes the following words from Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*: “We must understand how respiratory or sexual events, which have a place in objective space, are drawn away from it in the dream, and settled in a different theatre.” Morley comments briefly these words of Merleau-Ponty by writing: “Merleau-Ponty considers the common dream phenomena of rising and falling, which are known to be emblematic of respiration and sexuality. It is the body which, as primal ground, makes meaningful such emblematic links (between rising and falling in dreams and the physiological processes of respiration or sexuality)”. In Morley’s defense one could say that his article is concerned in the first place with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about dreaming, but still this article also forgets almost universally breathing which in my view is essential theme to be understood when on studies Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on sleeping and dreaming. James Morley, “The Sleeping Subject: Merleau-Ponty on Dreaming”, *Theory & Psychology* 9 (1) (1999): pp. 92–93. It is also important to acknowledge that Morley is one of the rare philosophers who have written something about breathing in connection to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, see Morley, “Inspiration and Expiration: Yoga Practice Through Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of the Body”. In addition to these studies about sleep see also, for example the following Husserlian oriented phenomenological analysis of falling asleep and sleep that forget breathing: Saulius Geniusas, “On Birth, Death, and Sleep in Husserl’s Late Manuscripts on Time” and Nicolas de Warren, “The Inner Night: Towards a Phenomenology of (Dreamless) Sleep”, in *On Time: New Contributions to the Husserlian Phenomenology of Time*, ed. Dieter Lohmar and Ichiro Yamaguchi (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010). It feels bit unfair to highlight these works as the forgetting of breathing in phenomenological studies on sleep as well as on any other topic is so pervasive. But at the same time it is important to bring forth these works as examples of this forgetting of breathing especially when Worthman, Schwenger and Linschoten all quote Merleau-Ponty’s important words concerning the relation between falling asleep and breathing without then giving any kind of, even the briefest, interrogation of this relation.

305 Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 294. See also Aryeh Finkelberg, *Heraclitus and Thales’ Conceptual Scheme: A Historical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 170, 183 and 186–87.

toward the subjective sources of my existence.”³⁰⁶ This distance from the world is gained through the withdrawal stages as one tries to fall asleep. To try to fall asleep means to place oneself in a position where the phenomenon of sleep might occur. During this withdrawal process a human being cuts off his or her relations to the world of awakesness as completely as possible. As a withdrawal process, Merleau-Ponty would agree with the basic traits of Freud’s description of sleep: “Sleep is a condition in which I wish to have nothing to do with the external world, and have withdrawn my interest from it. I put myself to sleep by withdrawing myself from the external world and by holding off its stimuli.” But Merleau-Ponty’s description is more nuanced than Freud’s as we will gradually see during this chapter. Merleau-Ponty describes the basic features of this withdrawal process as follows: “I lie down in my bed, on my left side, with my knees drawn up; I close my eyes, breathe slowly, and distance myself from my projects.”³⁰⁷ What does this brief description include? With regards to falling asleep, it includes a withdrawal from the visual field of things and objects by closing one’s eyes and from the field of social interaction by retreating to lie down in one’s bed as a form of solitude. It also includes a withdrawal from the cultural field of human enterprises and from the personal field of aims and goals by distancing oneself from one’s cultural and personal projects that one holds in such high esteem during the world of awakesness. All of these relations to the world are abolished in one’s journey to “the mystery of sleep.”³⁰⁸ But what is important, from the perspective of my dissertation, is that this distance to the world never occurs entirely as Merleau-Ponty says: “the sleeper is never completely enclosed within himself, never totally a sleeper”, that is, “never absolutely cut off from the...world.”³⁰⁹ There is always the sleeper’s, that is, the sleeping body’s “minimum”³¹⁰ relations or “last link” to the world which “makes waking up possible.”³¹¹ This last link is what Merleau-Ponty also calls

306 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 297. The translation has been modified.

307 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166. In this description the words “I lie down in my bed...with my knees drawn up” could perhaps be interpreted as connected to what Freud says of sleeper’s posture as he writes: “Some of us even roll ourselves into tight packages and assume in sleep a posture very similar to the intra-uterine posture.” Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 68.

308 Hans-Georg Gadamer uses this notion of “the mystery of sleep” in his book *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in the Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 85. Even if this notion is from Gadamer I suggest that it very well can be also used in connection Merleau-Ponty’s description of sleep as for Merleau-Ponty the most fundamental mystery is the mystery of the world. This mystery of the world was introduced in the Chapter Two of my dissertation. In my opinion the mystery of sleep is deeply connected to the mystery of the world as in sleep the sleeper is connected to the very sources of the world as we will later see in this chapter. Also the phenomenon of sleep is a mystery in the sense that it is not a problem that can be ever solved like one can solve a problem, for example a mathematical, financial or medical problem.

309 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167. “[E]ven during sleep...[one] can no longer cease ‘having it out’ with the world.” Ibid., p. 429.

310 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. John O’Neill (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988), p. 115.

311 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

“the subjective sources of my existence.” What can be the meaning of these words? The “subjective” neither refers to any form of subjectivity outside of the world nor to the “inner man,”³¹² but to the body-subject. In Merleau-Ponty’s view, the notion of “existence” is synonymous with the notion of “being-in-the-world.”³¹³ One of the ways he defines the notion of existence as being-in-the-world is the following: “‘existence’ is the movement through which man is in the world and involves himself in a physical and social situation which then becomes his point of view on the world.”³¹⁴ Thus it can be said that these subjective sources of my existence, to which “I turn myself back toward” during sleep, are to be understood as the bodily sources of my being-in-the-world. These sources are the last link or the minimum contact between my lived body and the world. Thus, sleep can be called the last link or the minimum relations to the world. From the following Merleau-Ponty quote it becomes even clearer that sleep is a certain kind of relation to the world, and that these subjective sources of my existence refer to the bodily sources of my being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty writes:

sleep...is the provisional involution or dedifferentiation. It is the return to the inarticulated, the withdrawal to a global or prepersonal relation with the world--which is not really absent but is, rather, distant--in which our place is marked by the body with a minimum of relations is maintained that make it possible to wake up....The negation of the world in sleep is equally a way of upholding it.³¹⁵

In this citation sleep as the last link is called “the provisional involution or dedifferentiation.” Involution is a process in which something turns in upon itself. In biology, involution refers to the shrinking, or return, of an organ to a former size.³¹⁶ The provisional means here, in connection to involution, that the temporal presence of this involution occurs only during sleep and stops being pre-

312 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxiii and lxxiv. This “inner man” that Merleau-Ponty speaks of refers to Saint Augustine’s phrase “*In te redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas*” (“Go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man.” This phrase is quoted by Husserl at the end of *Cartesian Meditations*. See *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 493n21. In reference to this “inner man” Merleau-Ponty writes: “Truth does not merely ‘dwell’ in the ‘inner man’; or rather, there is no ‘inner man,’ man is in and toward the world, and it is in the world that he knows himself.” Ibid. lxxiv.

313 See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 351.

314 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 72.

315 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, p. 115. The translation has been modified as it has one major mistake in it. Merleau-Ponty uses the word “*dé-différenciation*” in the original text which John O’Neill translates as “differentiation” when this word that Merleau-Ponty uses means exactly the opposite of this, that is, “*dedifferentiation*.” See the original French text, Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours: Collège de France 1952–1960* (Éditions Gallimard, 1968), p. 67. In Merleau-Ponty’s view even if sleep is a radical withdrawal from the world of awakesness or from the external world this withdrawal from the world is never total as it can be still said that during sleep we are in a relation with the world. This following citation from *Phenomenology of Perception* makes this clear as in Merleau-Ponty writes: “One day, and indeed once and for all, something was set in motion that, even during sleep,...[I] can no longer cease ‘having it out’ with the world.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 429.

316 Laurelee Sherwood, *Human Physiology: From Cells to Systems*, 8th edn., (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2012), p. 788.

sent when one wakes up. What about dedifferentiation? It is a term that means privation or negation of differentiation. In biology, dedifferentiation is a biological process in which living specialized structures or behaviours (differentiation) lose their specialization and reverse or regress into a more generalized, simplified or primitive structure of behaviour (dedifferentiation). An example of differentiation, in biology, would be a reversion of a specialized cell or tissue to a simpler unspecialized form.³¹⁷ In Merleau-Ponty's case, it is important to remember that he is not speaking of sleep in a biological, or in any other natural scientific, manner, but phenomenologically within the horizon of the lived body's being-in-the-world. This means that, as "sleep...is the provisional involution or dedifferentiation", Merleau-Ponty does not understand these terms in the context of natural sciences. What then does provisional involution mean in connection to sleep if it is understood from the perspective of the lived body's being-in-the-world? In sleep, provisional involution means that the human being turns in upon himself or herself. But as a human being is, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, a body-subject and the body is an organ, I could interpret this to mean that sleep is the shrinking or return of the body-subject as an organ to its former size. In this case, this former size should not be understood in the normal sense of the word "size," but as the size or amount holding of my body as, according to Merleau-Ponty, "my body" is "the system of all my holds on the world."³¹⁸ This means that one could interpret sleep to be the shrinking or return of the lived body-subject to its former holds on the world. Earlier it was said, for example, that during the process that leads to the event of falling asleep one withdraws by closing one's eyes from the visual field of things. This is one of the ways in which the body shrinks its holds on the world. In this case it shrinks its visual hold on the world to become almost non-existent. During sleep our relation to the world shrinks to its minimum as we withdraw from almost all waking holds on the world.

Merleau-Ponty also wrote in the above quotation about sleep that "sleep is the...dedifferentiation." What would it mean to phenomenologically interpret sleep as dedifferentiation? It would mean that sleep would be understood as a process of reversion, in which the lived body's specialized and differentiated structures or holds on the world lose their specific functions and the body-subject retreats to a simpler, more primitive and generalized form. These specialized holds of the body-subject that are lost are, for example, in addition to the visual field of things, the field of social interaction, the cultural field of human enterprises and the personal field of aims and goals. As the word "dedifferentiation" means literally "away from differentiation" it is then deeply connected to the word "differentiation." For Merleau-Ponty, differentiation is essentially intertwined with perception, as perception is "differentiation."³¹⁹ Galen A. Johnson comments on Merleau-Ponty's idea as follows:

317 Brian K. Hall, *Developmental and Cellular Skeletal Biology* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 115–120.

318 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 18.

319 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 197. See also Ohtaki Musubu, "Psychoanalysis and Ontology: Lacan, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty," in *Immersing in the*

Perception is contact with differentiation. In touching, my hand is touched, but the touching is not coincident with being touched. In seeing, I am or at least can be seen, but the seeing is differentiated from being seen....When the difference is removed, as when my eye grows too close to the object, there is blurring, then blindness. With my eyes too close, there is loss of the visual field...Vision is contact that includes differentiation; loss of vision is contact without differentiation.³²⁰

So there is no perception of things and objects without the differentiation of the perceiver and the perceived. Visual perception is possible only if “the seeing is differentiated from being seen,” that is, if there is a difference between the seer and the seen. This is possible only if the eyes have differentiated themselves from the visible thing which is seen, that is, that they are not too close to the seen-thing. What is important in relation to the phenomenon of sleep, even if Johnson does not speak of it, is that the “loss of vision is contact without differentiation.” When one closes one’s eyes in order to fall asleep one loses one’s visual field and enters into the world of “contact without differentiation.” This can be interpreted as one of the reasons Merleau-Ponty calls sleep “dedifferentiation.” Sleep is a prepersonal relation to the world without differentiation, that is, a relation to the world in which one is turned away from the world of differentiation. The awakened world of differentiation is a more complex world than the dormant world of dedifferentiation in which, for example, the subject and the object of perception have not yet been differentiated. In sleep we return to this world, where differentiation at perceptual, social, cultural and personal levels has not yet taken place.

As I already mentioned earlier, we are withdrawn from these various levels within the withdrawal process that makes falling asleep possible. As it can be seen from the above citation, Merleau-Ponty also calls these withdrawals in which different specified holds on the world are cut off “the negation of the world in sleep”. Withdrawing from the world is a certain kind of negation of the world as these various withdrawals negate the visual world, the social world, the cultural world and the personal world. Merleau-Ponty often uses the notions of “a field” and “a world”³²¹ quite synonymously, which means that we could as well speak of perceptual, social, practical, etc. fields. But even if sleep is “the negation of the world” it is never a total negation of the world as it is “equally a way of upholding [the world].” Let us begin to move slowly toward this idea of the upholding of the world in sleep and how it is essentially connected with the phenomenon of breathing.

Concrete: Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the Japanese Perspective, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and Shoichi Matsuba (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1998), p. 213.

320 Galen A. Johnson, “Introduction: Alterity as a Reversibility,” in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), p. xx.

321 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 343. It is important to remember that, according to Merleau-Ponty, “the world” is “the field of all fields” and it could be said that the notion of “this or that world” is synonymous with the expression of this or that field as various particularized world or field. See more detailed discussion of this topic in the Chapter Two of my dissertation.

In Chapter Two of my dissertation I investigated Merleau-Ponty's *there is* theses. One of these is called the world thesis: "there is the world" or "there is the perceived world". Here in Chapter Three I want to interrogate what these formulations of sleep as "provisional involution" and "dedifferentiation" mean in connection to the world thesis? Both of these formulations are two different ways of saying that, during sleep, one turns one's self back toward the bodily sources of one's existence or being-in-the-world. In addition to this, Merleau-Ponty calls these embodied sources of being-in-the world the "inarticulated," "global or prepersonal relation with the world." When specific holds on the world are suspended, only the global relation with the world as the source of our being-in-the-world remains. All the other forms of being-in-the-world, as holds on the world, are rooted on this inarticulated, global and prepersonal source. If this is the case, it means that during sleep, on some very general level, the mystery of the *Weltthesis*: there is the world as the constant thesis of my life, pronounces itself. But how does the world thesis pronounce itself if most of our holds on the world are suspended? In relation to the phenomenon of sleep, for example, can one any longer speak of the thesis of the primacy of perception, that is, of the primacy of there is the perceived world?

In the beginning of the first chapter of my thesis I quoted the opening words of *The Visible and the Invisible* as follows:

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher – the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute 'opinions' implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this we, what seeing is, and what thing or world is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.

In these opening words of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty speaks of our commonly shared barbaric conviction, or the perceptual faith, that "we see the things themselves, the world is what we see." But it is important to notice that, in these opening words, Merleau-Ponty also admits that this perceptual formulae expresses a fundamental "faith common to the natural man and the philosopher – the *moment he opens his eyes*." But what about the moment he or she closes his or her eyes, or the time he or she keeps his or her eyes closed? Also, according to Merleau-Ponty, our barbaric conviction "we see the things themselves, the world is what we see" refers to "a deep-seated set of mute 'opinions' implicated in our lives." What kind of transformation does this deep-seated set of mute "opinions" implicated in one's life could go through the moment one tries to fall asleep when, in Merleau-Ponty words, "I lie down in my bed, on my left side, with my knees drawn up; I close my eyes, *breathe slowly*, and distance myself from my projects"? I have already partially investigated this question in reference to sleep as provisional involution and dedifferentiation in relation to the perceptual, social, cultural and personal withdrawals from our relation to the world, but I have not said anything about Merleau-Ponty's words "I...breathe slowly." How is breathing slowly, according to Merleau-Ponty, relevant in one's effort to fall asleep? What is the connection be-

tween falling asleep and breathing slowly? These are the questions that I will now interrogate.

Sleep as the last link between the lived body and the world is, in Merleau-Ponty's view, called forth by a certain kind of breathing. He writes in *Phenomenology of Perception* of this in the first person as follows: "I...call forth the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing of the sleeper and his posture"³²² as well as "I was breathing slowly and deeply to call forth sleep."³²³ This slow and deep breath of imitation that calls forth sleep as the last link or the embodied source of our being-in-the-world is deeply related to what it is calling forth, as Merleau-Ponty writes in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

[S]leep arrives when a certain voluntary attitude suddenly receives from the outside the very confirmation that it was expecting. I was breathing slowly and deeply to call forth sleep, and suddenly, one might say, my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back, a certain respiratory rhythm desired by me just a moment ago, becomes my very being, and sleep intended until then as a signification, suddenly turns into a situation.³²⁴

There is also another instance in the same book that speaks of the moment that "sleep arrives." It says: "Sleep 'arrives' at [that] particular moment,...[when] I succeed in becoming what I pretended to be."³²⁵ These two pieces of text speak of the same event, the arrival of sleep. The first speaks of "a certain voluntary attitude" and the other of an act of pretending, but what is important to notice is that they are concerned with the same thing because the act of pretending is definitely a certain voluntary attitude, and in both cases the imitation of sleep is in play in order that sleep will arrive. One who wishes to fall asleep pretends to be sleeping, and this pretending equals imitation of the breathing and the posture of the sleeper. Merleau-Ponty states this imitation as pretending in a nutshell in the sentence that I have already quoted: "I lie down in my bed, on my left side, with my knees drawn up; I close my eyes, *breathe slowly*, and distance myself from my projects." Straight after these words, Merleau-Ponty continues by saying: "But this is where the power of my will or consciousness ends. Just as the faithful in Dionysian mysteries invoke the god by imitating the scenes of his life, *I too call forth the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing and posture of the sleeper.*"³²⁶ With these words it becomes clearer that the "voluntary attitude" is the pretending and imitation, as Merleau-Ponty connects it with "the power of my will or consciousness", which has the goal or intention to fall asleep. But

322 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166. Translation has been slightly altered.

323 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 219.

324 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 219. The translation is slightly altered. The original French texts runs as follows: "le sommeil vient quand une certaine attitude volontaire reçoit soudain du dehors la confirmation qu'elle attendait. Je respirais lentement et profondément pour appeler le sommeil et soudain on dirait que ma bouche communique avec quelque immense poumon extérieur qui appelle et refoule mon souffle, un certain rythme respiratoire, tout à l'heure voulu par moi, devient mon être même, et le sommeil, visé jusque-là comme signification, se fait soudain situation." Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 245.

325 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166.

326 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166.

this voluntary attitude cannot do it alone. It can only prepare one with the voluntary act of imitation, which is at the same time withdrawal and opening. I have already spoken of this withdrawal from the world of awakesness as an act of saying “no” to it. This included a perceptual, social, cultural, practical and theoretical withdrawal from the world. But this withdrawal, in its many dimensions, is never total as, according to Merleau-Ponty, even when we have fallen asleep some sort of “anonymous vigilance of the senses”³²⁷ still remains. When these senses have withdrawn from the world they have withdrawn almost totally, but *only* almost totally. This means that they remain, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, as “these slightly open doors” to the world, and as such they “make waking up [again] possible,” that is, they make our return to the world of awakesness possible in its multiple dimensions.³²⁸ If the senses would not remain as slightly open doors to the world it would be impossible for us to be awakened, for example, by the alarm clock, by the bright morning sunshine shining into our eyes or by somebody’s touch. The extent to which these doors are open varies during the different phases of sleep. But even as variations occur, the important factor is still that during sleep these doors are always more closed than open, and during the state of awakesness they are more open than closed. As the doors of the senses to the world are closed almost totally during sleep, it is very important to understand and remember that *the door of breathing to the world* is at the same time wide open. In the beginning of this chapter I said that Merleau-Ponty’s thinking on sleep has deep similarities to Heraclitus. Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the doors of the senses and opening to breathing are very similar to Heraclitus’ idea of “the passages of perception” that are shut in sleep, with the only connection to the environment “through breathing”.³²⁹ It is difficult to know if, when Heraclitus says that “the passages of perception are shut”, he means a total shutdown or something more like Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the doors of the senses being almost totally closed as slightly open doors.

327 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

328 I have translated the French wording “*ces portes entr’ouvertes*” as “these slightly open doors” instead of Landes’ translation of “these half-open doors”. I think that it is misleading translation as during sleep our senses are not “half-open doors” to things and the world. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 191. The English version can be found here: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

329 There is also, in my opinion, an interesting connection here that can be drawn between the Upanishadic thought’s idea of the primacy of breathing and Heraclitian-Merleau-Pontian idea of return to the breath through withdrawal of other relations to the world. I referred to the Upanishadic thought on breathing in the Introduction of my dissertation. Eraly writes of this Upanishadic primacy of breath as follows: “The primacy of breath, according to the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, was once demonstrated by the great god Prajapati when the various vital powers in man quarreled among themselves for supremacy and approached him to settle the dispute. Prajapati then asked the powers of speech, hearing, sight and mind to leave the body one after the other, but even after they all left, breath still remained. However, when breath left, all the other faculties departed with it, proving that all else were dependent on breath.” Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 197. In this *Kaushitaki Upanishad* even if it does not speak of sleeping or the process of falling asleep it does speak of the withdrawal of “the powers of speech, hearing, sight and mind” and after these withdrawal the “breath still remained.”

During sleep this door of breath is the only wide open door to the world and, as has already been mentioned, it is through this wide open door of breathing that we call the visitation or the arrival of sleep. Thus the voluntary attempt to fall asleep says “yes” to world of breathing. In a sense it could be said that it says “no”, or at least tries to say an overall “no”, to all the other relations to the world³³⁰ except the respiratory relation to the world as it calls forth sleep with deep and slow breathing. Thus, the respiratory relation to the world deepens during the preparation to fall asleep in comparison to our awakened everyday relation to the world, in which breathing is rarely deep at all. But this voluntary calling forth of sleep as an act of imitation or pretending does not turn into actual sleep by itself, that is, through the voluntary attitude, and Merleau-Ponty says the reason for this is that neither sleeping nor waking are “modalities of consciousness or will.”³³¹ They are something much deeper. If they would be modalities of consciousness or will, we could fall asleep by just wanting, wishing or consciously choosing to do so. But everybody knows that this is impossible, and anybody who has ever suffered from insomnia knows this particularly well. In the case of insomnia, the more willingly and consciously one tries to fall asleep, the more impossible this effort becomes. How could one then “succeed in becoming what [one] pretended to be,” that is, how could the imitation of sleep transform itself into the actuality of sleep? If awakesness and sleep are not “modalities of consciousness or will” then, according to Merleau-Ponty, the transformative or “existential step”³³² from awakesness to sleep takes place “beneath the level of the ‘will’”, or is “worked out at a deeper level than that of objective orthetic consciousness.”³³³ According to Merleau-Ponty, this deeper level beneath the level of the will or thethetic consciousness is the level of the lived body. It is the lived body that “transforms...my mimicry of sleep into actual sleep.”³³⁴ It is the “role of the body...to ensure this metamorphosis.”³³⁵ This means that nobody falls asleep, to borrow again Merleau-Ponty’s words, “through an intellectual effort or through an abstract decree of the will, but through a conversion that gathers [a person’s] entire body together.”³³⁶

As one does not fall asleep through conscious choice or by will, according to Merleau-Ponty, this event of falling sleep is a phenomenon of a certain kind of embodied faith and belief.³³⁷ The falling asleep can be said to be much closer to a phenomenon of religious faith than an “intellectual effort”. Throughout his exploration of falling asleep and the phenomenon of sleep, it is noticeable that

330 To compare this to Freud’s description of falling asleep one can remember that he wrote: “Sleep is a condition in which I wish to have nothing to do with the external world”.

331 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

332 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

333 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 166.

334 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

335 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.

336 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 168.

337 In the earlier chapters I have already spoken of question of faith as for Merleau-Ponty perception is “perceptual faith” and as for him there is “a fundamental faith: there is something”. He also speaks, for example, of embodied “belief in the world”. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 5-7 and 311.

Merleau-Ponty uses many words that refer to religious terminology.³³⁸ He speaks of the “*visitation* of sleep,” of the “*conversion* that gathers [the] entire body together,” of “the *faithful* in Dionysian mysteries [who] *invoke the god by imitating* the scenes of his life” and of receiving “from the outside the...*confirmation*.” In addition to these notions that have strong religious connotations, Merleau-Ponty also compares sleep and the mystery of falling asleep to other religious themes such as “the sacrament,” “an operation of Grace”, “the real presence of God” and the “communion.”³³⁹

Let us return to that mysterious moment when “sleep arrives”. According to Merleau-Ponty, “sleep arrives when a certain voluntary attitude suddenly receives from the outside the very confirmation that it was expecting.” This “voluntary attitude” was said to be the act of pretending that one was already sleeping as a way of calling forth sleep. One’s imitation was the slow and deep breathing of the sleeper and then suddenly this pretending received that confirmation from the outside. But what was it that gave the sleeper that confirmation from the outside? Merleau-Ponty calls it “some immense exterior lung”, as he writes: “suddenly, one might say, my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back”, and thus “a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being”. This is a very dramatic description by Merleau-Ponty. First of all, it shows how the transformative or “existential step” from waking to sleeping is taken “beneath the level” of consciousness and will. It seems that this existential step is taken even at the “deeper level than” perception as it is essentially connected to something that Merleau-Ponty calls “some immense exterior lung”, which takes over the deep and slow breathing of the pretender who was calling forth sleep with his or her imitation of the breath of the sleeper. As this immense exterior lung takes over from the outside the imitator’s breath by calling it forth and forcing it back, it transforms the existence of the imitator, not only by radically changing his or

338 In addition to Merleau-Ponty also, for example, theologian Karl Rahner speaks of sleep in religious terms. According to Rahner, there is “such a thing as a theology of sleeping” which includes, for example, “welcoming sleep in a prayerful way.” Of this religious meaning of sleep Rahner writes: “sleep is something very mysterious. People are individual and free, autonomous and self-directed; but when sleeping, they surrender, let go, entrust themselves to the powers of their existence that they themselves did not create and cannot oversee. Sleep is an act of trusting one’s deepest inner conviction, one’s own certainty, and the goodness of the human world. It is an act of innocence and of consenting to the elusive. If one approached sleep like that, not as a merely dull succumbing to physiological mechanisms but as an agreeable and trusting acceptance of an utterly human act, then falling asleep could be seen as relating to the inner structure of prayer, which is equally a letting-go, an entrusting of one’s own inner conviction to the providence of God which one lovingly accepts.” Karl Rahner, *The Mystical Way in Everyday Life*, trans. Annemarie S. Kidder (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), p. 183. If one wants to examine further Merleau-Ponty’s use of religious terminology and the new possibilities that this terminology could offer I recommend to see Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 87-100. In addition to Kearney’s book one can also see concerning Merleau-Ponty’s use of religious terminology the following book by Christopher Ben Simpson, *Merleau-Ponty and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

339 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 219.

her status from a waking being into a sleeping being, but also in a more important way (for the purposes of my dissertation) by changing him or her into a respiratory being. As Merleau-Ponty says: “a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being”. This person becomes a respiratory being as all the other doors or channels of his or her existence towards the world are either totally closed or only slightly open. Instead, the door or channel of breath is wide open to the world. In order to understand what all of this could mean, we must ask the meaning of the words: “a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being”. In order to understand this, one needs to find out what Merleau-Ponty means by the expression “my very being” (*mon être même*)? Later in *Phenomenology of Perception* he defines it in the following way: “the profound movement of transcendence...is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world.”³⁴⁰ Here we can notice that the expressions “my very being” and “my being” are not the same: “my very being” is “simultaneous contact with *my being* and with *the being of the world*.” In addition to this, in this quotation Merleau-Ponty says that “the profound movement of transcendence...is my very being”. These two expressions of “the profound movement of transcendence” and “the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world” are synonymous as, according to Merleau-Ponty, this movement of transcendence is “active transcendence between the subject and the world.”³⁴¹ This means that one could also say that “the profound movement of transcendence” “between the subject and the world” “is my very being”. One could perhaps even say more clearly that “the profound movement of transcendence” between “my being” and “the being of the world” is “my very being”. Another word that Merleau-Ponty uses as a synonym for “transcendence” is “ecstasy [*extase*]”³⁴², or the German “*ek-stase*”³⁴³. Merleau-Ponty understands this word in its etymological sense as “to stand outside of oneself”.³⁴⁴ The subject transcends itself into the world, or stands outside of itself in the world. As transcendence or ecstasy, that is, as “being-in-the-world”³⁴⁵, the subject is always already outside itself, directed toward the world. “My very being” is “being-in-the-world”. With regards to this “movement of transcendence between the subject and the world”, Merleau-Ponty also writes: “The interior and the exterior are inseparable. The world is entirely on the inside, and I am entirely outside of myself.”³⁴⁶

Now what would the words “a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being” mean in relation to all of this? At least I can say that “a certain respiratory rhythm” that “becomes my very being” is “the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world”, or a “profound movement of transcendence” “between the subject and the world”. This respiratory rhythm is

340 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 396.

341 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 454.

342 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 73, 388, 395, 443, 446 and 451.

343 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 442–444, 451 and 454.

344 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 512n3 and Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, p. 68.

345 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 454.

346 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 430.

a rhythm of being-in-the-world. Could we speak here of being-in-the-world as breathing-in-the-world? This “respiratory rhythm” occurs as “my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back”. So if, according to Merleau-Ponty, the meaning of the notion of “my very being” is “the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world” or “active transcendence between the subject and the world”, this means that this “simultaneous contact” or “active transcendence between” is in this case the respiratory communication between “my mouth” and “some immense exterior lung”. This respiratory communication, as simultaneous contact or active transcendence, can be interpreted as the “last link” or “minimum” relation between “my being” as the body-subject and the being of the world. It is the source of this body-world pact. This means that “some immense exterior lung” must be understood as the world in some sense of the word, if one takes seriously Merleau-Ponty’s definition of “my very being” as simultaneous contact between my being and the being of the world, or as active transcendence between the subject and the world. If the immense lung is a world, the world or “the being of the world”, I must still ask what “some immense exterior lung” is, and what is the meaning of this expression, which Merleau-Ponty does not define at all. It is also an expression that he only uses once in his whole philosophical corpus. This means that I get no help to define it from any text he has written. In addition to this, to my knowledge, nobody else has ever used this same expression, which means that I cannot get any help or perspective from any other philosophers or authors. Neither has anybody in the community of Merleau-Ponty scholars investigated the meaning of “some immense exterior lung”.³⁴⁷ So, in connection to the definition of “my very being”, I understand “some immense exterior lung” as a world, the world or “the being of the world”. It is also important to remember that I earlier quoted Merleau-Ponty’s words saying that the sleeper is “never absolutely cut off from the...world”. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty’s choice of words seems to say, in my interpretation, that “some immense exterior lung” is some kind of world or dimension of the world, as he uses the notion of “immense” in *Phenomenology of Perception* only in reference to the world and to being. In relation to this, he speaks of “an immense Memory of the world”³⁴⁸ and of “one immense individual”³⁴⁹, which

347 The only previous investigations of Merleau-Ponty’s “some immense exterior lung” have been made by myself. In my previous explorations I have investigated this immense lung in connection to the phenomena such as creativity, poetry, dreams, philosophy, space and peace. See Berndtson, “The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being: The Immense Lung and the Cosmic Breathing as the Sources of Dreams, Poetry and Philosophy”, pp. 285–87 and 290; Berndtson, “The Respiratory Constitution of Space and its Connection to the Origin of Space”, pp. 81–85 and Berndtson, “The Primordial Respiratory Peace and the Possibility of Cultivation of Breathing as a Method of Peacemaking”, pp. 62–64.

348 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 73. The translation has been altered. See the original text, Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 84.

349 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 343, 345, 359, 366 and 431. Merleau-Ponty calls the world “an individual”, “one immense individual”, “the world-as-an-individual” and “an unfinished individual”. He also speaks, for example, of a need “to recognize the world as [the] pre-objective individual”. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxii.

is the world or “one sole being”. He writes about this world as one “immense individual” and “one sole being” as follows: “from the very beginning I am in communication with one sole being [*un seul être*], one immense individual [*un immense individu*] from which my experiences are drawn, and who remains on the horizon of my life, just as the constant hum of a large city serves as the background for everything we do there.”³⁵⁰ In these words, in connection to “one sole being” as “one immense individual” that is the world, one can see a similarity to “some immense exterior lung” as, in both cases, Merleau-Ponty speaks of my “communication with” it. Could one also speak about “some immense exterior lung” in the similar way that Merleau-Ponty talks about “one sole being” as “one immense individual”? Could it, thus, be possible that “*from the very beginning* [of my life] I am in communication with” “some immense exterior lung”? Could this be the case, as the beginning of child’s life is lived mostly in the state of sleep?³⁵¹ Could it also be possible that “some immense exterior lung” “remains on the horizon of my life, just as the constant hum of a large city serves as the background for everything we do there”? I would at least suggest that one can understand “some immense exterior lung” as some kind of immense dimension of the world, or the immense dimension of the one sole being. Some kind, but what kind? Let us remember that in the process of falling asleep, and during sleep, the world, that is, the world of awakesness, is kept at a distance. For example, the perceived world is almost totally abolished, as during sleep the doors of the senses are left only slightly open to the world. One can compare this dormant situation to the phenomenon of night. This comparison between the world of night and the world of “some immense exterior lung” can be fruitful in order to better understand the nature of this immense lung. However, it is important to be aware that, according to Merleau-Ponty, this comparison between the two needs to be made with the provision that “some immense exterior lung” is an even more “striking experience of the unreal”³⁵² than the phenomenon of night. The “experience of the unreal” that Merleau-Ponty refers to here is the opposite of the experience of the real. The

350 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 378. See the English version Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 343. Landes translates “*un seul être*” as “a single being” and “*un immense individu*” as “an immense individual”. Smith translates “*un seul être*” as “one being”. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 328. As I have chosen to translate “*un*” here as “one” instead of “a” or “an” I am following the lead of Alphonso Lingis who translates in *The Visible and the Invisible* “*un seul Être*” as “one sole Being”. See Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, pp. 146 and 267. See Lingis’ translation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 110 and 217. One can see that Smith also translates “*un*” as “one” but for some unknown reason leaves “*seul*” untranslated and omitted from his translation. I interpret this Merleau-Ponty’s use of the notion of “one sole being” in *Phenomenology of Perception* as one of the rare occasions that he explicitly uses ontological terminology in this book. What Merleau-Ponty says in *The Visible and the Invisible* about “one sole Being” is the following: “my own experience interconnects within itself and connects with that of the others by opening upon one sole world, by inscribing itself in one sole Being.” (p. 110) It can be seen that in both *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible* the source of all experience is “one sole B/being”.

351 The newborn babies sleep around 16–17 hours a day.

352 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 296.

“real” refers to things and objects. The real world, from which sleep withdraws itself, is the perceived world of things and objects. Merleau-Ponty describes the unreality of the night as follows:

When...the world of clear and articulated objects is abolished, our perceptual being, now cut off from its world, sketches out a spatiality without things. This is what happens at night. The night is not an object in front of me; rather, it envelops me, it penetrates me through all of my senses, it suffocates my memories, and it all but effaces my personal identity. I am no longer withdrawn into my observation post in order to see the profiles of objects flowing by in the distance. The night is without profiles, it itself touches me and its unity is the mystical unity of the *mana*. Even cries, or a distant light, only populate it vaguely; it becomes entirely animated; it is a pure depth without planes, without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me. For reflection, every space is sustained by a thought that connects its parts, but this thought is accomplished from nowhere. On the contrary, it is from within nocturnal space that I unite with it/myself to it.³⁵³

So, if the experience of “some immense exterior lung” during sleep is an even more striking experience of the unreal than the experience of the night, how should one then interpret the meaning of it. One could treat it somewhat similarly to the night, which would mean, first of all, that “some immense exterior lung” is “not an object in front of me”, but rather *something* that “envelops me” and “penetrates me” as “I surrender...my whole body”³⁵⁴ to it through dormant respiratory communication. Similarly to the night, one could also say that some exterior immense lung is an unreal dimension of the world as “a spatiality without things.” In addition to this, I suggest that some immense exterior lung is also, like the phenomenon of night, “a pure depth without planes, without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me.” It could be said that some immense exterior lung is an unreal world in which almost all the features of the world have been stripped away leaving, just the most general features of the world. What could this mean? What could these most general features of the world be? In the most general form, the world is an *immense horizon, immense field* or *immense something*.³⁵⁵ This world in its most general form is pure depth, and as such it is neither a thing nor a collection of things, but an immense not nothing as “the field of all fields” without things. Merleau-Ponty calls this kind of world “the world in general”³⁵⁶. He writes of “the world in general” as follows:

353 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 296. Translation has been altered. See original French text, Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 328.

354 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 212.

355 Merleau-Ponty calls the world “an immense individual”, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 343 and 431. See also pp. 73 and 219.

356 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 254 and p. 328. I interpret that this notion of the “world in general” refers to the world in its most general features possible. In this sense it is even more primordial and fundamental world than “the natural world” which Merleau-Ponty normally conceives as the most primordial world. “The natural world” Merleau-Ponty defines in *Phenomenology of Perception* as “the horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, unity underlying all the disruption of my personal and historical life. Its counterpart within me is the given, general and pre-personal existence of my sensory functions in which we have discovered the definition of the

one can conceive a subject without an auditory field, but not of a subject without a world. Just as the absence of sound for the hearing subject does not break the communication with the sonorous world, so too the absence of the visual or auditory world for the subject who is blind or deaf from birth does not break the communication with the world in general, there is always something confronting/facing him³⁵⁷

His words are very interesting in connection to “some immense exterior lung” as I interpret it initially as the experience of the unreal world of not nothing. I would suggest that, in connection to the phenomenon of sleep, his words above could mean the following: It is possible to conceive a subject, that is, a body-subject, without an auditory or visual field, that is, without an auditory or visual world, but not a subject without a world. With this being the case, Merleau-Ponty says that even if one is “blind or deaf from the birth” it “does not break the communication with the world in general”. So what happens during the process of falling asleep when we first close our eyes as the first act of our imitation of a sleeper? We cut ourselves off from the visual world. When we fall asleep also our communication with the auditory world becomes almost non-existent as the ears withdraw and become only slightly open doors to the world. This means that, during sleep, we become almost “blind” and “deaf” to the world. This has happened to us since “from the birth”, as from the very beginning of our lives we have been subjects who fall asleep again and again and again. One of the main ideas of Merleau-Ponty’s entire philosophy as phenomenology of perception is that “if one perceives with his body, then the body is a natural myself and, as it were, the body is the subject of perception.”³⁵⁸ If one is “blind or deaf from birth”, or if one is blind *and* deaf from birth, one’s body is still “the subject of perception” as one is a tactile, smelling and tasting subject. But during sleep all these communications with the world are almost totally abolished. As Merleau-Ponty says, “the world of clear and articulated objects is abolished, our being, now cut off from its world, sketches out a spatiality without things.” When one falls asleep, Merleau-Ponty does not say that a certain tactile, smelling or tasting communication with the world becomes my very being, as all of these relations to the world have almost totally withdrawn from it. What he says is that “a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being”. So could it be said that, during sleep, “one can conceive a subject without” a perceptual field or perceptual world, but “not a subject without a world”? Could this be possible? It can be said for certain that we can at least conceive a subject without a perpetual world of objects and things, as both the experience of the night and of “some immense exterior lung” are experiences of a world of “pure depth” without things and objects. I would perhaps call this world without things and objects “the world in general”, so even then there is “the communication with the world in general”. It is important to notice that, in the case of “some immense exterior lung”, Merleau-Ponty also says that the breathing sub-

body.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p 330. “The world in general” could be interpreted to be the ultimate source of “the natural world”.

357 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 343. The translation has been altered. See the original French text: Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 379.

358 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 213.

ject, who is “breathing slowly and deeply”, “communicates with some immense exterior lung”. What is noteworthy is that, also in the case of the world as “one immense individual” and as “one sole being”, Merleau-Ponty used the notion of communication as our way of relating with these dimensions of the world. Thus I would suggest that “some immense exterior lung” is certainly “the world in general”. or a depth dimension of the world in general, that we are communicating with. Straight after the words “communication with the world in general”, Merleau-Ponty writes: “there is always something confronting/facing him”, that is, there is always something confronting/facing the body-subject. This *something* cannot be a thing or an object in the case of “some immense exterior lung” as it is the experience of unreal pure depth without things. It is also noteworthy that Merleau-Ponty does not call this exterior lung “immense exterior lung”, but rather “*some [quelque] immense exterior lung*”. This could perhaps mean that Merleau-Ponty refers with this title of “some” (*quelque*) to the dimension of “something” (*quelque chose*) which is not a thing, but is not nothing as an immense something and as a “pure depth” without any things. It is open something that is not obstructed or blocked by things. In a sense I could say that “some immense exterior lung” is immense not nothing.

Let us remind ourselves that in my dissertation I have followed Merleau-Ponty’s idea concerning our fundamental faith or barbaric conviction. According to the fundamental faith or barbaric conviction, *there is something*. What would this mean in relation to some immense exterior lung? If “there is always something confronting/facing” the body-subject then, in the case of some immense exterior lung, the fundamental faith or barbaric conviction would be: *there is always some immense exterior lung as immense something and not nothing confronting the body-subject*. To state this in the form of the world thesis would perhaps mean: *there is some immense exterior lung as the immense world in general and as the field of all fields*. Let us remind ourselves what Merleau-Ponty said in the “Preface” of *Phenomenology of Perception* as he introduced *Weltthesis* as “this constant thesis of my life.” He wrote: “The world is not what I think, but what I live. I am open to the world, *I communicate* indubitably *with it*, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. ‘There is a world,’ or rather ‘There is the world’; I can never completely account for this constant thesis of my life.” Here again it can be noticed that Merleau-Ponty talks about “communication”. Also, when one thinks of “some immense exterior lung” as the world in general, or as a general dimension of the world, it is important to understand that “I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.” It is inexhaustible as it is *immense* world of pure depth without surfaces, and I do not possess it as it is not an object that I could in any kind of manner control or manipulate. Actually, instead, it possesses me as “it envelops [and] penetrates me”.

If I take into account Merleau-Ponty’s ideas that sleep is the “last link” as the source of being-in-the-world, “provisional involution” and “dedifferentiation”, what would this mean with regards to “some immense exterior lung”? I have interpreted “involution” as the shrinking or return of the lived body-subject to its former holds on the world, and “dedifferentiation” as a process of

reversion in which the lived body's specialized structures or holds on the world lose their specific functions and the body-subject retreats to a simpler, primitive, generalized form. Now, if we turn ourselves back toward the bodily sources of our being-in-the-world during sleep, then the shrinking and return to the body's former holds on the world would be the return to its most primordial or originary holds on the world as the global and inarticulated relations with the world. Similarly, I could say that sleep as dedifferentiation in which the body-subject withdraws itself into a more general and simple form of existence would actually be a withdrawal into the most general and simple form of being-in-the-world as our source or root. This source, root or origin is what Merleau-Ponty also calls "my very being" as the simultaneous contact with my being and the being of the world or profound movement of transcendence between the subject and the world.

As we have seen, according to Merleau-Ponty, we call forth sleep by imitating the slow and deep breathing of the sleeper: we call forth the provisional involution and dedifferentiation in its most originary manner with the breath. In Merleau-Ponty's words, when sleep "suddenly" arrives, "one might say, my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back, a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being". This would mean that my respiratory communication with some immense exterior lung as the world in general would be the most primordial or originary hold on the world, and the most primitive and generalized form of being-in-the-world: thus Merleau-Ponty can call it "my very being". It would then be the case that all the other forms of being-in-the-world, as my holds on the world, are rooted in this respiratory source, and as such they all appear within the atmosphere of *there is some immense exterior lung as the world in general or as the being of the world*, which would then be, in the most primordial and radical manner, the constant thesis of my life. It important to remember that I said at the beginning of this investigation into sleeping that there are some important similarities between Heraclitus' and Merleau-Ponty's views on sleep. These two rare thinkers on sleep understand the breath as a root of our being-in-the-world. Fragment 129 of Heraclitus states that "in sleep the passages of perception are shut", and the only "connection [is] breathing, which is like a root".

According to Merleau-Ponty, "my very being" is "simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world." Also, as in sleep "a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being", it could be understood that this certain respiratory rhythm is a creation of the profound movement of transcendence between the respiratory body-subject and some immense exterior lung. In this simultaneous contact with my being and the being of the world, "my being" would be the breathing body-subject and "the being of the world" would be some immense exterior lung. If this would be the case, it makes me wonder if some immense exterior lung could be interpreted as "the *being* of the world" and if so, could this *being* be understood as the *root* or the *source* of the world as, for Merleau-Ponty: "During sleep...I keep the world present only in order to hold it at a distance, I turn myself back toward" the sources of my be-

ing-in-the-world? This would mean, in my opinion, that Merleau-Ponty's idea of "my very being" as "simultaneous contact with my being and the being of the world" could be interpreted and conceptualized thus: my very being is simultaneous contact with the breathing body-subject (my being) and with some immense lung of the world. As the world is held at a distance, there is the *immense lung* of the world as the *being* of the world, as the *root* or the *source* of the world that the sleeper turns himself back toward. The world that the sleeper keeps at a distance is all the other dimensions of the world, such as the perceptual world, the social world, the practical world and the theoretical world. I would suggest that it is this immense lung of the world, as the being of the world, that breathes life into these other dimensions of the world. Some immense exterior lung would be the immense lung of all of these worlds and their condition of possibility. Sleep as "provisional involution" and "dedifferentiation" reveals this immense lung of the world as the most primordial dimension of the world. I would also suggest that Merleau-Ponty's "world in general", in its most primordial sense, is the *being* of the world and thus the *immense lung* of the world.

If the world thesis (*Weltthesis*) in Merleau-Ponty's work is given a perceptual context as "the thesis of the primacy of perception" (*there is the perceived world*), one could very well ask if it is then the case, as I have suggested in my dissertation, that the phenomenon of sleep as the return (the provisional involution and the dedifferentiation) to the source or primordial root of the body-world pact in some sense abolishes this *Weltthesis* as the perceptual principle or beginning of his philosophy? Could this mean that, if the world thesis is interpreted within the context of sleep as the minimum contact between the body-subject and the world, this thesis could be reformulated as something which could be named *the thesis of the primacy of respiration* or *the primacy of breathing*, as in sleep there is respiratory something, that is, there is the world in general as some immense exterior lung, or there is the immense lung of the world, which has a *priority over* perception? This could perhaps mean that some immense exterior lung, as the world in general (the world of "respiratory rhythm"), or as the being of the world, would be the presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence, as well as all perceptual relations to the world and, as such, respiration would be the background from which all acts stand out, and which is presupposed by all of them. This would mean that the immense lung of the world would always "remain on the horizon of my life, just as the constant hum of a large city serves as the background for *everything* we do there." If this priority or primacy of breathing pronounces itself during the unreality of sleep and during the process of falling asleep, what is its connection to the world of awakesness and the real world of things and objects? Would this world thesis, as *there is the immense lung as the world in general*, be a principle only of the unreal world of sleep? Would the world of awakesness abolish the rule of the immense lung during the vigilance of the day, which brings back the rule of the primacy of perception? Or is it possible that this primacy of respiration, as our respiratory openness to the general world of the immense lung, still re-

mains as an immense horizon enveloping even the primacy of perception and providing “the background for *everything*”? In this case, “everything” would also include the thesis of primacy of perception. What is the connection between the real world and the unreal world? And what about the connection between “the thesis of primacy of perception” and the priority of “some immense exterior lung”? Is the thesis of the primacy of breathing, some deep dimension (pure depth dimension) of “the thesis of the primacy of perception”? Is respiration or breathing a form of perception or not? Or could it be that the priority of respiration (“certain respiratory rhythm”) actually precedes the priority of perception? So is our respiratory openness to some immense exterior lung the background for the primacy of perception? If that would be the case, what would it mean? If perception was named by Merleau-Ponty as the “fundamental experience”, could respiration also be named as a fundamental experience of human existence?

CHAPTER 4

The Fundamental Experience of Being and the Phenomenologico-Ontological Principle of Philosophy: “There is Being”

In this chapter I will investigate the ontological interpretation of the world thesis: there is the world. The ontological interpretation of this thesis states: there is Being. This kind of interpretation becomes possible if the world is understood as Being. I have previously stated that Merleau-Ponty equates the world or the fundamental dimension of the world, as the world in general, with the expression of “one sole being”. This examination of the ontological “there is” is intended to provide me with interpretative tools to help me understand Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis “*there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being*”, as I interpret this thesis to be deeply influenced by the ontological thesis: there is Being.³⁵⁹ In order to investigate this ontological thesis I will be examining Heidegger’s thinking of Being, which deeply influenced Merleau-Ponty’s late ontology. In this investigation of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology, I am neither trying to develop a scholarly perspective on the Heidegger research, nor am I trying to take any stance on certain discussions in academic Heidegger studies. As I said, my main purpose here is to examine Heidegger’s thinking of Being in order to provide a background to explicate and interpret Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological ontology, and especially his respiratory thesis concerning inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being.

The question of Being is the main theme in Merleau-Ponty’s late philosophy of phenomenological ontology.³⁶⁰ This means that the principle of the

359 Richard Kearney hints very briefly that Merleau-Ponty’s thesis “there is truly inspiration and expiration of Being” (Kearney’s translation) could be connected to Heidegger’s *Es Gibt* (“there is”, “it gives”). Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 307–308n13.

360 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 178.

world thesis, as the thesis of the primacy of perception (there is the perceived world), is interpreted within the horizon of ontological interrogation of Being. Merleau-Ponty still understands “the perceptual faith: the [barbaric] conviction that there is something, that there is the world”³⁶¹, as the first truth, as the “point of departure”³⁶² of philosophy, that is, as the principle of philosophy, but now this formulation of the world thesis equals the ontological formulation of the thesis as “there is Being.”³⁶³ With regards to this ontologically-oriented point of departure, in which Being, the world and something become deeply connected, Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “Our point of departure shall...[be]: there is being, there is world, there is *something*”.³⁶⁴ The perceptual faith as the principle of philosophy now means equally the barbaric conviction that there is the world, that there is something, and that there is Being. In ontological terms, the primacy of perception can be called the ontological primacy of perception or “[t]he ontological priority of the perceived” world.³⁶⁵ The equality of Being, the world as the perceived world, and *something* need to be explicated here. In his late phenomenological ontology, Merleau-Ponty quite often equates Being and the world.³⁶⁶ In one of the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible* he states this equality of Being and the world as follows: the “perceptual world is at bottom Being in Heidegger’s sense”.³⁶⁷ In this same working note he also states: “The brute or wild Being (= the perceived world)” and “the *Lebenswelt* [lifeworld] [is] universal Being”.³⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty’s

361 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 30.

362 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 88.

363 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 250.

364 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 88. The translation has been altered. In Lingis’ translation the wording is “there is being, there is a world, there is *something*.” The original texts says: “il y a être, il y a monde, il y a quelque chose”. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, p. 119. This means that the article “a” to the wording “there is a world” is Lingis’ addition. In my view it is a mistake to have this added article as I have argued in the Chapter Two that the world thesis is, as Merleau-Ponty writes in the “Preface” of *Phenomenology of Perception*, the “constant thesis of my life that ‘there is a world,’ or rather, ‘there is the world.’” So if in *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty writes “il y a monde” and not “il y a un monde” it is not correct to translate these words with an article “a”. In connection to this one could ask why does Lingis translate “il y a monde” as “there is a world”, when he does not translate *il y a être* as “there is a being”, but as “there is being”.

365 Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, p. 128.

366 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 119, 165, 170, 219, 252 and 254.

367 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170.

368 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170. The *Lebenswelt* is, of course, a term from Husserl’s late philosophy. This means that some can argue that when Merleau-Ponty calls in this working note the *Lebenswelt* the “universal Being” he is not anymore speaking about “Being in Heidegger’s sense”. To oppose this view it must be said that already in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty sees Heidegger’s thinking of Being and Husserl’s phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* much more similar than often is given credit to. To those who want to distinguish “between the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger” Merleau-Ponty responds that “all of [Heidegger’s] *Sein und Zeit* [Being and Time] emerges from Husserl’s suggestion, and in the end is nothing more than a making explicit of the ‘*natürlichen Weltbegriff*’ [natural concept of the world] or the ‘*Lebenswelt*’ [life-world] that Husserl, toward the end of his life, presented as the fundamental theme of phenomenology”. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxi. This means that, according to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Heidegger’s thinking of Being at least in his book *Being and Time* is “noth-

world is, of course, on the fundamental level, the perceptual world, which is the reason he speaks of the perceptual world when he equates the world and Being. Earlier in Chapter Two I already explicated how, on a fundamental level, the world as the field of all fields is something, even if it is neither a thing nor nothing, and as it is not nothing it is something. As the world is the field of all fields, and immense individual, it is the open world, as was also already mentioned. In its pure immense openness, the world is not restricted by any thing or any field. It is the open world as all the other fields, horizons and levels, as well as all the things, are *enclosed* within it. It does not exclude any of them, but in its openness it includes all of them. What is said of the world can be said in a similar way of Heideggerian Being as, according to Merleau-Ponty, it “is that which is *not nothing*; it is...the open ‘*etwas*’ [something]”. Thus it can initially be said that, on the fundamental ontological level, Being, the world and something, as the open something, are the same. When we speak of “something”, we need to make the distinction between the open something and the closed something. The world and Being are what can be called the open something in the truest sense of word. Everything else is closed something at least in some sense, as they are closed within and enclosed by something else. Things and objects, as well as various fields and horizons, are all something, but not open something in the truest sense of the word. There are various degrees of closed something as, for example, a bench as a thing is something, and a park where the bench is located is also something, but this park is more open something than the bench that is enclosed within this park, even if this bench can be removed from the park and taken somewhere else, which then becomes its dimensional background in place of the park where it was in the first place. This means that various “somethings”, as differing degrees of closed somethings, are all part of Being and the world, but at the same time the something, as the open something, is equal with Being and the world as the “open Being”³⁶⁹ and the open world.³⁷⁰ So the world, and Being as the open something, is the field within which this “smaller,” closed or less open something can appear. All of this, what I have said in the beginning of this chapter, initially means that, in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological ontology, the perceptual faith, or the fundamental faith, can now mean “*openness to being*”³⁷¹ or “there is Being”. Later in this chapter we will

ing more than a making explicit of...the ‘*Lebenswelt*’”. Merleau-Ponty interprets the *Lebenswelt* in the first place as the lived world of perception, that is, the “perceptual world [that] is at bottom Being in Heidegger’s sense”. As, for Merleau-Ponty, the *Lebenswelt* is the perceptual world he is following Husserl for whom the life-world is “the only real world, the one that is actually *given through perception*, that is ever experienced and experienceable”. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 48–49. This means that in his interpretation Merleau-Ponty equates Husserl’s *Lebenswelt* and Being in Heidegger’s sense as both are at the bottom in Merleau-Ponty’s own sense the perceptual world.

369 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 176.

370 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 345.

371 Merleau-Ponty writes: “*openness to being*...is the perceptual faith.” See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 88. The translation has been altered.

see how the expressions “there is Being” and “openness to Being” are synonyms.

Merleau-Ponty takes the ontological reformulation of the world thesis, of the fundamental faith as “there is Being”, from Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology. In “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger states this “there is Being”, as a part of his statement concerning the essence of the human being and the beginning of thinking, as follows: “we are precisely on a plane where *there is principally Being*.”³⁷² Heidegger’s ontological thesis expresses the fundamental and primordial condition and situation of human existence.³⁷³ This ontological thesis states “our first truth”³⁷⁴ as the “truth of Being,” that is, the fundamental principle or beginning of philosophy and human existence in general. So what does this Heidegger’s ontological thesis mean with regards to the truth of Being? Heidegger’s thesis states three things: 1) “we are precisely on a plane,” 2) “there is principally Being” and 3) these two previous principal statements are interconnected and presuppose each other as two sides of the same coin. When one of these ontological statements is explicitly expressed, the other statement is also implicitly uttered. We will soon come to see how these two parts are interconnected. What does Heidegger mean by the first part of his statement “we are precisely on a plane”? In order to understand this, I need to especially understand the meaning of the word “plane” in this statement. This “plane” is the most fundamental level of human existence and, as I am interpreting Heidegger for my Merleau-Pontian purposes, I say, to use Merleau-Ponty’s notions, that this “plane” is the most “common level”³⁷⁵ as “the level of all levels.”³⁷⁶ According to Heidegger, “Being and the plane are the same.”³⁷⁷ This means that it could as well be stated regarding human existence, or regarding our being-in-the-world, that in the primordial manner *we are precisely on Being*. I would suggest that, as my purpose is to use Heidegger to help me interpret Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis “*there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being*”, I could say that Heidegger’s words “we are precisely on a plane”, as we are on Being, could be rephrased with the following words from Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*: “we are within Being”³⁷⁸ (*nous sommes dans l’Être*). If one would take this Merleau-Pontian rephrasing seriously, one could, in my opinion, express this fundamental Heideggerian ontological statement “we are precisely on a plane where there is principally Being” as follows, in a Merleau-Pontian inspired manner: we are precisely within Being where there is principally Being. This could also be ex-

372 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, trans. David Farrell Krell et al. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 214. My emphasis. Merleau-Ponty studies this Heidegger’s ontological principle in his *Heidegger-lectures* from 1959. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France 1958-1959 et 1960-1961* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996) , pp. 113-114.)

373 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 194.

374 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 160.

375 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 180.

376 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 264.

377 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Basic Writings*, p. 214.

378 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 128.

pressed the other way around as: there is principally Being as we are within Being. Since Merleau-Ponty says that the “perceptual world [as was already stated] is at bottom Being in Heidegger’s sense”, I could even state this ontological statement in the words of ontological primacy of perception as follows: we are precisely within Being as the perceptual world where there is principally Being as the perceptual world.

According to Heidegger, this ontological principle “there is Being” conceals within it “the initial mystery for all thinking”³⁷⁹. For this reason, thinking in its most radical or truest sense as phenomenological ontology takes its point of departure from this mystery of “there is Being.” “There is Being” is, according to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the outset of all philosophy, that is, the ultimate principle of ontology. Before I continue investigating the meaning of this ontological thesis, it is important to understand Heidegger’s and late Merleau-Ponty’s view of the relation between philosophy and ontology.

Heidegger and late Merleau-Ponty understand philosophy and ontology as synonymous. The ontological thesis of “there is Being” is not only the beginning, but also the be all and end all of phenomenological ontology as, according to Heidegger, “there is Being” is “*the proper and sole theme of philosophy*”³⁸⁰. But how can “there is Being” simultaneously be the “point of departure” of philosophy and “the proper and *sole* theme of philosophy”? Does this mean that they are the same? Does this mean that philosophy does not move anywhere or progress beyond this fundamental principle as the point of departure? The proper answer is, in the same breath, “yes and no”, depending on what is meant by movement or progress. If the movement means a movement which departs from the fundamental principle of “there is Being,” then the answer is “no.” But if the movement means vertical movement, digging deeper into the layers of this fundamental principle, then the answer is “yes”, as phenomenological philosophy, properly understood, is perpetual recommencement of its own origins as a “philosophy of depths”³⁸¹. It is a continuous return to its own beginnings, to its own ontological root which I have expressed here, following Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, with a principal statement: we are precisely within Being where there is principally Being. It could be said that the interrogation of this ontological principle, as the initial mystery for all thinking, occupies the whole task of phenomenological ontology. As such, philosophy as phenomenological ontology is not only true to its own beginnings, but also true to the perpetual principle of human life, which is always originally in the state of this first truth:

379 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, in *Basic Writings*, p. 214. Translation has been slightly altered. Here it is important to remember that earlier it was stated that, according to Merleau-Ponty and Fink, the greatest mystery is the mystery of the world. So if Heidegger’s Being is, for Merleau-Ponty, essentially the perceived world then one can interpret this to mean within the Merleau-Pontian context that Heidegger is actually saying something very similar to Merleau-Ponty and Fink.

380 Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press), p. 11. Heidegger’s emphasizes.

381 Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 17. See Heidegger on the “progression” of thinking in Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 215.

we are precisely within Being where there is Being. To borrow words from the "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception*, this beginning or the first truth is the "initial, constant, and final situation" of philosophy.

If "the initial mystery for all [philosophical] thinking is concealed in this phrase"³⁸² "there is Being" (*es gibt das Sein, il y a l'Être*), then what does this ontological thesis actually mean? The German wording for "there is" is "*es gibt*", which literally means "it gives." Heidegger describes the thesis "*es gibt das Sein*" in a following way: "The 'it' [*es*] which here 'gives' [*gibt*] is Being itself."³⁸³ This means, according to Heidegger, that the meaning of Being and the "it gives/there is" are actually the same. Being equals the "there is/it gives." This sameness of them means: "It, Being, gives itself."³⁸⁴ But what does this mean, and what does it tell us? Well, first of all, it means that, if "the initial mystery for all thinking is concealed in this phrase" "there is/it gives Being", then it could be as well said that this initial mystery can be found in either Being or "there is/it gives", as they are the same. This also means that "there is/it gives" or "Being" can be understood as "the proper and sole theme of philosophy. Negatively, this means that philosophy is not a *science of beings* but of *Being* or, as the Greek expression goes, *ontology*."³⁸⁵ Here Heidegger defines philosophy, as phenomenological ontology, to be the science of Being instead of the science of beings. Ontology does not study primarily beings, that is, things or objects, but Being. Positive sciences study beings. For example, the positive science of biology studies living beings as organisms, and the science of history studies historical beings, that is, historical events and people as real factual events and as real facts. But these sciences of beings do not study Being, which always has a priority over beings, as we shall see later in this chapter. Ontology, as the science of Being, can be called "the quest of Being"³⁸⁶ or "the question of Being"³⁸⁷, that is, the "interrogation of Being"³⁸⁸. What is important question for ontology when it is trying to understand "Being" is first to understand what *It* is not. In the previous quotation Heidegger made a distinction between Being and beings as he spoke of sciences of beings and a science of Being. This distinction or difference between Being and beings is fundamental for Heidegger. He calls this fundamental difference "the ontological difference."³⁸⁹ The word "beings" is the plural of "a being." A being or beings is/are not a proper theme of philosophy:

382 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 215.

383 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 214. Translation has been slightly altered. This altered translation is taken from a footnote made by Joan Stambaugh in her translation of Heidegger's *Time and Being*. See Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), p. 5n1.

384 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 215.

385 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 11.

386 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 179.

387 Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

388 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 177.

389 See, for example, Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 24, 75 and 119–121 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 270. See also Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*, pp. 10–11 and 22.

as Heidegger famously says so very often, “Being is not a being.”³⁹⁰ This phrase contains the essence of Heidegger’s thinking. To understand the “ontological difference” between Being and beings is the key to understanding his thinking. What is “a being”? It is a thing, an object or an entity. Heidegger also calls a being by the name “the real”³⁹¹. These real beings are, for example, “a table, a chair, a tree, the sky, a body, some word, an action”³⁹². What about Being then? It is instead “that which makes beings as beings possible in *what* and *how* they are.”³⁹³ It is “prior to all beings”³⁹⁴. This means that Being can be called *a priori*. How should this *a priori* of Being be understood? First of all, it must be said that Heidegger’s *a priori*, even if it is the condition of possibility of beings, is not at all the same as Immanuel Kant’s *a priori*.³⁹⁵ Heidegger defines *a priori* as follows: “apriori—what from before, from earlier on already is. The apriori to something is that which already always is the earlier. This is a wholly formal definition of the apriori.”³⁹⁶ Being is that something which already always is the earlier. It is always already before beings. Magda King writes the following about Heidegger’s *a priori* in her book *A Guide to Heidegger’s Being and Time*:

A priori, earlier. Even in our simplest awareness of a thing there lies already the disclosure of something like time, space, relation, and so on. What already lies there in every experience as the condition of its possibility is said to be a priori, “earlier.” It is generally agreed that the business of philosophy—that is, philosophy in the strict and not the popular sense—is to inquire into a priori, but different thinkers have given varying interpretations of how this concept is to be understood.³⁹⁷

What King points out in general terms concerning the *a priori* as the “business of philosophy”, Heidegger expresses as follows in *Being and Time*: “philosophy should have the ‘*a priori*’ as its theme, rather than ‘empirical facts’ as such.”³⁹⁸ In relation to this theme of philosophy, I already quoted Heidegger’s words: “Being is the proper and sole theme of philosophy.”³⁹⁹ This would mean that, according to Heidegger, Being as *a priori* is the proper and sole theme of philosophy. If philosophy as phenomenological ontology studies the priority of Being, then positive sciences as sciences of beings study these “empirical facts” which Heidegger refers to above. Being as *a priori* is the condition of possibility of these so called “empirical facts” and of beings. Being is, according to Heidegger,

390 Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 8. See also “Letter on Humanism,” p. 214.

391 Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 101.

392 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 13.

393 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 324.

394 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 232.

395 The question of Heidegger’s concept of a *a priori* is investigated, for example, in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

396 Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 73.

397 Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger’s Being and Time*, ed. John Llewelyn (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 45.

398 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 210.

399 This wording that I have already quoted is from *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. See also Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 23–24, 49 and 62.

“always already”⁴⁰⁰ there as a condition of possibility before every experience of beings and so-called “empirical facts”. Let us see what this means, according to Heidegger.

This priority of Being is experienced by each and every human being as what is called by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty the primordial or fundamental “understanding of Being”⁴⁰¹, or “experience of Being”⁴⁰². Heidegger’s “understanding of Being” is, in the first place, experiential understanding, and as this is the case in my dissertation I follow Merleau-Ponty when I call this experiential understanding of Being the fundamental “experience of Being”.⁴⁰³ So what does this experiential understanding of Being or the fundamental experience of Being mean? It means that it is not possible to be a human being without this fundamental, or primordial, experience of Being. Even if this the case, it is at the same time important to understand that this experience stays implicit, latent or concealed in our normal and ordinary everydayness. Heidegger writes about this fundamental experience of Being in following way: “Every person in history knows [experientially] Being immediately, though without acknowledging it as such.”⁴⁰⁴ People “always have Being in view, although not in focus”⁴⁰⁵, that is, they “see Being and yet not see it.”⁴⁰⁶ This means that all human beings experience Being and yet do not experience it. What could Heidegger mean by saying that every person at the same time sees, or experiences Being, and yet does not see, or experience, it? He means that they experience it implicitly and do not experience it explicitly. To experience explicitly means to have something in one’s focus. What do people then see or experience explicitly? What is in their focus? The answer is beings. In the ordinary everydayness, according to Heidegger, people “only deal with, and calculate, and organize, beings, they ever find their way within beings and are there ‘at home’ and in their element.”⁴⁰⁷ But without the primordial or fundamental experience of Being, human beings “could never be busy with beings”⁴⁰⁸ in their daily life. This means that the experience of Being is the *a priori* fundamental condition of possibility for any experience of a being, of beings. Being *opens* or *unconceals* beings, that is, things and objects.

In their phenomenological ontologies, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty attempt to call this implicit or hidden experience of Being by many different

400 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 324.

401 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 23, 25, 31–33, 35–37, 39, 41 and 62–63.

402 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 177. Translation has been altered.

403 Jean Grondin also calls Heidegger’s “understanding of Being” “the fundamental experience...of Being” and the “experience of Being”. It is fundamental experience as it always comes before any experience of beings. Jean Grondin, “Why Reawaken the Question of Being?”, in *Heidegger’s Being and Time: Critical Essays*, ed. Richard Polt (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), pp. 25–27. See also John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), pp. 170, 223 and 241.

404 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 149.

405 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, pp. 100–101.

406 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 100.

407 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 101.

408 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 100.

names. One of these names or words of Being is openness [*Offenheit, ouverture*]. Heidegger often speaks about “the openness of Being”⁴⁰⁹. Being as openness is the open region or the clearing. Heidegger writes: “the open region...is Being itself.”⁴¹⁰ He also writes: “the clearing itself is Being.”⁴¹¹ The clearing or the open region is space or dimensionality that is free from obstructions and obstacles. A clearing is, for example, an open space in a forest. Being, as “[t]he clearing[,] is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent.”⁴¹² “Everything” refers to all beings (things, objects and entities). Merleau-Ponty also names “the *Offenheit* [openness] as structure of Being, word of Being.”⁴¹³ Being is the open Being. In relation to the world I have earlier discussed the question of openness or the open, saying that the world, for Merleau-Ponty, is the open world or the open something in the most fundamental sense and, as it is the open, it is the all-inclusive field of all fields within which “everything becomes present and absent.” Other words of Being as the open region are, for example, “universal dimensionality”⁴¹⁴, “common milieu”⁴¹⁵, “common level”⁴¹⁶, and “the world”⁴¹⁷. Being as the “universal dimensionality” equals the meaning of the “field of all fields” and the “horizon of all horizons” as, according to Merleau-Ponty, “[e]ach field is a dimensionality”⁴¹⁸ and Being is the universal dimensionality of all of these fields. Being is the dimensionality of all dimensionalities and for this reason it is the universal dimensionality. This is also the reason that Merleau-Ponty calls Being or the world the “common milieu” and “common level” of everything (all beings and their fields). It is important to remember that, according to Heidegger, “we are on the plane” and that this plane and Being are the same. Merleau-Ponty’s words of Being for this “plane” are “common level” and “common milieu”. What is common to everything is that it is and that it appears within the universal dimensionality. With regards to this commonality, Merleau-Ponty also calls Being the “common inner framework (*membrure*)”⁴¹⁹ of all things and their dimensions. Being would then be the common essential supporting structure within the world (practical world, social world, theoretical world). As, according to Merleau-Ponty, the perceptual world is Being, this means that the perpetual world is the open region, the universal dimensionality, the common level and the common milieu within which

409 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” pp. 228–229.

410 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 214.

411 Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 253.

412 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 384.

413 Merleau-Ponty, quoted by Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Paul B. Milan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 157n26.

414 See Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 213 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 227, 236, 257 and 265.

415 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 88 and *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 102.

416 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 180.

417 See Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 228 and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170 and also pp. 119, 165, 219 and 254.

418 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 227.

419 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 227. See more about this “inner framework” on pp. 215, 220, 223–224, 226, 229, 234, 248, 257 and 261.

all beings appear and disappear, and the common inner framework which supports everything.

After these clarifications on Being, let me revisit Heidegger's statement "we are precisely on a plane where there is principally Being" and my Merleau-Pontian inspired rephrasing of this ontological statement: *we are precisely within Being where there is principally Being*. What could be the meaning of these phrases if they would be interpreted after these clarifications on the meaning of Being. First of all, if one understands Being as openness or, as the open region and as the common level, the first parts of these phrases would say that we are precisely on the common level, as the open region or the openness, and that we are precisely within the common milieu as the open region or as the openness. It could also say that we are precisely on a plane as the perceptual world.⁴²⁰ The second part of these ontological statements as "there is principally Being" would say that there is principally openness or that there is principally the open region. It could also say that there is the common level or that there is the world as the perceptual world.

Earlier in this chapter it was stated that, according to Heidegger, Being and the "there is / it gives" is the same. This means that if they are the same, then also the "there is" would mean "openness" or the "open region." In this sense, one could interpret "there is Being" to mean either *openness Being*, *openness the open region*, *the open region openness* or *openness openness*. Would this kind of interpretation make any sense? Would these kinds of phrasings not look totally nonsensical? Are these phrasings not just tautological statements that merely say: *openness is openness*? Are we supposed to believe that this kind of tautology is the fundamental principle, the point of departure of philosophy, and the fundamental experience of human existence? Is it possible that these phrasings, *openness the open region* and *openness openness*, conceal what Heidegger calls "the initial mystery for all thinking", that is, for all philosophy? What could these two ontological opennesses or open regions be? Are they two dimensions of the same openness? Is there a meeting between these two opennesses? Could there be anything which would make the relation between these opennesses somehow more understandable? The skill is to read these ontological wordings in a correct manner. If one were to connect these two opennesses with a preposition "to", we would be able to express Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's fundamental experience of Being, that is, the experience of "there is Being" as follows: *openness to the open region* or *openness to openness*. With this kind of interpretation the ontological phrase *we are precisely within Being where there is principally Being* would now say *we are precisely within openness or the open region where principally openness to openness or openness to the open region*. As this

420 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 208. Here Merleau-Ponty calls perception "*premier plan de notre recherche*". Lingis translates this to say that perception is "the foreground of our research". *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 158. But perhaps these words of Merleau-Ponty could be interpreted differently to Lingis. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty states here that perception is "the premier plane of our research" as phenomenological ontology always returns to the beginning, that is, to Being as the perceptual world. This would then say that Being as perceptual world is the premier plane.

kind of wording is not grammatically correct because it does not include a verb in its second part, I suggest that we must supplement this sentence with the verb "to open". With this addition, the statement would say: *we are precisely within openness or the open region where principally openness opens to openness, or openness opens to the open region.* This is kind of interpretation follows what Merleau-Ponty writes about Heidegger's *Being* and the *there is/it gives* in his 1959 Heidegger lectures. Merleau-Ponty writes: "what is called *Seyn* or *Sein* [Being] is that which is *not nothing*; it is the 'es gibt' [there is/it gives], the 'there is' [le 'il y a'], the open 'etwas' [something] to which we have 'opening/openness' ['ouverture'] within the truth which we are."⁴²¹ In this crystallization, Merleau-Ponty rephrases Heidegger's fundamental experience of Being expressed in the phrase "we are precisely on a plane where there is principally Being." In this rephrasing of the fundamental experience of Being, Merleau-Ponty states that we have opening or openness to Being (to that which is *not nothing*), to the open something (to the open region, the open dimensionality, the open world, the open horizon/field) within the truth which we are. The truth that Merleau-Ponty is dealing with here is not any kind of traditional truth from the truth theories like truth as correspondence, coherence or pragmatic. The truth in this context, to which Merleau-Ponty is referring, is the ontological truth, which is the condition of all these other truths, that is, the 'first truth' that makes all the other truths possible. In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty writes: "Our first truth—which prejudices nothing and cannot be contested—will be that *there is presence*, that 'something' is there, and that 'someone' is there."⁴²² Here again this "presence" of "there is presence" means Being or openness/opening. "Presence is 'openness'."⁴²³ This means that Merleau-Ponty's notion of our first truth that is beyond doubt could be also stated as the truth of Being, that is, as the truth of there is Being. This first truth was stated earlier in Chapter Two of my dissertation in different words, as the fundamental faith: there is something (the true *cogito*), as "there is the absolute certainty of the world in general" (the *Weltthesis*) and as the primacy of perception: there is the perceived world. "We are" this ontological truth because we cannot be in any manner separated from there is Being or from openness to Being. There is no "someone", that is, "I", "you" or "we", without this first truth. The first truth is openness (the open region) within which beings (things and objects) can appear or disappear or, as Heidegger writes, Being "is the open region [the opening] for everything that becomes present and absent."⁴²⁴

With the help of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger then I can say that the ontological principle is that *we have* openness to Being, to the open something, because of "what *we* ourselves always already *are*"⁴²⁵ from the beginning as our

421 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 102. See also Leonard Lawlor, *Thinking through French Philosophy: the Being of the Question* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 104.

422 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 160. My emphasis.

423 Burke, "Listening at the Abyss," p. 95.

424 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 384.

425 Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, p. 217. My emphasis.

first truth. We are always already within Being (the open region, the word, the common level) where there is Being as openness to Being (the open region, the world). This means that the true essence of human being as “what we ourselves always already are”, according to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, is this “openness to Being”, “openness to the Open”.⁴²⁶ For this reason, for both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the fundamental question of philosophy, that is, “the question of questions”⁴²⁷, is the question concerning the fundamental experience of “the truth of Being”⁴²⁸, that is, “openness to Being”⁴²⁹, “there is principally Being”. This question remains the “initial, constant and final situation” of phenomenological ontology because it always returns to the beginning of everything. With the help of this ontological explication I hope I am ready to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s ontological thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” in the next chapter.

426 David Michael Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason: Echoes of Responsibility in Merleau-Ponty’s Ecology and Levinas’s Ethics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 83. See on essence of human being as “openness to Being”, Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), pp. 140 and 217. See also, Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, trans. William McNeill (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. xxvi and Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, editor’s introduction to *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 3.

427 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 371.

428 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 217 and p. 211.

429 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 371.

CHAPTER 5

The Ontologico-Respiratory Thesis of “There is Really and Truly Inspiration and Expiration of Being” and the Possibility of a New Respiratory Principle of Philosophy

Now I have arrived at a crucial point in this Section One of my dissertation. It is a crucial point, because all my previous investigations concerning the world thesis (in its perceptual and ontological contexts) as the principle of philosophy, and “some immense exterior lung” as the source of our bodily being-in-the-world, have been heading towards it. The purpose of this path that I have travelled in the previous chapters has been to build a conceptual framework to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s phrase “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” within the phenomenologico-ontological context. One of the most fundamental questions in my dissertation is what Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis means if it is interpreted as a question concerning phenomenological ontology? To give context to this ontologico-respiratory thesis, let me first quote the whole sentence from *Eye and Spirit*, in which Merleau-Ponty airs this thesis. This whole sentence says: “What is called ‘inspiration’ should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted.”⁴³⁰ This sentence is truly enigmatic and dense. It seems to hold paradoxical themes of respiration, seeing, painting, action and passion. This piece of text raises a lot of questions. In what way could respiration, seeing and painting be connected to each other? What does it mean to take “inspiration” literally? What is meant by “inspiration and expiration of Being”?

430 The original text *L’Œil et l’Esprit* says: “Ce qu’on appelle inspiration devrait être pris à la lettre: il y a vraiment inspiration et expiration de l’Être, respiration dans l’Être, action et passion si peu discernables qu’on ne sait plus qui voit et qui est vu, qui peint et qui est peint.” Merleau-Ponty, *L’Œil et l’Esprit* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964), pp. 31-32.

How should one understand the wording “respiration within Being”? What is the relation between the “there is” and respiration?

I will first concentrate on the first half of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence. In my investigation I will connect this first half of the sentence with the Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle of Silence the Abyss, which I introduced in Chapter One of my dissertation. My hypothesis is that this first half of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence can open up the respiratory dimension of the Claudelian-inspired principle of Silence the Abyss for us. Merleau-Ponty also calls Claudel’s principle of “Silence the Abyss” by the name “Silence, Abyss”. Merleau-Ponty incorporates this Claudelian principle into his phenomenological ontology to mean Being. Therefore I could say that, for Merleau-Ponty, “Silence the Abyss”, or “Silence, Abyss”, is a word of Being. I am calling the *respiratory dimension* of this Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle of Silence the Abyss *the principle of Silence of Breath*. By the first half of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence from *Eye and Spirit*, I mean: “What is called ‘inspiration’ should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. My other hypothesis, which is essentially connected to the previous hypothesis, is that the second half of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence opens the abyssal and chasmological⁴³¹ dimension of the Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle of Silence the Abyss. This abyssal and chasmological dimension of the second half of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence will be interpreted in Chapter Six as abyssal dehiscence or abyssal yawning between the seer and the seen and between the painter and the painted. I will interpret this abyssal dehiscence or abyssal yawning between the seer and the seen with Merleau-Ponty’s notion the “dehiscence of Being”. Through my etymological investigation, the notion of dehiscence will be interpreted as yawning: thus I will interpret the Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle of Silence the Abyss as having a chasmological dimension. I will call this chasmological dimension the Yawn of Air or the Abyss of Air. Through my etymological examination I will also connect Merleau-Ponty’s abyssal dehiscence of Being with Heidegger’s account of the Greek *khaos*. *Khaos* also means etymologically yawning. I will show that the latter part of Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory sentence from *Eye and Spirit*, which states that there is “action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted”, actually implicitly speaks about this dehiscence or yawning as the Abyss/Yawn of Air. The meaning of this Abyss/Yawn of Air is that there is always already a gap, that is, a gape between the perceiver and the perceived and that this gape or yawn is essentially not only connected to perception but also to air and breathing, as I will show later on in Chapters Six and Seven. In these chapters I will show how the abyss or yawn between the perceiver and the perceived can be interpreted, in aerial terms, as Abyss of *Air* or Yawn of *Air*.

Let us begin the interpretation with Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis. My hypothesis is that a new respiratory principle of philosophy in concealed within his thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and ex-

431 The notion of *chasmological* was defined in the Chapter One as study of yawning.

piration of Being, respiration within Being". This hypothesis is inspired by Heidegger's formulation in "Letter on Humanism", in which he stated: "The initial mystery for all thinking is concealed in [the] phrase" "there is Being." In this hypothesis I also follow de Saint Aubert's initial insight that the notion of "some immense exterior lung" from *Phenomenology of Perception* anticipates the ontological wording "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being". In Chapter Three I stated that the world thesis *there is some immense exterior lung as the world in general* or *there is some immense exterior lung of the world* could be understood as the thesis of the primacy of breathing. Now, if some immense exterior lung and inspiration and expiration of Being are related in some essential manner, it would be important for me to investigate if the ontological thesis of there is inspiration and expiration of Being could be understood as an ontological interpretation of some immense exterior lung. Earlier, I have also suggested following de Saint Aubert's notion that "some immense exterior lung" anticipates the ontological wording of "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration of Being". In the mid-1940s Merleau-Ponty was speaking of the primacy of perception, but at least from 1954 onwards he began to give this primacy of perception explicit ontological emphasis as he spoke of the "ontological priority of the perceived world"⁴³². For example, in his book *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, M.C. Dillon has famously divided Merleau-Ponty's philosophical career into two periods: "the implicit ontology" and "the explicit ontology"⁴³³. This makes me ponder if a similar motion of thought could be found in Merleau-Ponty concerning his cryptic remarks about breathing. This movement of thinking in Merleau-Ponty concerning breathing could perhaps be, if it were put in Dillon's terms, the movement from "some immense exterior lung" as the implicit ontology of breathing to "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" as the explicit ontology of breathing.⁴³⁴ In Chapter Three of this dissertation the thesis of the primacy of respiration or the primacy of breathing was suggested either as the thesis in which the respiratory world would always be the presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence, or as the thesis in which respiration would be the background from which acts stand out, and would be presupposed by them. Now in this chapter the primacy of breathing could perhaps be given an interpretation which would make it possible that we could begin to speak of the ontological primacy of breathing. In order to give this ontological horizon to breathing I will argue that in his ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" Merleau-Ponty *implicitly* gives a respiratory context to Heidegger's and his own ontological principle of philosophy: there is Being.

In the previous chapter I have investigated the meaning of Heidegger's ontological statement "precisely we are on a plane where there is principally

432 Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, p. 126.

433 Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, pp. vii, 86, 106, 153 and 174.

434 It is important to know that Dillon himself never connects his idea of the "implicit ontology" and the "explicit ontology" in Merleau-Ponty to the question of breathing.

Being" (*précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l'Être*) and my Merleau-Pontian inspired rephrasing of this statement as *precisely we are within Being where there is principally Being*. These ontological statements contain the essence of human existence. In this chapter I interpret Merleau-Ponty's words "[w]hat is called 'inspiration' should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" with the help of these ontological statements concerning the essence of human existence. In addition to this, I will also enlist Bachelard's help in order to interpret Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory statement. I argue that Merleau-Ponty conjoins Heidegger's ontological principle "there is principally Being" with Bachelard's respiratory phrase from *Air and Dreams* (the original title *L'Air et les Songes*): "it is...really and truly breath...which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being (*C'est...vraiment...le soufflé qui est...le premier phénomène du silence de l'être*)"⁴³⁵ to express the ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being (*il y a vraiment inspiration et expiration de l'Être, respiration dans l'Être*)". I make this claim as, in my interpretation, all the extra elements ("really and truly," "inspiration," "expiration" and "respiration with Being") of Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis in relation to Heidegger's "there is principally [in the first place] Being" seem to come from Bachelard's respiratory phrase and from a few pages around this phrase in *Air and Dreams*. In the following I will explicate what I mean by Merleau-Ponty's conjoining of Heidegger's ontological thesis and Bachelard's respiratory phrase.

To start my interpretative explication of how Merleau-Ponty perhaps arrives to his ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly [*vraiment*] inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", I will first suggest that in his thesis he changes Heidegger's notion *principalement* (principally) of "*il y a principalement l'Être*" to Bachelard's notion *vraiment* (really and truly). Heidegger's "there is *principally* Being" changes in Merleau-Ponty's thesis into a form which states: there is *really and truly* Being. But it is important to notice that Bachelard's phrase "it is...really and truly breath...which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being" (*C'est...vraiment...le soufflé qui est...le premier phénomène du silence de l'être*) also speaks about *le premier phénomène...de l'être* (the premier phenomenon...of being). This is interesting and important because the adjectival form of *premier* is *premièrement*, which means "in the first place", as does Heidegger's *principalement*. Thus, one can notice that both Heidegger's and Bachelard's wordings connect principality to Being, even if they do so in different ways.

To clarify how the conjoining of Heidegger's ontological thesis and Bachelard's respiratory phrase in Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis is possible, I need to understand the ontological connection between the expressions "there is" and "it is". As I have already noticed, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty use the wording "there is" in their ontological theses, while Bachelard

435 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes: Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Librairie José Corti, 1943), p. 313.

uses “it is” in his respiratory phrase. In his book *Parmenides*, Heidegger equates Being and “it is”.⁴³⁶ I have already mentioned that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty both equate *Es gibt* (there is/it gives) and *il y a* (there is) with Being. So if “it is” and Being are synonyms, along with “there is” and Being, I will also interpret “there is” and “it is” to be synonyms too in this ontological context. If this is the case, then it would mean that I could transform Bachelard’s phrase, in which he uses the wording “it is”, into the following form: *there is really and truly breath which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being*. With this reformulation of Bachelard’s respiratory phrase, I have made it express the thesis of “there is” in a more explicit ontological manner. Now Bachelard’s mutated phrase looks more like Merleau-Ponty’s thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, as both of these phrases are now stating “there is really and truly” in an identical manner, and both are referring to breathing and being/Being.

Merleau-Ponty’s thematic reference to breathing as “*inspiration*”, “*expiration*” and “*respiration dans l’Être*” (respiration within Being) also seem, in my interpretation, to be taken from Bachelard’s *Air and Dreams*. I claim this as Bachelard uses the respiratory terms “*inspirant*” (inspiratory), “*expirant*” (expiratory) and “*l’être respirant*” (respiratory being)⁴³⁷ in *Air and Dreams*, just one page before his phrase “it is...really and truly breath...which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being”. I suggest that Merleau-Ponty changes these adjective forms into noun forms in his ontologico-respiratory thesis. As breath is understood as “*inspiration*”, “*expiration*” and “*respiration*”, this means that my reformulation or mutation of Bachelard’s respiratory phrase *there is really and truly breath* can now go through another reformulation. In this second reformulation of Bachelard’s respiratory phrase, the word “breath” has been changed into “*inspiration*”, “*expiration*” and “*respiration*”. This is possible as “*inspiration*” and “*expiration*” are phases of the breath, and “*respiration*” may be understood as a synonym of “breath”. With this change of words, Bachelard’s mutated phrase says: *there is really and truly inspiration, expiration and respiration*. According to Bachelard, breath is the premier phenomenon of the silence of being. So, in Bachelard’s view there is silence of being (*silence de l’être*). Also, according to Merleau-Ponty, Being is silence. For example, in connection to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of Being, David Kleinberg-Levin, Remy Kwant and Gary Brent Madison speak of “the silence of Being”.⁴³⁸ Being is silence of Being. If, in Bachelard’s view, “breath...is the premier phenomenon of silence of being”, this means that breath is a phenomenon of being, and as such one can speak of the breath of being. If it is the case that Merleau-Ponty reads this Bachelard’s “breath (*soufflé*)” as inspiration, expiration and respiration, in my view, this would mean (as I am trying to show step by step how Merleau-Ponty conjoins

436 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 18.

437 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 312.

438 Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 99, Remy Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophical Life* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), pp. 187-9 and Madison, *Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, pp. 198-201.

Heidegger's ontological thesis and Bachelard's respiratory phrase in his own ontologico-respiratory thesis) that Merleau-Ponty changes Bachelard's "breath...of (silence of) being" into "inspiration and expiration of (silence of) Being". With this kind of interpretation, the next step of my reformulation of Bachelard's respiratory phrase would say the following: *there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of (silence of) Being*. If one would drop the wording "silence of" from this rephrasing, it would mean that the entire beginning of Merleau-Ponty's thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" would be in place, as now it would say, "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being".

Let us then turn to Bachelard's words "*l'être respirant*" (respiratory being) in order to understand what they could mean in relation to Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis, as we are still missing the words "respiration within Being". What I suggest next is perhaps even more conjectural compared to what I have said previously about the relation between Bachelard's respiratory phrase and Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis. One could speculate that the original philosophical inspiration for Merleau-Ponty to give the ontological thesis "there is Being" a respiratory context arises from a sentence in *Air and Dreams*, in which Bachelard uses the term "*l'être respirant*" (respiratory being) in close connection to the notion of "*il y a*". In this sentence he airs the notions "*il y a*" (there is) and "*l'être respirant*" in reverse order "*l'être respirant, il y a*" ("the respiratory being, there is"). This sentence runs in French as follows: "*De l'univers à l'être respirant, il y a le rapport de la santé constituante à la santé constituée*"⁴³⁹ ("From the universe to the respiratory being, there is the rapport/link from the constituting health to the constituted health"). One could form a certain kind of prototype of Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis by reversing the order of Bachelard's sentence and separating these two notions *l'être respirant* and *il y a* from the whole of the sentence into a phrase which would simply say *il y a l'être respirant* (there is the respiratory being). This, of course, is purely conjectural, but as Bachelard's text fragment "*l'être respirant, il y a*" appears just a page before his phrase "it is...really and truly breath...which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being", it is an interesting hypothetical scenario of how "*il y a*" may have taken on a respiratory meaning in Merleau-Ponty's mind. This speculation does not, of course, make any sense to a person who is not sensitive to the tradition of phenomenological ontology, in which the notion of "there is" (*il y a/es gibt*) plays such an important role. For a person who lives in the normal state of forgetfulness of Being, the mysterious notion of *il y a* does not wake one up into a wondering state of being. For a philosopher, however, especially the calibre of Merleau-Ponty, who is highly attuned to the special ontological meaning of the "there is", I would say that every reading of the phrasing of *il y a*, especially in connection to *l'être*, would make him truly alert to its philosophical and ontological possibilities. This is especially true for Merleau-Ponty with regards to Bachelard as his elemental poetics is one of the key influences in the creation of Merleau-Ponty's late ontology of Being and the

439 Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, p. 312.

Flesh.⁴⁴⁰ If I combine my previous rephrasing of Bachelard as “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being” with this last speculative phrasing “there is respiratory being”, I arrive at: “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiratory b/Being”. This is not quite yet Merleau-Ponty’s “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, but it is getting closer to it. As I said earlier, Merleau-Ponty, in my view, changes Bachelard’s adjectives “inspiratory”, “expiratory” and “respiratory” into the nouns “inspiration”, “expiration” and “respiration”. If I follow this idea by changing the adjective “respiratory” to the noun “respiration”, the last phrasing could be rephrased to say, “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration b/Being”. This kind of phrasing is, of course, grammatically incorrect as it is missing a preposition between the words “respiration” and “b/Being”. In Merleau-Ponty’s thesis, this preposition is “within”. In order to connect “respiration” to “within Being”, one needs, in my view, to connect what I have said now in this chapter about Merleau-Ponty’s and Bachelard’s respiratory phrases and what I have said previously about the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological statement *we are within Being where there is principally Being*.

I will argue that Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” places the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological statement *we are within Being where there is principally Being*, or “we are precisely on a plane where there is principally”, on a new level or a new plane. I will show in the following how, in my interpretation, this phenomenologico-ontological statement can be transformed into an ontologico-respiratory statement with the help of both Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis and Bachelard’s respiratory phrase. Let us begin with the “respiration within Being” (“*respiration dans l’Être*”) part of Merleau-Ponty’s phrase in connection to the ontological statement *we are within Being where there is principally Being*. In my view, I can combine Merleau-Ponty’s “respiration within Being” from *Eye and Spirit* and “we are within Being” (“*nous sommes dans l’Être*”⁴⁴¹) from *The Visible and the Invisible*. In doing so, “respiration” becomes what “we are within Being”. I am thus able to say *we are respiration within Being (nous sommes respiration dans l’Être)*. If I follow this same train of thought, I could also combine the two ontological theses of “there is Being”: Heidegger’s “*there is principally Being*” and Merleau-Ponty’s “*there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*”. I also earlier suggested that Merleau-Ponty changes Heidegger’s *principally* to Bachelard’s *really and truly* in his ontologico-respiratory thesis, but at the same time I also noticed that Bachelard’s respiratory phrase speaks of principality with the word *premier*, as he says that “breath is the premier phenomenon of the silence of being”. In this way I was

440 Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. 461n73, Fabrice Colonna, “Abstract: Merleau-Ponty Thinker of the Imaginary”, *Chiasmi International*, no. 5 (2004), pp. 145–146 and Glen A. Mazis, *Merleau-Ponty and the Face of the World: Silence, Ethics, Imagination, and Poetic Ontology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), pp. 255–269.

441 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945), p. 167.

able to say that it could be interpreted that Merleau-Ponty transforms Heidegger's "there is principally Being", with the aid of Bachelard, into "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being," but as the breath is the premier phenomenon of being it could be also interpreted that this "really and truly" includes "principally", which would mean that one could equally say: *there is principally inspiration and expiration of Being*. The adjective "principally" means "in the first place", so this ontologico-respiratory thesis could be also expressed as *there is in the first place inspiration and expiration of Being*. This would mean that this ontologico-respiratory thesis would explicitly say that there is an ontological priority or primacy of inspiration and expiration of Being. Now, if one remembers that it was said that "some immense exterior lung" anticipates "inspiration and expiration of Being", this ontological priority of breathing as inspiration and expiration of Being would go well together with the primacy of breathing that was suggested in Chapter Three in connection with this immense lung as the immense lung of the world. If I were at this moment to put together my interpretation of the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological statement "we are within Being where there is principally Being" with Bachelard's respiratory phrase and Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis, I could come up with the following formulation: *we are respiration within Being where there is (in the first place⁴⁴²) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. This new ontologico-respiratory statement airs the essence of human existence as what we always already are, and the phenomenon of respiration as a fundamental experience of Being.

Merleau-Ponty does not in any explicit way clarify what he means by his ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" in *Eye and Spirit*. Similarly, I do not get any explicit help or guidance from the community of Merleau-Ponty scholars who have devoted their life to examining manifold and different dimensions and possibilities of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The reason for this is that no member of the Merleau-Ponty scholarly community, or for that matter any philosopher or researcher in general, has made any explicit attempt of inquiry concerning Merleau-Ponty's respiratory phrase *except* a few small references to this ontologico-respiratory thesis. Most of these small references by Merleau-Ponty scholars to this ontologico-respiratory thesis of "inspiration and expiration of Being" understand it as a metaphor for "artistic inspiration"⁴⁴³ or as a meta-

442 This expression of "in the first place" refers both to the notion of *principally* of Heidegger's ontological thesis and to the notion of *premier* of Bachelard's respiratory phrase.

443 Kearney, *Navigations*, p. 447n13 and Fóti, *Tracing Expression in Merleau-Ponty*, p. 46. See also Jenny Slatman, "Phenomenology of the Icon", in *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition*, eds. Bernard Flynn, Wayne J. Froman and Robert Vallier (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 202 and Luigi Corrias, *The Passivity of Law: Competence and Constitution in the European Court of Justice* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), p. 98. In Duane H. Davis' interpretation this Merleau-Ponty's ontological expression is painter's colours as he writes: "Colors for Merleau-Ponty's [Paul] Klee are 'inspiration and expiration of Being', 'exhaled at the right place'." Duane H. Davis, "The Art of Perception", in *Merleau-Ponty and the*

phoric notion to describe perception as the reversibility of Being.⁴⁴⁴ The few exceptions to this norm are Galen A. Johnson, Jessica Wiskus, David E. Pettigrew, Emmanuel de Saint Aubert and David Kleinberg-Levin. However, even out of these five philosophers, only Kleinberg-Levin pays inspiration and expiration of Being any real attention, and even he does not really place this ontologico-respiratory thesis in the explicit focus of investigation.⁴⁴⁵ Johnson and Wiskus very briefly acknowledge that the expression “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” is about “the rhythm of breathing”⁴⁴⁶ and about “our very breath”.⁴⁴⁷ Pettigrew makes a brief remark about inspiration and expiration of Being as an “ontological allegory” and compares it to Heraclitus’ “the breath-soul”.⁴⁴⁸ Saint Aubert has used Merleau-Ponty’s inspiration and expiration of Being as one of the important examples of reversibility regarding our active and passive being-in-the-world, the other examples being vibration and sensible communion, to study how Paul “Caudel’s strange theory of ‘co-naissance’ (both knowledge and literally co-birthing)”⁴⁴⁹ has influenced Merleau-Ponty’s thought. He has also emphasized Caudel’s presence in *Phenomenology of Perception*’s respiratory piece of text that I earlier quoted about the process of falling asleep as oral communication with some immense exterior lung. According to de Saint Aubert, this text passage on the process of falling asleep, as I have briefly mentioned a few times, “offers an astonishing anticipation of the ontology...of [Merleau-Ponty’s] last writings, in particular of the passages of *Eye and Spirit* on respiration of Being, vibration and the possession of sensi-

Art of Perception, eds. Duane H. Davis and William S. Hamrick (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), p. 48.

- 444 Douglas Low, *Merleau-Ponty’s Last Vision: A Proposal for the Completion of The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000), p. 59.
- 445 Kleinberg-Levin names breathing as “our first and most primordial openness” in his article from 1984 [David Michael Levin, “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 14 (1984), pp. 121-147], but after that he seems to forget the primordially of breathing till 2008 when he publishes book *Before the Voice of Reason* in which he returns to this idea of primordially of breath. For example, in his important and famous trilogy *The Body’s Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), *The Opening Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (London: Routledge, 1988), and *The Listening Self: Personal Growth, Social Change, and the Closure of Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1989) the phenomenon of breathing is mentioned few times and the primordially of breathing is a forgotten idea. Also in a short text “Understanding: Learning to Stand on the Earth and Stand under the Sky” from 1999 in which Kleinberg-Levin summarizes his philosophy till that day there is not a single mention of the phenomenon of breathing in general or of breathing as “our first and most primordial openness” in particular.
- 446 Galen A. Johnson, *The Retrieval of the Beautiful: Thinking Merleau-Ponty’s Aesthetics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), p. 201.
- 447 Jessica Wiskus, “Cohesion and Expression: Merleau-Ponty on Cézanne,” in *Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception*, eds. Duane H. Davis and William S. Hamrick (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), p. 72. See also a brief reference to the importance of respiration in Merleau-Ponty’s “respiration in Being”, David Morris, “The Enigma of Reversibility and the Genesis of Sense in Merleau-Ponty”, *Continental Philosophy Review* 43 (2010): pp. 151 and 151n34.
- 448 David E. Pettigrew, “Merleau-Ponty and the Unconscious: A Poetic Vision,” in *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World*, eds. Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 65.
- 449 Saint Aubert, “La ‘co-naissance Merleau-Ponty et Claudel,” p. 278.

ble.”⁴⁵⁰ For my phenomenologico-ontological investigation of breathing, it is very inspiring that de Saint Aubert conceives an important connection between *Phenomenology of Perception*’s “some immense exterior lung” and *Eye and Spirit*’s “respiration of Being”. Saint Aubert’s remarks about inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being are very brief, but the important thing is that he takes inspiration and expiration of Being literally as a phenomenon of breathing and sees its connection to some exterior immense lung. Saint Aubert sees that some exterior immense lung anticipates inspiration and expiration of Being. My most important influence is Kleinberg-Levin’s two texts. The first one is an article titled “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing” from 1984, and the second is a subchapter titled “The Song of the Winds” in Kleinberg-Levin’s book titled *Before the Voice of Reason: Echoes of Responsibility in Merleau-Ponty’s Ecology and Levinas’s Ethics* from 2008. Both of these texts (the article and the subchapter) begin by quoting Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement in the following form from *Eye and Spirit*: “We speak of ‘inspiration’, and the word should be taken literally. There really is inspiration and expiration of Being...”⁴⁵¹ In both of these texts Kleinberg-Levin follows Merleau-Ponty’s advice to take “inspiration” literally as “breathing in, inhalation”, that is, as the essential dimension of the phenomenon of breathing. Both of these texts are phenomenologico-ontological investigations of breathing, and they make particular use of Merleau-Ponty’s and Heidegger’s phenomenological ontologies as their theoretical background. But even if they both commence by quoting Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement, they only very briefly make any explicit reference to this particular piece of text. Actually, both of Kleinberg-Levin’s texts have only one explicit reference to Merleau-Ponty’s statement apart from the starting quotation. In the article “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing”, Kleinberg-Levin writes: “If *there really is an inspiration and expiration of Being*, then it would seem needful that we give thought to the potentially spacious nature of our breathing, and that, in particular, we consider some way to actualize and fulfill its primordial experience of Being.”⁴⁵² In the subchapter “The Song of the Winds” Kleinberg-Levin writes: “If *there really is*, as Merleau-Ponty’s late phenomenology suggests, *an inspiration and expiration of being*, then that could be taken as the ontological measure for the ecstatic fulfillment of our experience with breathing.”⁴⁵³ In these quotations Kleinberg-Levin connects Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis of inspiration and expiration of Being to the phenomenon of breathing, to the ontological dimensions of breathing and to the primordial experience of Being. In this sense I can say that Kleinberg-Levin’s ontological interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s onto-

450 Saint Aubert, *Du lien de êtres aux éléments de l’être*, p. 246. Saint Aubert speaks of Merleau-Ponty’s “respiration of Being” but it is important to remember that Merleau-Ponty does not exactly use this notion in *Eye and Spirit*. He is speaks of “inspiration and expiration of Being” and “respiration within Being”.

451 Kleinberg-Levin quotes in both of the cases Dallery’s translation that leaves out of the translation “*respiration dans l’Être*”. Levin, “Logos and Psyche,” p. 121 and Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 71.

452 Levin, “Logos and Psyche,” p. 131. My emphasis.

453 Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 80. My emphasis.

logico-respiratory thesis shows the way in a very inspiring manner with regards to my own interpretation. Let us follow a few of the other key points in these two texts by Kleinberg-Levin. The most important point is the ontological primacy of breathing as the primordial experience of Being, that is, the idea that breathing is the principle, the beginning of life and philosophy. Kleinberg-Levin explicitly states this ontological primacy of breathing in these three following sentences: 1) "Breathing...is our first and most primordial openness to elemental being...[to] a sphere of air, i.e., an elemental atmosphere,"⁴⁵⁴ 2) "Breathing is our most fundamental openness, our most fundamental experience of non-duality"⁴⁵⁵ and finally 3) "Breathing is our body's first openness to Being."⁴⁵⁶

I stated earlier in this chapter the ontologico-respiratory principle, or the point of departure of philosophy, and respiration as the fundamental, or primordial, experience of Being as follows: *we are respiration within Being where there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. What does this mean? And how do Kleinberg-Levin's statements about the ontological primacy of breathing relate to this ontologico-respiratory principle? Does this ontologico-respiratory principle conceal within itself the initial mystery for all philosophical thinking in a similar manner as Heidegger says "there is Being" does? I have discovered in the previous chapter (Chapter Four) that this initial mystery of ontology, the question of questions of philosophy, is "openness to Being", "there is principally Being". This ontological principle, as the initial mystery of ontology, expresses "our first truth", that is, "the truth of Being" within which we are from the very start. So how should one interpret the meaning of *we are respiration within Being where there is really and truly in the first place inspiration and expiration of Being*?

I will first investigate the meaning of "we are" in this ontologico-respiratory statement or principle. I will interpret this "we are" in the Merleau-Pontian context that I have spoken of earlier in Chapter Two of my dissertation. This "we are" refers in the first place to the essence of human existence as "what we ourselves always already are", to use Heidegger's formulation. In the Merleau-Pontian context it can be said that the "we are" as "what we ourselves always already are" means all the living body-subjects as the natural selves that are always in the state of openness to something, that is, in the state of there is something. This "we are" is our bodily existence as our very being, which Merleau-Ponty defines as our simultaneous contact with ourselves as natural embodied selves and with the world or Being, and as the profound movement of transcendence between the body-subject and the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this contact or relationship means openness.⁴⁵⁷ What about the notion of respiration as we are respiration in my ontologico-respiratory statement, and its connection

454 Levin, "Logos and Psyche," p. 124.

455 This sentence appears in an identical form in both of Kleinberg-Levin's texts on breathing. Levin, "Logos and Psyche," p. 129 and Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 79.

456 Levin, "Logos and Psyche," p. 126.

457 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 128.

to “we are” as “what we ourselves always already are”? Respiration is a contact or a relationship, that is, it is an openness between ourselves and something. Respiration as openness could be called respiratory openness or respiratory opening, in a similar manner as Merleau-Ponty calls perception “perceptual openness”. This means that the notion “we are” as bodily openness can be interpreted to mean a respiratory openness or respiratory opening. This would mean that the ontological phrasing *we are respiration within Being* (“what we ourselves always already are”) means we are, as bodily openness, in the first place respiratory openness within Being. How could I interpret the meaning of Being in this phrase? It must be remembered that Being was defined in the previous chapter as that which is not a thing or an object, but the *there is*, openness, the open region, the open something, the universal dimensionality, the horizon of all horizons, the common level, the common milieu, the clearing and the world. This would mean that this ontologico-respiratory statement *we are respiration within Being*, as the fundamental experience of Being and as the essence of human existence, could be interpreted to say that what we ourselves always already are is the embodied respiration as respiratory openness within the open region, the open something, the universal dimensionality, or the world.

Having given an initial interpretation to the phrasing *we are respiration within Being*, it is time to try to interpret the other half of Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement. This other half runs as follows: there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being. What could be the ontological meaning of this ontologico-respiratory thesis? First of all, it has been said many times that this ontologico-respiratory thesis is understood in my dissertation as an alternation of the ontological principle “there is principally Being”, which expresses the fundamental experience of Being as openness to Being, that is, as openness to the Open, the universal dimensionality or the open world. This means that I will interpret this ontologico-respiratory thesis following what I have previously said about the meaning of Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological principle of “there is Being”. I will initially interpret the “there is” of this thesis as “openness”. This interpretation follows both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty as, for them, “there is” and “openness” are the same. Openness is neither a thing nor an object, but it is still something which Merleau-Ponty also calls “not nothing”. This openness is receptivity, that is, openness to receive.⁴⁵⁸ It is open access to Being. Receptivity or open access is not any kind of thing or object, but a condition of possibility that one can experience things and objects. Taking all of this into account, I will again ask how one can interpret the meaning of the ontologico-respiratory thesis *there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. This thesis expresses at least openness in the first place to inspiration and expiration of Being. As in phenomenological ontology the *there is* and Being are the same, this makes me wonder what that would mean in reference to Merleau-Ponty’s respiratory thesis? Would it mean that, as Being “is” inspiration and expiration of Being, the “there is” in this thesis should also be called the *inspiratory and expiratory there is*,

458 David Michael Levin, *The Body’s Recollection of Being*, pp. 54, 178–179, 243 and 290.

or *inspiration and expiration of the there is*? If that is the case, could I also then speak of inspiratory and expiratory openness, or inspiration and expiration of openness? This would perhaps mean that, if I was to answer “yes” to these questions, then Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis could now also be stated as follows: inspiratory and expiratory openness (in the first place) to inspiration and expiration of Being.

After this interpretative possibility, let us turn to the notion of *vraiment* in Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis. What is the meaning of this notion of “really and truly” (*vraiment*), which Merleau-Ponty, in my interpretation, takes from Bachelard’s respiratory phrase “it is...really and truly (*vraiment*) breath...which is the premier phenomenon of silence of being”? I will initially interpret *vraiment* (really and truly) to mean “really”, which emphasizes that the notions of “inspiration”, “expiration” and “respiration” in Merleau-Ponty’s thesis are not to be understood as metaphors. It has been earlier mentioned that the expression of “inspiration and expiration of Being” has been understood as a metaphor for artistic inspiration, or as a metaphor for perception as the reversibility of Being between the perceiver and the perceived. These interpretations are understandable possibilities of the whole of Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory sentence: “What is called ‘inspiration’ should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted.” The “inspiration” can be understood as artistic inspiration, as this sentence speaks of the action and passion of painting, as *Eye and Spirit* in general speaks of the “theory of painting”.⁴⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty’s “inspiration and expiration of Being” can also be understood as a metaphoric expression of the perceptual reversibility of the seer and the seen as in it “one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen”.⁴⁶⁰ But neither of these interpretations takes truly seriously the beginning of Merleau-Ponty’s sentence, which states that the notion of “inspiration” should be taken literally and that “there is *really and truly* inspiration and expiration of Being”. Instead of these metaphoric interpretations of the meaning of this sentence, the *vraiment* as really, in my interpretation, is connected with the beginning of this whole sentence that says, “what is called ‘inspiration’ should be taken literally”. The literal meaning of “inspiration” is “inhalation” or “in-breath”.⁴⁶¹ This is the literal meaning of “in-

459 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 361.

460 Merleau-Ponty uses this expression “one no longer knows” always in reference to the phenomenon of reversibility. See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp.139 and 264–265. But this reversibility does not have to be automatically a reversibility of the seer and the seen or the painting and the painted. It could be also, for example, a reversibility of inspiration and expiration.

461 For example, in his book *Inspiration* David R. Law writes: “The term ‘inspiration’ means literally ‘in-breathing’.” David R. Law, *Inspiration* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 49. See also Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume I* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 114, Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 108 and Jane Piirto, “Creativity,” in *The Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology: Volume 2*, eds. Joe L. Kincheloe and Raymond A. Horn (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), p. 314.

spiration" because the Latin word "inspiration" comes from the words *in-* which means "in" and *spirare* which means "to breathe". If, in the case of "inspiration", the word is taken literally, and is at the same time read in relation with "really", I suggest that this should also be done with the words "expiration" and "respiration" in this sentence. The literal meaning of "expiration" is "exhalation" or "out-breath" as this word comes from the Latin *ex-* "out" and, like "inspiration", from *spirare* "to breathe". The word "respiration" literally means "breathing again" as the Latin *re-* in this case means "again" with *spirare*. This "really" can also refer to the *emphasization* of the enigmatic expression of "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", that is, "there is *really* inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being". This would perhaps mean that Merleau-Ponty here emphasizes that this ontologico-respiratory region, as the universal dimensionality, really exists. As this ontologico-respiratory thesis that I am interpreting is the fundamental principle, it also means that *in the first place* there is really inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being, that is, that there is really ontological level or dimension of breathing as the ontological principle and that all the other meanings of breathing come later and are always based on the foundation of this ontological principle. This would mean, for example, that the natural scientific (respiratory physiological) concept of respiration as the gas exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide and as cellular respiration is secondary to the fundamental experience of inspiration and expiration of Being, that is, to the ontological experience of inhalation and exhalation. So there is *really* an ontological dimension of breathing and it has, for example, a priority over the natural scientific concept of breathing. This French word *vraiment* also means "truly", and if I would think about the meaning of "truly" in connection to this ontologico-respiratory thesis, what could it mean? What could it mean that there is *truly* inspiration and expiration of Being? If there is *really* an ontological meaning of breathing or respiration as the primordial *reality*⁴⁶² or realm of breathing in the sense of the ontological priority over other kinds of notions of breathing, could I also say that there is *truly* an ontological meaning of breathing. This could then be interpreted to mean that *vraiment* as "truly" would refer to the ontological truth as the truth of Being, that is, to our first truth. In the previous chapter, this truth of Being as our first truth was stated in the following manner: there is principally Being. If my whole explication until now concerning "there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being" would be collected together as one single ontologico-respiratory thesis, it could be stated as follows: our first truth as the truth of Being is, in the first place, before anything else, inhaling and exhaling openness to inhalation and exhalation of Being as the open something, the universal dimensionality or the world.

462 This reality could also be called following Bachelard "the realism of unreality" or Merleau-Ponty the "striking experience of the unreal" as it is important to remember that Being is not any *real* thing, but unreal from the perspective of beings. Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 5 So it is a reality that is not at all reality of the real beings, but more like a paradoxical reality of the unreality. See also Mazis, *Merleau-Ponty and the Face of the World*, pp. 179–180, 207–208, 237 and 253–254.

Before I try to give an initial interpretation of the whole of this ontologico-respiratory statement, let me try to think how I could interpret Being in a new way in this statement. I have already stated that Being is not a being (a thing, an object), but that It is “the open region”, “the open something”, “the universal dimensionality”, “the world”, “the open horizon”, “the field of all fields”, “openness”, “that which is not nothing”, the “there is”, the “source”, the “common milieu” and the “common level”. Being is that first opening or openness within which things and objects can appear, and become present for us.⁴⁶³ It is the universal dimensionality that reveals beings as beings, that is, makes their appearance possible in what and how they are. Or, as Levin puts it, “Being is not *a* being, but rather the dimensionality within which all beings are to be encountered.”⁴⁶⁴ Perception as openness to things and to the world is the essential dimension of this opening of Being, that is, the fundamental experience of Being. Merleau-Ponty rarely speaks of air, but I would still argue that what he says on those rare occasions is highly important and could have massive implications if his short remarks about the air would be taken into serious account. Then the element of air would play a crucial role in the perceptual opening of Being. In his working note from November 1959 in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes: “Perception is not first a perception of *things*, but a perception of *elements* (water, air...)”⁴⁶⁵. I will take these words of Merleau-Ponty very seriously in my interpretation of the meaning of Being. For Merleau-Ponty, the elements are “not objects, but fields”⁴⁶⁶. Here I emphasize the element of air as “an ‘element’ of Being”⁴⁶⁷. Air is thus an element of that which is not an object or a thing.⁴⁶⁸ The element of air could be understood as an element of the open something, “a field of Being”⁴⁶⁹. This means that perception is, in the first place, a perception of elemental air, which is not a thing or an object, but a field, that is, a field within which we can perceive things. In one late Merleau-Ponty lecture note, this elemental field of air is thought of as a “space of open air, a crossroads where all things come to exist for one another”⁴⁷⁰. This would mean that perception is, in the first place, a perception of the “space of open air”, and secondly of the things within this elemental open air. It is important to know that Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the elements is deeply influenced by Bachelard. For Bachelard, the elements (air, water, fire and earth) are imaginary. For example, in *Air and Dreams* he speaks about “the imaginary air”⁴⁷¹. Merleau-

463 In the words of William J. Richardson “Being [is] the Source of all beings”. William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 4th edn. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), p. 476.

464 Levin, *The Body’s Recollection of Being*, p. 11.

465 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 218.

466 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 267.

467 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139.

468 Bachelard writes in *Air and Dreams*: “Air...frees us from our attachment to matter”, to material objects. Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 136. It can free us from this attachment as it is not itself an object of any kind.

469 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 202 and p. 240.

470 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, pp. 371-372. See also Rudi Visker, *Truth and Singularity*, p. 211.

471 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 11, p. 71 and p. 152.

Ponty's late ontology of Being is deeply inspired by Bachelard's elemental poetics. In Merleau-Ponty's thinking of Being, Bachelard's notion of *the imaginary* equals Being, or is at least a fundamental dimension of Being. Like Being, the imaginary is the "open"⁴⁷² and the unreal, that is, it is not a thing, but a field.⁴⁷³ The "imaginary air", for Bachelard, is definitely "open something", that is, "the reign of 'open silence'". It is "the silence which breathes."⁴⁷⁴ Bachelard also calls this "imaginary air" as "the reign of 'open silence'" by the names "the free air (*l'air libre*)"⁴⁷⁵ and "an aerial world"⁴⁷⁶.

In 1960, Merleau-Ponty defines the ultimate achievement of Husserl's last philosophy in *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology* by quoting Husserl's last assistant Fink: "Even Husserl's last philosophy is in no way a gathered harvest, an acquired domain of cultivated spirit, a house in which one can conveniently set up housekeeping. Everything is open, all the paths lead out to the free air (*l'air libre*)."⁴⁷⁷ The last sentence of this quotation not only defines Husserl's last philosophy, but Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the ultimate definition of philosophical interrogation. Philosophy as radical reflection is an open project that always happens within the dimensional rootedness of "open Being"⁴⁷⁸, and it always returns to this openness of Being which Merleau-Ponty names here as "the free air" (*Freie; l'air libre*). For Merleau-Ponty, in true philosophy, "everything is open, all the paths lead out to the free air."

For Heidegger, the word "free" (*Freie*) is a word of Being. In *Parmenides*, for example, Heidegger identifies "the open region" with "the free", and he speaks equally of the openness of Being and "the free of Being"⁴⁷⁹. In "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", Heidegger uses expressions like "free openness" and "the free open"⁴⁸⁰. The free or the free open, as the word of Be-

472 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 1.

473 Taylor Carman in his book *Merleau-Ponty* defines *the imaginary* in a following manner: "The imaginary is not the fictional or the counterfactual, but the depth of possibility in virtue of which we are able to experience things as real." Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 187.

474 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 242. The translation is modified.

475 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 8. Original text, Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, 14.

476 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 40 and 151.

477 Eugen Fink quoted by Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours. Collège de France 1952-1968.*, p. 168. The last sentence of this quotation in original French text runs as follows: "tout est ouvert, tous les chemins conduisent à l'air libre." The English translation: Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 9 and Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 189. Fink's original German text says: "Alles ist offen, alle Wege führen ins Freie." Eugen Fink, "Die Spätphilosophie Husserl in der Freiburger Zeit", in *Edmund Husserl 1859-1959. Recueil commémoratif publié à l'occasion de centenaire de la naissance du philosophie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), p. 114. This means that Merleau-Ponty translates "Freie" as "l'air libre". This German word "Freie" is most commonly translated as "free, open, clear". Also Heidegger often calls Being as *das Freie*. Heidegger's Being as *das Freie* is translated into English, for example, as "the free dimension", "the free realm", "the Free", "the domain of the Open", "the domain of the Free", "the free and open region" and "the open space". See, for example, Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, p. 127, Richardson, *Heidegger*, pp. 318 and 618 and John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 95-96 and 143.

478 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 176.

479 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 151.

480 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 385.

ing, must be understood as the region, space, dimensionality or clearing that is clear of obstructions and free from obstacles. The free allows free and open passage without constraints. Beings (things and objects) obstruct and hinder. Heidegger also connects the free with the element of air as he uses the expression “the free air”⁴⁸¹ in a similar manner as Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger even uses the expression “the free of...air”⁴⁸² in the similar way that he used “the free of Being” in *Parmenides*.

This means that Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard and Heidegger all speak of the “free air”. With the help of these three philosophers I can say that Being, as “the open something”, could very well be interpreted as “the space of open air”, “the free air”, “the free of air”, the element of air, “the aerial world”, or “the imaginary air” (as the reign of open respiratory silence) that is neither a thing nor an object. But even if the free air is not a thing, neither is it nothing. It is not nothing. It is really and truly something, an open something as a field or a dimensionality of “the free region”⁴⁸³, of “the open region” or of “free openness”. Luce Irigaray makes this ontological relation between air and Being that one can find on rare occasions from Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger explicit as she conjoins Being and air. She writes of this ontological relation as follows: “air appears as the element that goes hand in hand with Being.”⁴⁸⁴ In her book *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, Irigaray also speaks of the “free air (*l'air libre*)”⁴⁸⁵ like Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Bachelard before her. Irigaray understands this free air as the depth dimension of Being. She also speaks of the “open air”⁴⁸⁶ and “the clearing of air”⁴⁸⁷ as the words of air which express the primordial element of Being. She writes of this “clearing of air” as follows: “The clearing of air is a clearing for appearing and disappearing, for presence and absence.”⁴⁸⁸ This sentence shows how clearly and explicitly Irigaray interprets Heidegger’s clearing of Being as the “clearing of air” in *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. Irigaray’s sentence almost copies Heidegger’s words about the clearing from “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” that I have quoted earlier. In this text, Heidegger says that “[t]he clearing is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent.” So the clearing of air is,

481 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 48.

482 Heidegger quoted by Richard M. Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 95.

483 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 384.

484 Luce Irigaray, “From *The Forgetting of Air* to *To Be Two*”, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček, in *Feminist Interpretation of Martin Heidegger*, eds. Nancy J. Holland and Patricia Huntington (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 309. In connection to this essential intertwining of air and Being Irigaray says in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*: “To forget Being is to forget the air”. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 108.

485 Luce Irigaray, *L'Oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1983), pp. 41–42 and 69. Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary Beth Mader (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999), pp. 41–42.

486 Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, p. 73.

487 Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, p. 9 and p. 19.

488 Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, p. 9.

in Irigaray's interpretation, the open region or the open and free space for everything to appear and disappear. In connection to Irigaray's radicalization of Heidegger's clearing (*Lichtung*), Peter Sloterdijk writes the following in his book *Terror from the Air*: "Luce Irigaray has even suggested that Heidegger's concept of *Lichtung* be bracketed and replaced by a meditation on air--the 'airing' instead of 'clearing.' [*Luftung statt Lichtung.*]"⁴⁸⁹ In this aerial radicalization of the clearing, according to Irigaray, "[p]rior to any [other] clearing, air [as the clearing of air or as Sloterdijk's term 'airing'] is" always already there. It is there as a condition of possibility, for example, prior to "[t]he clearing of trees".⁴⁹⁰ In addition to this intertwining of air and Heideggerian Being, Irigaray's interrogation of elemental air also takes its inspiration, in my opinion, from Bachelard's elemental poetics of air, even if she does not acknowledge her debt to him.⁴⁹¹

With these aerial ideas taken from Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, Heidegger and Irigaray, I will now try to initially interpret Being (the open something) as an element of air. Being has been referred to by these philosophers as the open air, the free air, the free of air, the aerial world and the clearing of air. I will suggest under the influence of these four philosophers that everything that has been said about Being earlier in my dissertation can be now be understood

489 Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air*, trans. Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), p. 93.

490 Irigaray, *Forgetting of Air*, p. 19.

491 In *The Forgetting of Air* Irigaray does not acknowledge her debt to Bachelard's idea of the elemental imaginary and its aerial dimension in *Air and Dreams* which has been most probably inspiration to her thinking on elemental life as it was Bachelard who brought the question of elements in a major way into the French philosophical discourse in the 20th century. Margaret Whitford writes about this intellectual debt: "Although Irigaray never, as far as I know, mentions Bachelard, within the French intellectual context the resonances of the term imaginary are clearly Bachelardian. In addition, Irigaray's use of the four elements seems to echo [also] Bachelard's" thought. Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 55. Of this "Bachelardian influence in [Irigaray's] explorations" see also Patricia J. Huntington, *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia, and Recognition: Kristeva, Heidegger, Irigaray* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 164. If Irigaray does not acknowledge her debt to Bachelard neither does she acknowledge in her book *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* the rare aerial and respiratory remarks in Heidegger's work. She is either ignorant about them or she wants to simplify Heidegger's thought in a way that it does not have any aerial or respiratory hints in order to justify her claim of Heidegger's total forgetting of air. Irigaray does neither refer to Heidegger's "free of...air" as the "free of Being" which I have mentioned above nor to his discussions concerning the "ether" as "the free air of the high heavens, the open realm of the spirit." Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 48. See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Part 3, Vol. 75, ed. C. Ochwadt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), pp. 387-388. In his book on Schelling Heidegger writes: "Being is the ether in which man breathes. Without this ether, he would descend to the mere beast and his whole activity to the breeding of beasts." Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 98. It is also important to remember that Heidegger makes brief remarks about breathlessness of anxiety in *Being and Time* and *History of the Concept of Time*. See *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 231 and *History Of Concept of Time*, p. 290. In *Heraklit* Heidegger interprets respiratory dimensions of the *psyche* of Heraclitus. In the Chapter Eight which is the first chapter of the Section Two of my dissertation I will refer to these Heidegger's Heraclitean respiratory explorations.

within the ontological atmosphere of open and free air. This means that Being, as the clearing of air, is prior to all beings and it is this clearing of air or the free of air that makes it possible for any thing to appear to us. Being as the open something, as the universal dimensionality, is the atmosphere of air which “surrounds us...[and] the things.”⁴⁹² This atmosphere of air, or the clearing of air as the open something, the open region, is the open air, the free air and the aerial world.

These ontologico-conceptual tools, which I have grown more familiar with during this dissertation, now provide me with a possibility to give an initial interpretation of the whole of the ontologico-respiratory statement *we are respiration within Being where there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. I have earlier interpreted the first part of the ontologico-respiratory statement “we are respiration within Being” to mean the following: we ourselves always already are as bodily openness a respiratory openness or respiratory opening within something which is not a thing or an object, but Being as the open region, openness, the open something, the horizon of all horizons, the universal dimensionality, the common milieu, the clearing or the world. Now that Being has been just defined in aerial terms as the open air, the free air, the clearing of air, the aerial world or the atmosphere of air, I would interpret this first part of the ontologico-respiratory statement to say: we ourselves always already are as bodily openness a respiratory openness within the open and free air, the clearing of air, or the aerial world. The second part that stated *as our first truth there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being* was previously interpreted to say: (in the first place) inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inspiration and expiration of Being as inhalation and exhalation of the open region, of the free space, of the common milieu or of the world. This second part of the ontologico-respiratory statement could now be reformulated with this ontologico-aerial terminology to state: as our first truth (in the first place), inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the common milieu of open and free air, of the clearing of air or of the aerial world. Having made these ontologico-aerial reformulations, I can conjoin these two phrases to express the constant ontologico-respiratory principle of our life as our first truth (the truth of Being) and the fundamental experience of Being in the following way: *we ourselves always already are as bodily openness respiratory openness or respiratory opening within the aerial world as the clearing of air or as the common atmosphere of open and free air where inhaling and exhaling openness opens in the first place as our first truth to inhalation and exhalation of the aerial world as the clearing of air and as the common atmosphere of open and free air*.

In this final formulation, what I call our first truth, as the truth of Being (the *a priori* of Being), could also be called “the truth of breath”⁴⁹³ because the truth of Being that I am dealing with here is the truth of inspiration and expiration of Being. This expression of “the truth of breath” is from Bachelard’s *Air*

492 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 237.

493 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 314.

and Dreams. If the truth of Being is that there is principally Being, then the truth of breath as the truth of inspiration and expiration of Being is that there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being. It could be conceived that this ontologico-respiratory principle, as the truth of breath or as the ontological priority of respiration, actually provides an ontological explanation of the basic and barbaric conviction *we breathe air*. It is important to remember that my dissertation took its original point of departure as a philosophical interrogation from the barbaric respiratory conviction.

I started my dissertation with our barbaric conviction we breathe air. My goal was set at the beginning of this dissertation to try to think of this basic and barbaric respiratory conviction in a philosophical manner. I have now provided an initial philosophical, that is, phenomenologico-ontological, interpretation of our basic barbaric conviction we breathe air. How is this so? At the beginning of my dissertation, influenced by Merleau-Ponty I stated that I must investigate the meaning of “we”, “breathe” and “air”. During the first five chapters of my dissertation I have carried out this kind of research as I have tried to interpret what “we,” “breathe” and “air” mean. The last formulation of the ontologico-respiratory principle, we are respiration within Being where there is inspiration and expiration of Being, gives us an idea of what the basic barbaric conviction *we breathe air* could mean in the depth dimension. I now suggest that the ontological meaning in the depth dimension of we breathe air is that *we* ourselves are always already, as bodily openness, respiratory openness, or respiratory opening, within the aerial world as the clearing of air, or the common atmosphere/milieu of open and free air, where inhaling and exhaling openness opens in the first place as our first truth, as the truth of breath to the inhalation and exhalation of the aerial world, as the clearing of air and the common atmosphere of open and free air. Here the “we” of the barbaric conviction of “we breathe air” is understood in the depth dimension as bodily openness, which is actually, in its root respiration/breathing, as respiratory openness. The verb “to breathe” of this barbaric conviction is in no way separated from the word “we” as breathing or as respiratory openness, which constantly circulates from inhaling openness to exhaling openness and, vice versa, is always the breathing of the breathing body-subjects. The “air” of “we breathe air” has been ontologically understood as Being, which is then interpreted as the aerial world, the clearing of air or the common atmosphere of open and free air.

This basic and barbaric conviction we breathe air, and its ontological interpretation as the ontologico-respiratory statement, also intertwine with the principle that I introduced in Chapter One of this dissertation. This principle, which is inspired by the Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle of Silence, Abyss, is the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air. This principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, which is a respiratory and chasmologico-aerial mutation of the principle of Silence, Abyss, is a crystallization of the barbaric conviction of we breathe air and the ontologico-respiratory thesis of “there is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. In this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air, the “Silence of Breath” part stands

for we breathe air, while the “Abyss of Air” or “Yawn of Air” part stands especially for air, as I will show in the next two chapters (Chapters Six and Seven).

Before I move on to the next chapter, in which I will be interrogating the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air (the other half of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air), let us now briefly interrogate the possible relation between Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “some immense exterior lung”, as the “world in general” or as the immense lung of the world, and the notion of “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. In my opinion, there is an important connection to be found between these two respiratory notions by Merleau-Ponty. Saint Aubert makes a very brief implicit reference to this possible connection. I already referred to this earlier in this chapter, but I did not investigate this possible connection. I quoted the words of de Saint Aubert, in which he said that Merleau-Ponty’s piece of text concerning the sleep and “some immense exterior lung” “offers an astonishing anticipation of the ontology...of [Merleau-Ponty’s] last writings, in particular of the passages of *Eye and Spirit* on respiration of Being, vibration and the possession of sensible.” This means that, according to de Saint Aubert, “some immense exterior lung” anticipates “respiration of Being”, that is, “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. Saint Aubert does not say any more about it. He only refers to this connection. To my knowledge, nobody in Merleau-Ponty scholarship has ever investigated the connection between these two respiratory notions.

Let us remind ourselves of the sentence in which Merleau-Ponty speaks of “some immense exterior lung”. This is how this sentence runs: “I was breathing slowly and deeply to call forth sleep, and suddenly, one might say, my mouth communicates with some immense exterior lung that calls my breath forth and forces it back, a certain respiratory rhythm desired/wanted by me just a moment ago, becomes my very being, and sleep intended until then as a signification, suddenly turns into a situation.” With this reminder I can ask what it could mean that “some immense exterior lung” perhaps anticipates “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”? I have earlier suggested that “some immense exterior lung” can be understood as the “world in general”, that is, as the unreal world of pure depth without objects and surfaces. As such it is stripped away of almost all features of the world (for example, of the perceptual world as a world in which one perceives the things as perceived things), leaving just the most general features of the world. This meant that it was interpreted as an immense something and immense not nothing, as well as an immense field as the field of all fields. It was suggested that the world thesis as “there is some immense exterior lung as the world in general” is something more primordial than the primacy of perception as it rules even the time of sleep, when the normal perceptual world order is abolished. It could mean that it is *a priori* to the primacy of perception. Now I can say that if one takes the ontological understanding of the “there is” into account as “openness”, then one could say that this respiratory world thesis would state the body-subject’s primordial *openness* to some immense exterior lung.

For this comparison between “some immense exterior lung” and “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” to become possible, I must also briefly remind myself what kind of meaning I have discovered within this “inspiration and expiration of Being”. First of all it must be said that, according to Merleau-Ponty, Being equals “the world” as he states, for example: “Being = the perceived world”. Thus, I interpreted “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, for example, as the respiratory world (inspiration and expiration of the world) and as respiration within the world. This already means that de Saint Aubert is most probably correct when he says that immense lung anticipates inspiration and expiration of Being, as in my understanding both speak of some kind of respiratory world. In my investigation of “inspiration and expiration of Being”, I conjoined Merleau-Ponty’s “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”, and my interpretation of my Merleau-Pontian-Heideggerian rephrasing of Heidegger’s words from “Letter on Humanism”: we are within Being where there is principally Being. The result of this conjoining was the following ontologico-respiratory thesis: we are respiration within Being where there is (in the first place) really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being.

Now let us ask what could be the relation between this ontologico-respiratory thesis and Merleau-Ponty’s words concerning the immense lung? What would their relation look like if I read them together in a sense that they perhaps speak about something similar or within the same respiratory atmosphere? What would that mean? I would interweave the following two phrasings “I was breathing slowly and deeply to call forth sleep” and we are respiration within Being. These two belong together, as I suggest that the words “I was breathing slowly...” are part of what it means that we are respiration within Being. Both of these phrasings begin with a personal pronoun “I” or “we”, which follows a verb “being” in the form of “was” or “are”, and after that comes the word breath as “breathing” or “respiration”. Of course, their meaning is not the same, as I said that the first wording is part of the second one, but not vice versa. The phrasing *we are respiration* within Being names the respiratory essence of human existence and “I was breathing slowly and deeply” names one modality, that is, one possibility of that respiratory essence. Other modalities could be, for example, “to breathe rapidly” and “to breathe shallowly”. The wording *we are respiration* within Being names who or what we are in the essential level. This “respiration” was understood to mean “respiratory openness”. Also, to breathe in a certain way “to call forth sleep” is one of the modalities of “We are respiration within Being”. This is one of the “voluntary attitude[s]” of the respiratory essence of human existence. Other “voluntary attitude[s]” are, for example, to call forth relaxation, healing or spiritual growth.⁴⁹⁴ All these voluntary attitudes are also modalities of this respiratory essence. Involuntary breathing of our everydayness is also a modality of “We are respiration within

494 See Drew Leder, “Breath as the Hinge of Dis-ease and Healing”, in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. 219–231.

Being". All possible ways and styles of breathing, and all possible goals, wishes and purposes connected to breathing, are various modalities of the essential truth that "We are respiration within Being".

Perhaps it is very important that Merleau-Ponty uses the verb "to call", as he says: "I was breathing slowly and deeply *to call forth* sleep". In another instance he says: "I *call up* the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing of the sleeper". I *call* by a certain kind of breathing. The call is returned, or responded to, the moment "I succeed in becoming what I pretended to be." I become the slow and deep breathing of the sleeper. At that moment my call switches into or reverses to the call of "some immense exterior lung" that now "calls my breath forth and forces it back", I would like to suggest that this switching takes us into the level of "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being". "We are respiration within Being" is the platform for every kind of breathing, and with a proper kind of respiratory imitation or pretending, as the call of voluntary breathing, there is a possibility of switch, transformation or "existential step" that takes us to a deeper level where we are called by the immense lung. As de Saint Aubert already suggested that Merleau-Ponty's description of sleeping involving "some immense exterior lung" anticipates "inspiration and expiration of Being", I would argue that they speak of the same respiratory phenomenon. How is this so? It is because neither of them is *a* being (a thing, an object or an empirical fact) of any sort, and both can be understood as the world in general, which is the field of all fields, as not nothing and as the open or immense something which is not limited by, or closed within, something else. In addition to these common features, both of them are also essentially respiratory something, which breathes us by taking our breath and giving us a breath in a circular movement. If all of this is true, I could switch the expression "inspiration and expiration of Being" to replace "some immense exterior lung" in Merleau-Ponty's description of what happens in sleep as follows: my mouth communicates with *inspiration and expiration of Being* that calls my breath forth and forces it back.

I also suggest that Merleau-Ponty's notion of "my very being", as "a certain respiratory rhythm" which is the "simultaneous contact with my being" as a bodily openness, that is, as a respiratory openness and "with the being of the world" as the immense lung, could be interpreted to mean the same respiratory essence of human existence that the phrasing "we are respiration within Being" expresses. In a similar manner, "we are respiration within Being" expresses our "very being" because in this sentence "we are" also means "bodily openness" in the depth dimension, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, and as we are respiration it expresses the body's respiratory openness and the word "Being" can be interpreted, as it has so many times in my dissertation, in a Merleau-Pontian manner, as the world. This would mean that "we are respiration within Being" is also our very being as it expresses the simultaneous contact with our being as respiratory openness and with the being of the world as Being. Finally, I can say that the respiratory thesis that expresses our first truth as the truth of breath, "we are respiration within Being where there is really and truly inspiration and

expiration of Being", could be interpreted as a thesis concerning the immense lung as I have understood it in a synonymous manner with inspiration and expiration of Being. This kind of rephrasing would announce this thesis as follows: "we are respiration within the Immense Lung where there is the Immense Lung that calls our breath forth and forces it back." All of this means that when I previously gave my initial ontological interpretation of the meaning of we breathe air, I could also have spoken of Merleau-Ponty's "some immense exterior lung".

CHAPTER 6

The Principle of Yawning Abyss of Air: A Phenomenologico-Ontologico-Aerial Interpretation of the Merleau-Pontian Dehiscence of Being and the Hesiodic-Heideggerian *Khaos*

In this chapter I am going to explicate the ontological principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air. This explication includes: 1) what is the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air?, 2) how is this yawning or gaping principle an essential dimension of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air?, 3) how is this ontological principle of Yawning Abyss of Air connected to our basic barbaric conviction we breathe air?, and 4) how is this principle of Yawning Abyss of Air especially intertwined with the ontological clearing of air as the free and open air?

Let us begin this investigation of the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air with a citation from Merleau-Ponty:

Inevitably the roles between the painter and the visible switch. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them. As André Marchand says, after 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, were speaking to me....I was there, listening....I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it....I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out."⁴⁹⁵

These are the famous words from *Eye and Spirit* that Merleau-Ponty airs just before his ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" that has been the main focus here in Section One of my dissertation. In this quotation the words "the roles *between* the painter and the visible" are highly important as they switch us over to the dimension of Abyss of Air within my Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian inspired principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. This yawning abyss of air "*between*

495 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 358.

the painter and the visible” also opens within the second part of Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory statement in *Eye and Spirit*, as it says just after “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being” that there is “action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted.” How can I find the fundamental phenomenon that I call the yawning abyss of air hidden in these words? It is important to understand that there can be the one “who sees” and the one “who is seen”, in whatever form that might be, even if “one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen” within the reversibility of Being (the switching between the two), *only if there is a gap or a hiatus between the seer and the seen* and “between the painter and the visible.” One name for this gap or hiatus between the seer and the seen, according to Merleau-Ponty, is “a dehiscence of Being,”⁴⁹⁶ that is, the ontological “dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing.”⁴⁹⁷ If this dehiscence is a dehiscence of Being, it tells us already that this dehiscence cannot be a being, that is, a thing or an object of any sort because Being is not a being. At the same time, however, it is something and, as something, it is not nothing. As “opening” or “openness” are words of Being, according to Merleau-Ponty, it can be said that the dehiscence between the seeing and the seen, between the painter and the visible as something, is some kind of opening between them. To generalize this opening as dehiscence, let us quote Lawrence Hass, who writes of this dehiscence that it “opens up in perception, *between me and the things, between my vision and my body, between my self and other selves, brings with it a folding over of one onto the other.*”⁴⁹⁸ In his book *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, Hass continues to describe this dehiscence of Being as follows:

It is...the separation-difference that makes perception possible. This separation-difference is no illusion, no fiction. Even though it is not an object, it is real⁴⁹⁹ and really there—as is, for example, *the space between your eyes and this printed page*. It is “there” as the generative possibility in every perception. At the same time, it is imperative to understand that *écart* [or dehiscence⁵⁰⁰] is not a “transcendental” in Kant’s

496 Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, p. 375.

497 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 153.

498 Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, p. 131. My emphasis.

499 Hass uses the notion of the “real” in a different manner as I am using it in my dissertation as in my investigation the “real” is connected to beings, that is, to things and objects. The dehiscence of Being is not an object as Hass himself points out. So what Hass calls the “real” in the case of dehiscence or *écart* I would call the “unreal.” For Hass *écart* or dehiscence is real as it is not a “fiction” nor “illusion.” Following Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger I call dehiscence “unreal” as it is not an object nor a thing. This does not mean that in my understanding dehiscence is something fictitious or illusory. Dehiscence is very much “there” as Hass emphasizes, but it is there as something invisible. Merleau-Ponty, and especially the late Merleau-Ponty of the ontological period, would call this unreal of dehiscence or *écart* “something” which is “not nothing,” “natural negativity,” “invisible,” etc. See *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 109*, 216 and 258. It is “negativity” as it is not any kind of positive being, that is, a thing. The dehiscence of Being is the invisible that makes the visible appear.

500 In Merleau-Ponty’s work *écart* and *dehiscence* are two names of the same primordial phenomenon of Being. In my dissertation in which I am explicating the principle of Silence of Breath, yawning Abyss of Air I prefer to emphasize the chasmological no-

sense, for it is not “external to,” or “before” perceptual experience, but rather amid it, opening it up from within. We might say that *écart* [or dehiscence] is the very working of openness in the perceptual experience which creates the *space* or *gap* through which sensibility occurs.⁵⁰¹

In Hass’ words the dehiscence of Being somehow makes perception possible. It makes perception possible because it is what Hass calls a “separation-difference.” In perception, there is this dehiscence that separates and differentiates the perceiver and the perceived from each other. This dehiscence as a gap, space or opening between me and the things, between my vision and my body, between my self and the other selves, is that which makes separated and differentiated subjects, objects, things, and selves possible. Hass also calls this dehiscence or *écart*, as the separating space, “difference-spacing-openness”.⁵⁰² In Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological ontology of perception, this means that this dehiscence makes it possible for us to perceive things and others which are separate and different from each other and from ourselves. Dehiscence as distantiation is the distance as the condition of possibility that one can see the perceived object. Seeing is impossible without the required space of distance between the seer and the seen, between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. This distance or separation-difference is neither a subject nor an object.

In my dissertation I use Merleau-Ponty’s notion of dehiscence in its etymological meaning. In this etymological sense, the French *dehiscence* comes from the Latin *dehiscere* (“to gape,” “to open,” “to split down”) which stems from the Latin *hiare* “to yawn, to gape, to stand open.” The Latin word *hiatus* (opening, gap, aperture, rupture), which obviously appears in French and English as *hiatus*, also stems from the Latin *hiare*. Merleau-Ponty also uses the notion of *hiatus*⁵⁰³ to express *dehiscence* between the subject and the object⁵⁰⁴, the seer and the seen. The Latin word *hiare* has its etymology in the Greek *khasmo* (to yawn) which is

tion of *dehiscence* instead of *écart* even if the French notion of *écart* is much more commonly used in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology and in the research around Merleau-Ponty’s work. For example, according to Hass and Dillon, Merleau-Ponty’s notions of *écart* and *dehiscence* are synonyms. See Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, pp. 129 and 136 and Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, pp. 215 and 223. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *écart* is translated, for example, as “separation”, “difference”, “irreducible difference”, “difference-spacing-openness”, “divergence”, “dehiscence”, “distantiation” and “space of noncoincidence”. See about these possible translations, Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (ed.), *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. vii, 84–85, 95 and 205 and Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, pp. 111, 123, 129–131, 133–134, 137, 140, 188 and 197.

501 Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, pp. 130–31. My emphasis.

502 Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, p. 137. Gail Weiss calls *écart* “a space of noncoincidence that resists articulation”, “a space of disincorporation” and “space of differentiation”. “[A]s the moment of disincorporation [*écart* or dehiscence] makes all forms of corporeal differentiation possible [and it is also] what allows us to establish boundaries between bodies”. Gail Weiss, “Écart: The Space of Corporeal Difference”, in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 206, 212 and 214.

503 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 148.

504 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 197.

etymologically related, via "*khasmos*," meaning "open mouth, yawning space, chasm," and the verb "*khaino*" which is "to yawn," with the word "*khaos*." Thus, it appears [also] that [the English] "yawning," [the German] "gähnen" and [the Dutch] "geeuwen" are related, via "*khasmo*" and "*khaino*," to "chaos" as well.⁵⁰⁵

These words concerning the Greek word *khaos* as yawning clearly rule out an "anachronistic interpretation" of this word as "*khaos* signifies... 'disorder', 'mess,' [or] 'chaos' in its ordinary modern sense."⁵⁰⁶ In an etymological sense, chaos (Gr. *khaos*) does not mean "disorder" or "mess", but it is essentially connected to "yawning", "yawning space", "chasm" and "open mouth". The French word "dehiscence" is etymologically related to this field of meanings via the Latin *hiare*, as was mentioned earlier.

From this chapter on I will be using the term "chasmological" in this dissertation. I already introduced this term, which was invented by Wolter Seuntjens, in the Introduction and in Chapter One of this dissertation. As a reminder I can say that Seuntjens defines his notion of *chasmology* as the "study of yawning". To form this notion, he joins the Greek word *khasmo* with *-logy*. The notion of "chasmological" is an adjective form of "chasmology". In my dissertation I am using this term "chasmological" in the context of phenomenological ontology as a notion connected to the experience of dehiscence of Being or of the world and the ontologico-aerial experience of *khaos*.

As I said above, I interpret Merleau-Ponty's notion of dehiscence in its the etymological sense. This brief etymological analysis shows that "dehiscence" is a chasmological term meaning "gaping, yawning, opening." If the term dehiscence would be understood in this manner, what would it mean? In chasmological terms, Merleau-Ponty's "dehiscence of Being" would mean yawning of Being or gaping of Being. As I have understood Being as the Open, the open region, the common milieu, the clearing, the universal dimensionality and the world it would mean that I could express dehiscence of Being as the yawning of the open region, as the yawning of the common milieu, as the gaping of the clearing, as the gaping of the universal dimensionality and as the yawning of the world. Chasmologically speaking, I could say that the dehiscence of Being means that the world, or the open region as the yawning space, yawns, or a chasm gapes between the perceiver and the perceived. In addition to this, chasmologically speaking, I could also say that this yawning of the world, or the gaping of the universal dimensionality, is the separation-difference between myself and the things, between my vision and my body, between my self and other selves. Thus, this yawning of the world as the dehiscence of Being and as the opening in the midst of the perceptual experience as the common milieu (literally "middle place") is the condition of possibility of any perception of things.

505 Wolter Seuntjens, *On Yawning or The Hidden Sexuality of the Human Yawn* (Amsterdam: F&N Boekservice/Eigen Beheer, 2004), pp. 34-35. See also Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, trans. Janet Lloyd with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 374.

506 Mitchell Miller, "'First of all' On the Semantics and Ethics of Hesiod's Cosmogony", in *Ancient Philosophy* 21 (2001), p. 254.

If I interpret Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence of Being in this etymological manner as the yawning of the world or the yawning of Being, then I can connect it more easily with another chasmological word that Merleau-Ponty uses in *The Visible and the Invisible*. This French word is *béance*. This word means "yawning, gaping, gap or opening."⁵⁰⁷ Merleau-Ponty writes of *béance* as follows: "Philosophy does not raise questions and does not provide answers that would little by little fill the lacunae/gaps [*lacunes*]....[I]n any case, one day [these questions and answers] end up at/lead to this yawning/gaping/gap/opening [*à cette béance*]."⁵⁰⁸ I interpret that Merleau-Ponty uses the words *dehiscence* and *béance* synonymously, as both of them mean "yawning, gaping and opening". If I read these two notions as synonyms⁵⁰⁹ I could say that one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is to return all questions and answers to the dehiscence of Being and to interrogate these questions and answers within this ontological gaping horizon as the origin of all separation and difference, that is, for example, in this case as the origin of all separate and different questions and answers. In connection to this, it can be said that, according to Merleau-Ponty, this dehiscence of Being or *béance* as yawning space gapes "silently behind all our affirmations, negations, and even behind all formulated questions."⁵¹⁰

My previous brief etymological investigation of *dehiscence* and chaos (*khaos*) has allowed me to think of Merleau-Ponty's notions of *dehiscence* and *béance* in chasmological terms. Now I will deepen this investigation with Heidegger's short descriptions of *khaos*, which will give me a chance to see the similarity between Merleau-Ponty's notion of the dehiscence and Heideggerian *khaos*. This investigation will also help me understand how dehiscence and *khaos* can be interpreted in an aerial manner as expressions of the principle of yawning Abyss of Air. In the Introduction and Chapter One, as well as at the very beginning of this chapter, I have suggested that both of these chasmological notions (dehiscence and *khaos*) could be expressions of what I have named as the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air.

507 In his book *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* Sean Gaston ponders how to translate this French word *béance*. According to Gaston this word can be translated as "the gap," "gaping" and "opening." Jacques Derrida also speaks in his philosophy about "a gaping opening/openness [*une ouverture béante*]." See Gaston, *Impossible Mourning*, pp. 4, 15 and 120.

508 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 140. See also the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 105. The translation has been modified. Lingis translates *béance* as "open wondering."

509 In an earlier footnote I already brought it up that Lacan, who influenced Merleau-Ponty's later thinking, used, for example, practically synonymously these terms *dehiscence* and *béance* in his thinking. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 72. In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty refers to Lacan on page 126. James Phillips, for example, has written about Merleau-Ponty's and Lacan's influence on each other. See James Phillips, "Lacan and Merleau-Ponty: The Confrontation of Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology," in *Disseminating Lacan*, ed. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 69-106.

510 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 129. My emphasis.

According to Heidegger, the word *khaos* names “the fundamental experience” of human existence.⁵¹¹ In his book *Nietzsche*, Heidegger writes of this fundamental experience of *khaos* as follows: “Chaos, *khaos*, *khaino*, means ‘to yawn’; it signifies something that opens wide or gapes. We conceive of *khaos* in most intimate connection with an original interpretation of the essence of *aletheia* as the self-opening abyss (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*).”⁵¹² In a later volume of *Nietzsche*, Heidegger states that “The Greek word *khaos* originally means ‘gaping’; it points in the direction of a measureless, supportless, and groundless yawning open. (See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 116.)”⁵¹³ Yet again, in *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, Heidegger points out: “*Khaos* signifies first of all the yawning, gaping chasm, the open that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed.”⁵¹⁴ The lines from Hesiod’s *Theogony* (116) that Heidegger is referring to says: “from the beginning, tell who first of them (the gods) came-to-be. First of all Chaos came-to-be; but then afterwards Broad-breasted earth, a secure dwelling place forever for all”⁵¹⁵. If this is interpreted in Heideggerian terms, this means that what Hesiod is actually saying is that *first of all* Chaos, as the Yawn or the Gape that opens itself wide as the self-opening abyss, came-to-be.⁵¹⁶ Everything else comes *afterwards*. In Hesiod’s thinking, *khaos* (the Yawn, the Gape) as the self-opening abyss that “first opens itself” is the *first principle* as the beginning which makes everything else possible, that is, which has the priority over everything else. In Drew A. Hyland’s Heideggerian interpretation, this primacy of Chaos (*khaos*), as it comes before everything else, is “the principle of ‘difference’”⁵¹⁷, that is, the principle that separates and differentiates beings from each other. In this sense *khaos* is the gap (the “yawning gap”⁵¹⁸) or separation⁵¹⁹ between things, between objects and between human beings. In Heidegger’s own terms, Chaos “announces itself as the ‘in-between’ of beings,”⁵²⁰ that is, as “the open [that] mediates the connections *between* all actual things.”⁵²¹ As it “mediates” as “the ‘in-between’” between beings, *khaos* “is the mediator for everything mediated, that is, for the mediate.”⁵²² At the same time, *khaos* is the con-

511 Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes Three and Four*, p. 77.

512 Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume One and Two*, p. 91.

513 Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume Three and Four*, p. 77.

514 Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, p. 85.

515 Hesiod quoted by Hyland, “First of All Came Chaos,” in *Heidegger and the Greeks: Interpretive Essays*, eds. Drew A. Hyland and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 9.

516 Alejandro A. Vallega for example states this Hesiod’s line: “First of all things was the opening [*chaos*]” Vallega, *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 42. In this interpretation it is important to note that “opening” is not a thing even if Vallega writes “first of all things.”

517 Hyland, “First of All Came Chaos,” p. 15.

518 Francis Macdonald Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Cosimo, 2009), p. 66.

519 Hyland, “First of All Came Chaos,” p. 10.

520 Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 276.

521 Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, p. 83.

522 Martin Heidegger, “As When on a Holiday...,” in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal, trans. Jerome Veith (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 164.

nection and the separation *between* everything (all things, every possible thing). *Khaos* yawns or gapes *between* beings, in Miller's terms, as a "yawning space."⁵²³ In Heidegger's words, "everything is engulfed" within this abyssal opening which opens itself. Here we have a fundamental difference between *khaos* and everything else which becomes possible through the openness of *khaos*. This fundamental difference is the difference between what differentiates but is itself undifferentiated and what is differentiated. This means that there is "[t]he undifferentiated Chaos"⁵²⁴ as the principle of difference. Heidegger often calls this fundamental difference "the ontological difference" between Being and beings. This is the fundamental difference between actual beings and that which makes these beings as beings possible. This means that the fundamental word "*khaos*" is a word of Being.

Heidegger calls *khaos* "supportless and groundless yawning" abyss as nothing supports it and it has no ground which would ground it. "*Khaos*, the gaping-opening, is...ab-ground [abyss]."⁵²⁵ If something would support or ground it, it would not be that which is "the first of all," "the open that first opens itself." Does this mean that *khaos* is its own ground? Does it ground itself? If one were to call it the ground, then this ground could be named the "groundless ground,"⁵²⁶ or the "groundlessness of the ground"⁵²⁷. Merleau-Ponty says with reference to Heidegger that "the so-called *Grund* [ground] is *Abgrund* [abyss]."⁵²⁸ In his book *Parmenides*, Heidegger writes of the groundlessness of Being as follows: "Being...is not a ground but is the groundless. It is called such because it is primordially detached from a 'soil' and 'ground' and does not require them."⁵²⁹ The open of Being or the yawning open of *khaos* is "the groundless," the abyss, that is, "abyssal ground"⁵³⁰ or "abyssal foundation."⁵³¹ All

523 Miller, "First of all," p. 271.

524 Cornfield, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 100. Heidegger makes an interesting comment in connection to this "undifferentiated Chaos" as he writes: "for all experience, which only knows what is mediated, chaos seems to be without differentiation and thus mere confusion. But the 'chaotic' in this sense, however, is only the inessential aspect of what 'chaos' means." Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p. 85. There is a need to think the relations between the concepts of "chaotic", "differentiation", "undifferentiation", and "confusion". But what will be essential in this thinking is the horizon within which these concepts are thought of. Then the fundamental question is will these questions be thought of within the horizon of "experience, which only knows what is mediated" or within the experiential horizon of the mediator. There is then also the question can we still speak of the experience that is not mediated. *Khaos* would be, according to Heidegger, that "fundamental experience" as mentioned in the Chapter One of my dissertation.

525 Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 85.

526 See, for example, John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, pp. 40, 81 and 86; Hyong-hyo Kim, "Merleau-Pontean 'Flesh' and Its Buddhist Interpretation," in *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*, p. 36; Douglas Low, *Merleau-Ponty's Last Vision*, p. 41.

527 Burke, "Listening at the Abyss," p. 90.

528 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 250. See also, for example, Renato Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and the Path* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), pp. 43-55.

529 Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 150.

530 Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, trans. William McNeill (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1993), p. 58.

things and living beings are engulfed within this measureless chaos. All beings are buried completely within this profound depth.

Here it can be seen that *khaos* and Merleau-Ponty's notion of dehiscence name the same yawning space between all beings. Both *khaos* and *dehiscence* name the first opening as the separation-difference or gap, that is, the gaping abyss that is required for there to be any experience or perception of things. This means that the primordial experience of *khaos* or dehiscence is the "fundamental experience"⁵³² of Being (of the open region, of the universal dimensionality, of the common milieu) which always precedes any perception of things or any experience of things. This fundamental experience of Being as the yawning abyss of "in-between" (that which yawns between all beings) is the principle that I have already mentioned quite a few times during this dissertation. This is the principle of Abyss of Air, as we will later find out, and as abyss and yawn are synonymous one can equally call this principle the principle of Yawn of Air. In relation to the question of difference, I can say that *khaos*, as the open that first opens itself and enables separation-difference, is the principle of difference, and this principle of difference is the principle of Abyss of Air, that is, the principle of Yawn of Air.

As *khaos* is a word of Being that names the fundamental experience of Being (that which is not a thing and is always already before things as their condition of possibility), and as dehiscence is the dehiscence of Being, I now suggest that these two words will be considered in relation to the fundamental starting point of my dissertation in Chapter One. This means that I will think of these two words of Being in relation to the basic barbaric conviction of we breathe air⁵³³ in a similar fashion as I have already done with the ontologico-respiratory thesis of "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being." In connection to the barbaric conviction of we breathe air, I have interpreted the word "Being", as the notion "inspiration and expiration of Being", to mean the clearing of air, the aerial world, the common atmosphere/milieu of the open air and the free air. An essential question for me is: is it possible to interpret the word "Being" as the notion of "dehiscence of Being" in a similar way as I have interpreted the notion of "inspiration and expiration of Being"? I have already interpreted Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence of Being in a chasmological manner as the yawning of the world and as the gaping of the universal dimensionality. In my opinion, I could also follow Irigaray's words: "air appears as the element that goes hand in hand with Being." This would mean that the dehiscence of Being would express itself as the dehiscence of air, that is, as the yawning of the aerial world and the gaping of the common atmosphere/milieu of the open and free air.

531 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 109.

532 Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes Three and Four*, p. 77.

533 Let us remember that in the Chapter One my dissertation began with a Merleau-Pontian inspired idea concerning the barbaric conviction as the respiratory conviction of we breathe air in a similar fashion as Merleau-Ponty himself began his book *The Visible and the Invisible* with the barbaric conviction of we see the things.

This would mean that the dehiscence of Being expressing the principle of philosophy could be interpreted within the atmosphere of we breathe air as the principle of Yawn of Air or the Abyss of Air. This would also mean that the dehiscence of Being, as the principle of yawning Abyss of Air, would open up in our perception as the gaping element of air between us and the things, between our vision and our body, and between our selves and other selves. The aerial world as the common atmosphere/milieu of the open and free air, in my interpretation, yawns as the separation-difference that makes the perception of things possible. It is the open and free air that yawns between everything as the principle of Yawn or Abyss of Air. The aerial world is, to use Heidegger's terms, "the 'in-between' of beings," "the open [that] mediates the connections *between* all actual things" and "the mediator for everything mediated." At the same time as the open, free and gaping air is the principle of separation-difference, it is also the mediator that connects everything. Hesiod wrote that, in the beginning, the first of all Chaos came-to-be. In Heidegger's terms, this meant that first of all the yawning, gaping abyss, the open that first opens itself came-to-be, wherein everything is engulfed. In aerial terms⁵³⁴ this would say that, in the beginning as the fundamental experience, the first of all the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, the common atmosphere of the open, free and *gaping air* that first opens itself came-to-be, wherein everything is engulfed. This would be the first principle as the principle of Abyss/Yawn of Air.

This aerial reading of chaos or dehiscence brings to mind the citation from Merleau-Ponty which I already quoted earlier. In this quotation from one of the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible*, he writes: "Perception is not *first* a perception of *things*, but a perception of *elements* (water, air...)." If I emphasize the aerial atmosphere of this quotation it says: perception is not *first* a perception of things, but a perception of *element of air*. Here Merleau-Ponty implicitly expresses, in my interpretation, in perceptual terms something very similar, or perhaps even the same, what I just expressed as the aerial interpretation of Chaos as the principle of Abyss of Air: first of all the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, the common atmosphere of the open, free and gaping air that first opens itself came-to-be, wherein everything is engulfed. How is this so? What Merleau-Ponty says in this quotation is that perception is first a perception of the gaping air or, to put it in a Hesiodic way, first of all a perception of element of air came-to-be. In explicit experiential terms this Hesiodic formulation would mean, as perception for Merleau-Ponty is always "perceptual expe-

534 In his book *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* Jean-Pierre Vernant very briefly connects Hesiod's Chaos with air as he writes: "In the beginning was chaos, the dark abyss, *the airy void* in which nothing is distinguished from anything else." Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 374. Francis Macdonald Cornford also connects very briefly Hesiod's Chaos with air as follows: "The word ['Chaos'] means simply the 'yawning gap' --the gap we now see, with its lower part filled with *air* and mist and cloud". Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 66. My emphasis. Even if Vernant and Cornford do not elaborate at all what this connection between chaos and air could be it is important to notice that they indeed in these quotations acknowledge the existence of this connection.

rience"⁵³⁵ and a "fundamental experience"⁵³⁶, that first of all the perceptual experience as a fundamental experience of element of air came-to-be. This primordial or fundamental aerial perception makes a perception of things possible. All perception of things comes afterwards. It becomes possible only after the perception of air generates or gapes the yawning space between the perceiver and the thing perceived. It is this perception of the common elemental atmosphere of the gaping and open air that mediates the connections between all the perceived things, as well as all the perceiving subjects. This perception of air is the yawning of the aerial world, that is, a perception of the aerial dehiscence of Being or the aerial *khaos*, wherein everything is engulfed. This means that all perceptual experience of things is engulfed within the perceptual experience of the common atmosphere of the open and free air.

535 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 4, 11, 48, 72-74, 191-192, 211, 247, 263, 267, 269, 317 and 334. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception always begins as a "return to perceptual experience" (pp. 48, 247 and 269) or as an effort "to reawaken perceptual experience" (p. 267).

536 Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 110.

CHAPTER 7

The Initial Conclusion of the Section One: The Principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air as the Secret and Hidden Essence of We Breathe Air

Is there a connection between the dehiscence of Being or Chaos as the yawning of the aerial world and the ontologico-respiratory statement that expresses the principle of Silence of Breath as we are respiration within Being where there is in the first place really and truly the silence of inspiration and expiration of Being? Earlier in Section One of my dissertation the ontologico-respiratory principle of Silence of Breath has been understood as follows: we ourselves always already are as bodily openness respiratory openness within the common atmosphere of open and free air, or within the aerial world where, as our first truth as the truth of breath, the silence of inhaling, or inspiring, and exhaling, or expiring, openness opens to the silence of inhalation, or inspiration, and exhalation, or expiration, of the common atmosphere of open and free air or the aerial world. In my Heideggerian, Merleau-Pontian, Bachelardian and Irigarayan inspired ontologico-aerial examination of the dehiscence of Being, or of the Hesiodic Chaos as “first of all Chaos came-to-be,” I stated: first of all the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, the common atmosphere of the open and free air that first opens itself came-to-be, wherein everything is engulfed. Now in this chapter my question is: could I somehow read these two ideas together, that is, the ontologico-respiratory principle concerning “there is inspiration and expiration of Being” and the ontologico-aerial examination of Chaos and dehiscence of Being as the principle of difference? What is important to notice is that both of these ideas speak about 1) the aerial world, or the common atmosphere of the open and free air, and 2) the priority of Being. The first one deals with the priority of inspiration and expiration of Being and the second one with the priority of dehiscence of Being. The intimate connection between these two ideas can be found from these two essential common features. The first of these speaks about the fundamental phenomena of respiration and air while the sec-

and actually speaks perhaps only about the fundamental phenomenon of air. This means that I could, in my opinion, easily read the aerial parts together, if I examine the first part of the ontologico-respiratory thesis which states: we are respiration within Being. This first part was originally created by intertwining Merleau-Ponty's wording "we are within Being" from *The Visible and the Invisible* and his words "respiration within Being" from *Eye and Spirit*. If I only aerially examine the ontological phrase "we are within Being", it would say within the horizon of my interpretation that we ourselves always already are bodily openness within the aerial world, within the common atmosphere of the open and free air or within the clearing of air. If I would then combine this aerial wording of "we are within Being" with my discoveries from the aerial interpretation of dehiscence of Being or Chaos, which said that first of all the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, the common atmosphere of the open and free air that first opens itself came-to-be, wherein everything is engulfed, I could state the following: *first of all we ourselves always already are bodily openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, within the common atmosphere of the open and free air that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed.* Now if I take along the part "respiration within Being" as "we are respiration within Being" the wording would change to the following: *first of all we ourselves always already are as bodily openness respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, within the common atmosphere of the open and free air that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed.* With this same logic, the latter part of the ontologico-respiratory statement, as the ontologico-respiratory thesis of "inspiration and expiration of Being", would say, if it would be interpreted in this chasmologico-aerial manner, the following: as our first truth as the truth of breath inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the yawning abyss of the aerial world. To make this last phrasing little bit more readable, I could phrase it as follows: as our first truth embodied inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the yawning atmosphere of the open and free air. The whole of the newly composed ontologico-respiratory-chasmological principle, which conjoins the ontologico-respiratory principle and the aerial ontologico-chasmological principle, would now state: *first of all we ourselves always already are as bodily openness silent respiratory openness within the yawning abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where as our first truth silent inhaling and exhaling openness opens to the silence of inhalation and exhalation of the common yawning atmosphere of the open and free air.* This ontologico-respiratory-chasmologico-aerial principle is the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air.

In the beginning of Section One of my dissertation (in Chapter One) I wrote that "my philosophical dissertation is dedicated to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air in the name of we breathe air." One could now begin to understand what this dedication could truly mean. I wanted to give a phenomenologico-ontological explication to our basic barbaric conviction we breathe air. In the very beginning of my dissertation I quoted Casey's, Gadamer's, Hass' and Detmer's phenomenological investigations, in which they all used the wording "we breathe air" analogously to clarify other phenomena. My

starting point was that these philosophers, in common with almost anyone else, do not really have a clear idea of what we breathe air really and truly means, and if this is the case, how could one really and truly compare another phenomenon to the air we breathe. Should one not first have a clearer grasp of what we breathe air means before one is able to use this experiential phrasing analogously to explicate some other phenomenon? This problem was the starting point for my dissertation. It led me to try to investigate what this basic barbaric respiratory conviction could mean. It could be said that this basic respiratory conviction has now been elaborated to really and truly state the ontologico-respiratory-chasmologico-aerial principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air in the depth dimension. I can say now that I have initially understood that the barbaric conviction as we breathe air means at least the following: first of all we ourselves always already are as bodily openness the silence of respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where as our first truth (as our truth of breath) the silence of inhaling and exhaling openness opens to the silent inhalation and exhalation of the common yawning atmosphere of the open and free air. So it could be said that, in these three simple words of barbaric conviction, *we breathe air* is concealed the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. This means that the "we" of this barbaric conviction is part of "breathe" and "air." As "we" are always already respiratory openness (respiration, breathing), this means that the part "breathe" already includes "we." This can also be thought of in connection to the process of falling asleep, in which "a certain respiratory rhythm...becomes my very being." In the plural form of "we" it can be said that when we fall asleep a certain respiratory rhythm becomes our very being, which means that this respiratory rhythm, as the communication between us, as the respiratory body-subjects (respiratory opennesses), and "some immense exterior lung" as the world in general, is what "we" ourselves always already truly are. There is no "I" or "we" which can be separated from "breathe" of "we breathe air." Also, this "we" is included in "air", as this "air" is the Abyss of Air wherein everything is engulfed. This means that this "we" is part of this "everything" which is engulfed in the yawning of the aerial world, in the gaping of the common atmosphere of the free and open air that surrounds everything and thus has in a sense swallowed up everything into its profound abyssal depth. To conclude the train of thought, I will say the following. As I have just said that "air" of "we breathe air" is the Abyss of Air or the Yawn of Air, that is, the dehiscence of Being, or Chaos, as the yawning of the aerial world, and as "breathe" of we breathe air is the Silence of Breath as "we are *respiration* within Being", (that is, the combination of Merleau-Ponty's "we are within Being" and "respiration within Being" with Bachelard's "*breath* is the premier phenomenon of *silence* of being"), this all means that the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air stated in the ontologico-respiratory-chasmologico-aerial thesis that *first of all we always already are as bodily openness the silence of respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where as our first truth as the truth of breath inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the common yawning atmosphere of the open and free air.*

This concluding statement of Section One of my dissertation airs *the hidden and secret essence of our barbaric conviction we breathe air*

SECTION TWO

**THE METHOD OF NEW RESPIRATORY AND
CHASMOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY: ONTOLOGICO-
RESPIRATORY REDUCTION AND THINKING IN
BREATHING AS A NEW WAY OF THINKING**

CHAPTER 8

The Method of Phenomenologico-Ontological Respiratory Philosophy: Phenomenologico-Ontological Reduction and Its Depth-Dimension as Ontologico- Respiratory Reduction

In Section One of my dissertation I discovered the new principle of philosophy, or thinking, which I call the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air (Yawn of Air) in the name of we breathe air. In Section Two, the task of my dissertation is to interrogate the method of philosophy as respiratory and gaping philosophy that is based on this ontologico-respiratory-chasmologico-aerial principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. My question is: what does it mean for philosophical thinking if one seriously considers, as the initial mystery for all thinking, Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" in connection to the chasmological ideas of Hesiod, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty? These chasmological ideas include, for example, Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence of Being as the principle of separation-difference between the perceiver and the perceived and Heidegger's *khaos* as "the yawning, gaping chasm, the open that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed." What would it mean to philosophy if one takes the intertwining of these respiratory and chasmological formulations as the beginning of philosophy? This new principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, as the point of departure for philosophy, was initially understood in my aerial, respiratory and chasmological interpretation to say: first of all as our first truth (the truth of breath) we ourselves always already are as bodily openness silent respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where the silence of inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the yawning atmosphere of the open and free air.

My search for a new philosophy founded upon this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, or upon the fundamental faith and barbaric conviction we breathe air, is deeply inspired by phenomenological philosophy. How is this so?

In the movement of phenomenology the philosophers, for example Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, have called for a “new philosophy”⁵³⁷ or a “new ontology.”⁵³⁸ Let us in the beginning of this section investigate this phenomenological idea of a new philosophy, or new ontology, as well as the phenomenological method in general, which is essentially the foundation of this idea of a new philosophy. This methodological investigation provides a phenomenological grounding for the phenomenologico-respiratory project of my dissertation as a possible new respiratory and chasmologico-aerial philosophy and ontology. In my exploration of these newly-based fundamental methodological themes of phenomenology, I draw inspiration from Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Bachelard and Husserl. My account of the method of phenomenology in Section Two of my dissertation is my intertwining of the methodological themes of these four great thinkers of phenomenology. In a similar manner to Section One, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy plays the most important role in Section Two’s methodological chapters. My account of the method of phenomenology serves my task of trying to deepen this phenomenological method as a method of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. My basic methodological question in Section Two is how to philosophize if this respiratory and chasmologico-aerial principle is taken as a new beginning of philosophy.

There is a deep desire in phenomenological philosophy for a new philosophy or new ontology. In Husserl’s words, this means that there is a deep need for “philosophizing in a *new* way”.⁵³⁹ Heidegger articulates this philosophical desire as a need for “a completely *new* method of thinking”.⁵⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, speaks of a need for “an absolutely *new* way of thinking”.⁵⁴¹ This deep desire for a completely, or absolutely, new way of philosophizing in phenomenological philosophy is no surprise if one has truly comprehended the radicalism of the phenomenological approach, in which, according to Husserl, the philosopher must always take an “*entirely new point of departure*”⁵⁴² with regards to what one investigates. Like Husserl, Bachelard also uses almost the same wording as he speaks of a need for a “*new departure*”⁵⁴³, which means to him that “[o]n principle, phenomenology liquidates the past and confronts what is *new*.”⁵⁴⁴ This phenomenological approach of liquidating the past and confronting what is new, and always taking an entirely new of point of depar-

537 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 198. Merleau-Ponty, “Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: Preface to Hesnard’s *L’Oeuvre de Freud*,” p. 81.

538 Merleau-Ponty, *In the Praise of Philosophy*, pp. 167-168. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 169.

539 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 151. My emphasis.

540 Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’ The *Spiegel* Interview,” trans. William J. Richardson, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010), p. 59. My emphasis.

541 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 177.

542 Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. Lee Hardy (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2010), p. 19. My emphasis.

543 Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), p. 15. In the English translation of this book “*un nouveau départ*” is translated as “a fresh start”. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxxii. My emphasis.

544 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxxii. My emphasis.

ture as a way of philosophizing, is shared by all of these four phenomenologists who have inspired my dissertation's methodological framework. Within this radical, or phenomenological, methodological approach it is important to see how the task of the philosopher is understood. In phenomenological philosophy, the philosopher is in the truest sense understood by Husserl, Heidegger, Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty as a "perpetual beginner"⁵⁴⁵. Husserl coined the slogan "*Philosoph, ewiger Anfänger!*" ("Philosopher, perpetual beginner!") which repeatedly appears in his manuscripts.⁵⁴⁶ Also in his published works, for example in *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl refers to this idea of the philosopher with phrasings like "we beginning philosophers" and "[t]he beginning phenomenologist[s]".⁵⁴⁷ Heidegger writes about this idea of the philosopher as a perpetual beginner as follows: "Perhaps philosophy shows most forcibly and persistently how much Man is a beginner. Philosophizing ultimately means nothing other than being a beginner."⁵⁴⁸ In the "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the philosopher is a perpetual beginner, and still fifteen years later he says in *The Visible and the Invisible* that "philosophy...must [always] recommence everything".⁵⁴⁹ Bachelard states this idea of the phenomenological beginner in relation to traditional philosophy when he writes in *The Poetics of Space* that "can philosophical culture be the propaedeutics to phenomenology? It does not seem so. Philosophy introduces us to ideas that are too well coordinated for us to examine and re-examine them, detail after detail, as the phenomenologist must from the beginning."⁵⁵⁰ This shows that Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard all share the idea of the philosopher as "a perpetual beginner". This means that, in the phenomenological project of perpetual beginning, philosophy is not taken as a ready-made philosophical culture but as a "true thinking"⁵⁵¹ which must always begin again and again anew "from the ground up"⁵⁵². It is then a project in which everything must be examined and re-examined from the beginning. Philosophy as true thinking is thus thinking which always begins from the beginning of thinking, that is, from the principle, or the source, of thinking. In Merleau-Ponty's words, this phenomenological idea of the philosopher as a perpetual beginner, starting from the ground up as the beginning, means that the philosopher "accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know." This is the first step to becoming a philosopher in the truest phenomenological sense as a perpetual beginner, and it is important to understand that I empha-

545 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxviii.

546 Juha Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction* (Vantaa, Finland: Tummavuoren kirjapaino Oy, 2000), p. 178.

547 Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dori-on Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), pp. 11 and 76.

548 Heidegger quoted by Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 1.

549 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 130.

550 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 234-235.

551 Merleau-Ponty, *Éloge de la philosophie et autres essais* (Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1967), p. 18. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 12. The translation has been altered.

552 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1960), p. 99.

size the word *perpetual* as it is not at all enough that the philosopher, in a Cartesian way⁵⁵³ only once in his or her life, “accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know.” This act of not accepting something as established needs to be done by the perpetual beginner over and over again throughout his or her life. The perpetual beginner’s philosophical attitude is not only directed towards everyday beliefs, common sense knowledge and scientific knowledge, but also towards philosophy itself. Being a perpetual beginner also therefore means, according to Merleau-Ponty, “that philosophy itself must not take itself as established in the truths it has managed to utter, that philosophy is an ever-renewed experiment/experience of its own beginning, that it consists entirely in describing this beginning, and finally, that radical reflection is conscious of its own dependence on an unreflected life that is its initial, constant, and final situation.”⁵⁵⁴ In these words of Merleau-Ponty are included, for example, Bachelard’s words that I already quoted in relation to the idea of the perpetual beginner when he asked: “can philosophical culture be the propaedeutics to phenomenology?” and when he answered his own question thus: “It does not seem so. Philosophy introduces us to ideas that are too well coordinated for us to examine and re-examine them, detail after detail, as the phenomenologist must from the beginning.” The philosophical culture as a body of established truths and ideas that are too well coordinated that Bachelard speaks of cannot ever be the “propaedeutics to phenomenology”, as this philosophy of established truths does not return to the beginning of philosophy, and as it does not return to the beginning of its own established philosophical ideas and truths. However, the philosopher as a perpetual beginner examines and re-examines over and over again, starting from the ground up, from the beginning, how these philosophical truths and ideas come to be established, what are the roots that these truths and ideas are grounded upon, and what presuppositions lie behind them. One of the perpetual beginner’s main questions concerns the conditions of possibility that we can have any kinds of so-called established truths and ideas, be they truths and ideas that are a product of our everyday common sense, science or philosophy.

The perpetual beginner, who “accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know,” does not desire in the first place to consume culture, but to “create culture”⁵⁵⁵ as he is, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, “not

553 Descartes writes famously in the beginning of *Meditations on First Philosophy*: “I realized that it was necessary, *once in the course of my life*, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundation if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last.” Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume II*, p. 12. My emphasis. In relation to this Merleau-Ponty writes in “Eye and Mind”: “Four centuries after the ‘solutions’ of the Renaissance and three centuries after Descartes, depth is still new, and it insists on being sought, not ‘once in his life’ but all throughout a life.” Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 369. The notion of “depth” in Merleau-Ponty’s usage here refers to this foundation that Descartes speaks of.

554 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxviii.

555 This formulation that, in the first place, we should not *consume culture*, but we should *create culture* is taken from Terence McKenna’s speech “Eros and the Eschaton” which was given on the 25th of March 1994 at the University of Washington, Seattle.

satisfied to be a cultured animal but takes up culture from its inception and founds it anew"⁵⁵⁶. Those who accept established truths consume the ready-made culture of our everydayness, science and philosophy. The philosopher instead wants to return himself, in his "will for radicalism", to "the wild region wherein...all [cultures] have originated"⁵⁵⁷, and found the culture anew as a creation. Merleau-Ponty also calls this originary wild and "untamed region"⁵⁵⁸, to which he wants to return, "the brute or wild Being"⁵⁵⁹, "the 'wild' or 'vertical' world"⁵⁶⁰, "the 'barbarous' source"⁵⁶¹ and "the barbaric Principle"⁵⁶². All of these notions, from the "wild region" to the "barbaric Principle", are different names for the beginning that the perpetual beginner desires to return to. The task of the philosopher is nothing but describing this return to the beginning. This description of the beginning as a creative process is what Merleau-Ponty calls a new philosophy or new ontology. In order to accomplish such a task this new philosophy, or new ontology, as a "creation"⁵⁶³, "requires a complete reconstruction of philosophy"⁵⁶⁴, which includes "a complete reworking [*refonte*; literally re-melting]"⁵⁶⁵, "revision"⁵⁶⁶ and "re-examination"⁵⁶⁷ of "what is thinking"⁵⁶⁸, that is, what philosophy is at that moment, for the perpetual beginner, when "philosophy itself must not take itself as established in the truths it has managed to utter". According to Merleau-Ponty, this means that, in the creation of new philosophy, "we have to *rethink* with regard[s] to our experience of the world"⁵⁶⁹ as the brute or wild Being, which is the beginning, "all notions"⁵⁷⁰ and "concepts ordinarily used"⁵⁷¹ in philosophy and life in general. If this is the task of thinking as a perpetual project of not consuming but creating "culture anew"⁵⁷², it can be said, following Merleau-Ponty, that "philosophy has never

In this speech McKenna expresses his dream for a new point of departure which describes very well, in my opinion, the ethos of a "perpetual beginner", that is, of a person who desires "to say what has never been said, to see what has never been seen, to draw, paint, sing, sculpt, dance and act what has never before been done. To push the envelope of creativity and language. And what's really important is, I call it 'the felt presence of direct experience' which is a fancy term, which simply means *we have to stop consuming our culture. We have to create culture.*" (My emphasis.) Terence McKenna, "Reclaim Your Mind," accessed January 18, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eu9GfHCpVo>.

556 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 78.

557 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 115.

558 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 120.

559 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170. See also p. 121.

560 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 177.

561 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 178.

562 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 267.

563 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 197.

564 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 193.

565 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 179.

566 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 22.

567 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 23.

568 "Now as before, philosophy begins with a 'What is thinking?' and is absorbed in the question to begin with." Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 6. My emphasis.

569 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 6.

570 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 6. My emphasis.

571 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 179.

572 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 181.

had more to do than *today*⁵⁷³ as “in philosophy everything remains to be done or redone”⁵⁷⁴ because, for the perpetual beginner, philosophy is, as was already quoted, “an ever-renewed experiment/experience of its own beginning.” Without this constant and complete redoing, re-examination, reworking and reconstruction of philosophy, there is no true philosophy. The true philosophy of perpetual recommencement is constantly striving for a new philosophy as “an ever-renewed experiment of its own beginning”. In this sense the role of the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, can be very well compared to the role of the artist, about whom Merleau-Ponty writes: “The artist is not content to continue the past by veneration or revolt. He recommences his attempt from the ground up. The reason why the painter takes up his brush is that in a sense the art of painting still remains to be done.”⁵⁷⁵

Merleau-Ponty even goes so far to make his point about what the true philosophy as new philosophy is that, in the beginning of his last lecture course “Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Hegel”, he says: “True philosophy scoffs at philosophy, since it is aphilosophical.”⁵⁷⁶ In this quotation Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction between “true philosophy”, which is “aphilosophical” (non-philosophical) and “philosophy”, which is traditional philosophy as an established institution. This established philosophy, as opposed to “true philosophy”, is “content to continue the past by veneration or revolt”. This established philosophical tradition as the continuation of the past has decided what philosophy is, and thus what are the so-called philosophical questions and problems and how they should be properly approached. This traditional philosophy as an established institution includes different traditions like Platonism, Thomism, Cartesianism, Marxism, positivism, empiricism, rationalism, etc. All of these philosophical traditions have already decided what philosophy is, what its methods, questions, problems and fundamental concepts are, how it sees its place in relation to other philosophical traditions, and which philosophers it venerates in the history of philosophy and which ones it revolts against. However, in contrast to this traditional philosophy as an established institution, “true philosophy”, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, “scoffs at philosophy, since it is aphilosophical.” This means that “true philosophy” does not live, in the first place, from the past traditions of philosophy, but rather “*lives from everything* which happens to the philosopher and his times.”⁵⁷⁷ This means that true phi-

573 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 7. My emphasis.

574 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 9.

575 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 99. See the English translation of this quotation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 278 and Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 79. The translation has been altered. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty sees this similarity between the activity of the phenomenological philosopher and the artist as follows: “Phenomenology is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry, or Cézanne -- through the same kind of attention and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to grasp the sense of world or of history in its nascent state.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxv.

576 Merleau-Ponty, “Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Hegel,” p. 9. See also Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 93.

577 Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 128. My emphasis. Merleau-Ponty expresses this distinction between traditional philosophy and true philosophy in an interview with Madeleine

losophy takes its questions, interests and problems “from *everything*”. As this “everything which happens to the philosopher and his times” truly includes “everything”, it means that traditional philosophy is also part of it. If the philosophical traditions were excluded from the field of true philosophy, it would not be true to itself as living “from *everything*”. Thus, true philosophy lives not only from traditional philosophy, but also from other matters such as human relations, thing-relations, painting, poetry, psychoanalysis, sciences, politics, cinema, literature, religion, love, war, history, nature and sexuality. All of these themes are investigated from the phenomenological perspective of the lived, embodied and perceptual experience of the world, and of Being, which always comes before any traditional perspective. This “true philosophy” is, to cite Husserl, “the philosophizer’s quite personal affair. It must arise as *his* wisdom, as his self-acquired knowledge tending toward universality, a knowledge for which he can answer from the beginning, and at each step, by virtue of his own absolute insight.”⁵⁷⁸ Each philosopher as a perpetual beginner has to begin again and again from his or her own lived experience of the world and Being as the beginning of all thinking. Only in this way can the path of the philosopher become the kind of “personal affair” that Husserl refers to in such a way that “he can [truly] answer from the beginning”. “True philosophy” is “aphilosophical”, that is, non-philosophical as its beginning or source is not philosophical “reflection” but, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, “its own dependence on an *unreflected life* that is its initial, constant, and final situation.”

As one can easily guess the truly philosophical path of the perpetual beginner as a path of a “personal affair” that “scoffs at [traditional] philosophy”, is not at all easy⁵⁷⁹ and for this reason, according to Merleau-Ponty, “hardly any have followed [the example of Husserl and Heidegger as perpetual beginners] in what was nevertheless their principal effort: to recuperate within an absolutely new way of thinking the [fundamental] experience of Being”⁵⁸⁰, that is, the primordial experience of the wild and vertical world as the beginning wherein all cultures and traditions originated. This difficult path is a path of perpetual recommencing and recreating that includes continual returning, reawakening, liberating, unlearning, relearning, wondering and transforming. In his or her will for radicalism as a project of baring “all the *roots* (the ‘vertical world’)”⁵⁸¹, the philosopher as a perpetual beginner on this path wants to return

Chapsal on February 17, 1958 in which he says: “The idea that in France today some people are divided as to whether Thomas Aquinas and Friedrich Engels are right or wrong in what they said about Nature – this idea looks dismaying to me when one considers all there is to know and understand.” Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 389.

578 Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 2.

579 In *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty writes: “The philosopher’s path maybe difficult, but we are sure that each step makes others possible.” Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 319. See also, for example, James Morley, “It’s Always About the *Epoché*”, p. 225.

580 Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours: Collège de France 1952–1960*, p. 153. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 177. The translation has been altered.

581 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 169. From this quotation one can see that what Merleau-Ponty means by the vertical world is the world of all the roots.

to the fundamental experience of the wild Being or the vertical world as the beginning which is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, the barbaric principle of thinking or, in Heidegger's words, the "element of thinking"⁵⁸² (the first principle of thinking). In order to accomplish such a return to the barbaric or first principle of thinking, the perpetual beginner has to first reawaken⁵⁸³ this fundamental experience of Being or the greatest mystery of all, as the mystery of the world, from its state of slumber.⁵⁸⁴ Then again, in order to do this, the philosopher must radically liberate himself or herself, as Husserl says, from all philosophical, "scientific and prescientific traditions"⁵⁸⁵ which never begin from the ground up, that is, from the beginning, and which in their own way function as sleeping pills from the perspective of *original* philosophical thinking. A fundamental dimension of this liberation on the path of the philosopher is a "liberation of language"⁵⁸⁶ from "the given logic and vocabulary"⁵⁸⁷ of these ready-made cultural traditions "into a more original"⁵⁸⁸ means of expressing, speaking and thinking. This radical liberation is always a path of unlearning and relearning. It is unlearning in which one "accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know."⁵⁸⁹ Only through this non-acceptance can one re-

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- 582 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 195. It is important to remember that the word "element" comes from the Latin *elementum* that means "the first principle". So Heidegger's "element of thinking" here can be understood as the first principle of thinking and that first principle is the fundamental experience of Being.
- 583 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), pp. viii and 179n1. Here I follow Smith's translation instead Landes' as Smith translates "réveiller" as "reawakening" and Landes translates it as "awaken". It is important to understand that the question is not only an awakening of the experience of the world, but actually even more a *re-awakening* of it. See Landes' translations, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxii and 530n7. See the original text, Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. iii and 208n1. See also the chapter titled "The Task of Awakening a Fundamental Attunement [Experience] and the Indication of a Concealed Fundamental Attunement [Experience] in Our Contemporary Dasein," in Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, pp. 59–77. In addition to this see Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 73. Bachelard is also speaking about awakening the childhood within us as a beginning; Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 127 as well as p. 110.
- 584 Heidegger, for example, speaks of the dormant state of a fundamental experience of anxiety. Of this he writes as follows: "the original anxiety in existence is usually repressed. Anxiety is there. *It is only sleeping*. Its breath quivers perpetually through Dasein" Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 108. My emphasis.
- 585 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 199. The task of the philosopher, according to Merleau-Ponty, is to reawaken the fundamental or primordial experience of the world beneath all these traditions. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 530n7.
- 586 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 194.
- 587 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 176. The translation has been modified.
- 588 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 194.
- 589 This unlearning as not accepting what people believe they know is often called in phenomenology as a method of phenomenological *epoché*. This Greek word *epoché* means "pause, stoppage, check, suspension". The essential act of phenomenological method is the performance of *epoché* in which one tries to suspend all belief-systems. The *epoché* is process of unlearning what we believe we know. The *epoché* is a "disavowal of science", ready-made philosophies, traditional ways of thinking and common sense understanding of the world in order to relearn to think more originally. Original thinking means here to begin thinking from the origin or the beginning of thinking. See of this "disavowal of science", Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxi. See also, Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phe-*

learn to rethink in an original way. Original means that which takes its beginning from the origin. Heidegger says the following about the relation between unlearning and relearning: “we can [re]learn [true and original philosophical] thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally”⁵⁹⁰. True thinking or true philosophy as original thinking means “to relearn to see the [wild] world”⁵⁹¹, that is, to learn again to see the world as it “come[s] into being”⁵⁹² “in its nascent state”.⁵⁹³ Only through this process of unlearning can one liberate one’s vision. The philosopher’s liberated, “free gaze,”⁵⁹⁴ to use Husserl’s expression, is a gaze which wonders, that is, *stands “in wonder before the world”*⁵⁹⁵. To learn to wonder again means cultivating a beginner’s attitude or perspective to the world, that is, to *become truly* a philosopher as a perpetual beginner.⁵⁹⁶ According to Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, going step by step through this philosopher’s path of perpetual recommencement is “a complete transformation”⁵⁹⁷, “a total change”⁵⁹⁸ of “human existence” which brings about “a thoroughly new way of life”.⁵⁹⁹ Husserl compares the radicality of this complete transformation to “a religious conversion”⁶⁰⁰. As such a radical transformation it, according to Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, is a complete disavowal of “our familiarity with”⁶⁰¹ the world as a habitual world of our everydayness. Through this life-changing philosophical conversion the world in its wildness appears as “mysterious”⁶⁰², “strange and paradoxical”⁶⁰³ and, from the

nomenology, pp. 135–137. In the Chapter Twelve of my dissertation I will explicitly investigate the method of phenomenological *epoché* from the perspective of yawning.

590 Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, p. 8.

591 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. xvi. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxv. The translation has been modified.

592 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 58.

593 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. lxxxv.

594 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 151.

595 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. lxxvii.

596 Of this Merleau-Ponty says: “the philosophical attitude [is the rejection of all ready-made explanations], in my opinion. Philosophy is *thaumazein* [wonder, astonishment], the consciousness of strangeness. It does away with ‘philosophical’ explanations by systems.” Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 236.

597 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 62. Husserl also speaks about “total transformation of attitude” See Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 148 and p. 149. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes of this *transformation*: “We must not merely practice philosophy, but also become aware of the transformation that it brings with it in the spectacle of the world and in our existence.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. 63.

598 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 148.

599 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 150.

600 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 137.

601 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. lxxvii.

602 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxv. It is important to remember that in the Chapter Two I referred to Fink who thought that the *world* as there is the world is the mystery of all mysteries and that in Chapter Four it was stated that, according to Heidegger, “there is Being” is the initial mystery.

603 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxvii. See also Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 134 which states that “a phenomenologist...is] constantly confronted with the strangeness of the world” that is, with the transformation from “what is familiar into what is strange.”

perspective of our normal everydayness which has a will for tamed cultural structures, including ready-made answers, theories and belief-systems of scientific and prescientific traditions, this complete transformation is “essentially a catastrophic event”⁶⁰⁴ in which the world turns “upside down”.⁶⁰⁵ The primordial experience of the world is the opening of this “crazy,”⁶⁰⁶ wild, strange and mysterious world (“the strangeness of the world”⁶⁰⁷), and for this reason the “only one emotion...possible for...[the true philosopher as a perpetual beginner is] the feeling of strangeness”⁶⁰⁸ and “mystery.”⁶⁰⁹ Philosophy, that is, “the philosophical attitude”, is this “vertiginous” feeling of strangeness, “consciousness of strangeness”⁶¹⁰ which Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Husserl all identify, following the Greeks⁶¹¹ with the fundamental “disposition,” or “attitude” of *thaumazein* (astonishment, wonder, amazement).⁶¹² This whole path of liberation, or path of the perpetual beginner, as “a method of beginning”⁶¹³ that I have been describing in this chapter is called in phenomenology a “method of reduction.”⁶¹⁴ In this case the word “reduction” refers to its etymological sense “to lead back” or “to bring back,” that is, to lead one’s way back, in Husserl’s words, to “the true beginnings, or origins, of *rizomata panton* [the roots of everything].”⁶¹⁵ To accomplish phenomenological reduction means to become a perpetual beginner, a childlike wonderer⁶¹⁶, who has, according to Husserl, “cho-

604 Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 50. See also Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction*, p. 180.

605 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 23. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger quotes Hegel as follows: “the world of philosophy is in and for itself a topsy-turvy, an inverted world.” Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 14. See also in the same book p. 285.

606 “Philosophy’s world is a crazy world.” Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 14n1.

607 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 134.

608 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 18.

609 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. xx, *Signs*, p. 163 and *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 133.

610 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 236.

611 In *Theaetetus*, Plato writes: “For there is especially the *pathos* [emotion] of a philosopher, to be astonished. For there is no other beginning of *philosophia* than this.” (155d) In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle follows this Plato’s idea as he writes: “For through astonishment men have begun to philosophize both in our times and at the beginning.” (*Met.* A 2, 982b12) See also, Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Jean T. Wild and William Kluback (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 79-85.

612 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 236. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 140-149. Husserl, *The Crisis*, p. 285. Also for Bachelard wonder is the fundamental attitude of the phenomenologist as he writes, for example, in *The Poetics of Space*: “A beginning of a philosophical phenomenology...consist[s] in our being able...to recapture the naïve wonder”. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 93.

613 Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction*, p. 38.

614 Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction*, p. 38.

615 Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 146.

616 To become a wonderer, a beginner, is to see the world anew, in its novelty and in this sense the beginner’s perspective can be related to the child’s perspective as Himanka writes in *Phenomenology and Reduction*: “From the phenomenological perspective a child is essentially someone who finds something as a novelty that has never been confronted before. One distances oneself from childhood when the novelty disap-

sen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge"⁶¹⁷, and this means that philosophy is nothing more than a constant interrogation which "goes back to ultimate origins"⁶¹⁸, for example to the ultimate origins of all knowledge. The philosopher's task, or role, is to "perform a phenomenological reduction"⁶¹⁹ in his or her own philosophizing. There is no phenomenological philosophy without performing a reduction⁶²⁰, and to accomplish this complete transformation, this thoroughly new way of life of reduction, means to perpetually relearn to stand in wonder before the world, that is, to recommence thinking constantly from the "initial mystery" which is "the mystery of a *Weltthesis* [world thesis]"⁶²¹: there is the world. Husserl's last assistant Eugen Fink stated this in a wonderful manner as follows: "What is of decisive importance is the awakening of an immeasurable astonishment over...the greatest mystery of all, the mystery of the being of the world itself."⁶²² Merleau-Ponty praises Fink's words as he connects them to the ultimate meaning of what phenomenological reduction is about. In these words, in Merleau-Ponty's view, Fink grasps the

pears and becomes acquainted and used to these things." (p. 170) And for this reason as the philosopher is a perpetual beginner "a philosopher remains a child and a beginner throughout life" (p. 178) To free oneself from the traditional ways of seeing and thinking means to "begin a transcendental childhood" (p. 169) See Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction*, pp. 169–170 and 178. Also James Morley talks about this connection between wonder, childlikeness and phenomenological method in his article "It's Always About *Epoché*" as he writes: "The phenomenological [method] is a commitment to assume the position of perpetual beginner and a childlike yet disciplined openness to the world as an ongoing birth of meaning. It is a stance of wonder, astonishment". Morley, "It's Always About *Epoché*", *Les Collectifs du Cirp* Vol. 1: 2010, p. 230. Also Bachelard writes in connection to this in *The Poetics of Reverie* as follows: "Childhood...has a proper phenomenological meaning, a pure phenomenological meaning since it is under the sign of wonder." Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 127.

- 617 Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 2. This Husserl's idea that the true philosopher must "begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge" has a historical resemblance, like the *thaumazein* (wonder, astonishment, amazement) as the phenomenological attitude of a true philosopher, to Plato. In *Symposium*, Plato tells us that *Eros* as the philosopher *par excellence* is "always poor" (203c) and that "need is his constant companion." (203d) All of that he inherits from his mother *Penia* (Poverty). *Eros* is, thus, perpetually in need because of his mother. On the other hand, his father is *Poros* (Resource) and, for this reason, he always pursuing to overcome poverty and gain wisdom, knowledge, beauty and goodness. Plato, *Symposium and the Death of Socrates*, trans. Tom Griffith (Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997).
- 618 Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, p. 147.
- 619 Edmund Husserl, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology: From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-1911*, trans. Ingo Farin and James G. Hart (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006) p. 82. See also, for example, Natalie Depraz, "What about the *praxis* of Reduction? Between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty", in *Merleau-Ponty's Reading of Husserl*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 121.
- 620 As Merleau-Ponty writes: "Phenomenology is only accessible to a phenomenological method." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxi.
- 621 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 163.
- 622 Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings*, ed. and trans. R.O. Elveton (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 109.

essence of reduction as the reawakening of astonishment or wonder before this greatest mystery of all. The method of reduction and phenomenology are so deeply and essentially connected that there is no phenomenology without the phenomenological method of reduction. Merleau-Ponty praises Fink's formulation as follows: "Perhaps the best formulation of the reduction, [that is, of phenomenology,] is the one offered by Husserl's assistant Eugen Fink when he spoke of a 'wonder' before the world."⁶²³ Merleau-Ponty wrote these words in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Some fifteen years later, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, he states that ultimately the method of reduction as the method of returning to the beginning is "the disclosing of the *Weltthesis*".⁶²⁴ It is the wonder that discloses the mystery of the *Weltthesis*: there is the world. So phenomenology is essentially about perpetual beginner's wonder, or astonishment, before the world. This initial and greatest mystery of all, that is, that there is the world is, for the perpetual beginner, the "wonder of all wonders"⁶²⁵, that is, the barbaric source and barbaric conviction vibrating at the centre of human existence. The philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, always wishes to dwell within that centre and to learn to give this fundamental and wondrous experience of the mystery of the world a linguistic "expression"⁶²⁶, that is, he or she has a deep wish "to put [it] into words".⁶²⁷

Let us next think about what the method of reduction means as a method of phenomenological ontology. What kind of reduction is performed in phenomenological ontology? In philosophy as phenomenological ontology, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger perform a phenomenological reduction which can be called an ontological reduction as it leads the thinker back to Being as the ultimate origin. Being as the ultimate origin of phenomenological ontology can also be called the wonder of all wonders, the initial mystery for all thinking, the barbaric Principle or the element of all thinking. It is important to recognize that neither Merleau-Ponty nor Heidegger use this notion of *ontological reduction* explicitly, even if both speak of a reduction in relation to Being as a certain kind of return to Being. Instead of Merleau-Ponty himself, it is a Merleau-Ponty scholar Renaud Barbaras who, in reference to Merleau-Ponty's late phenomenological ontology of Being, uses this notion of "ontological reduction."⁶²⁸ In reference to Heidegger, for example, Richard Kearney speaks of "Heidegger's *ontological reduction*, ([even] though Heidegger never used this term [himself])".⁶²⁹

623 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxvii.

624 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, p. 179.

625 John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, pp. 20 and 26.

626 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 58.

627 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125.

628 Renaud Barbaras, "Perception and Movement: The End of the Metaphysical Approach," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, eds. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, p. 82.

629 In addition to this Kearney also writes: "This [ontological] reduction involved a...reorientation of our awareness...from the essences of beings to 'being as being' (*Sein als Sein*). This also entailed a 'turning' of our attention toward the so-called *ontological difference*, namely, the long neglected difference between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiendes*)." Richard Kearney, "Epiphanies of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology," in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philos-*

Heidegger writes about this so-called ontological reduction in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* as follows: “For us [who do phenomenological ontology] phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of Being”⁶³⁰. So, according to Heidegger, reduction as a method of phenomenological ontology leads one back from the experience of beings to the fundamental experience of Being. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty writes that the reduction as a method of phenomenological ontology is a “reduction to the pre-personal and meta-personal *Weltthesis*, to the ‘there is...’, to there is *not nothing*, to the *Offenheit* [openness] as the structure of Being, word of Being.”⁶³¹ This means that reduction is “the disclosing of [the mystery of] the *Weltthesis*”⁶³², that is, of “there is the world” and its ontological interpretation as “there is Being”. The ontological method, or path, of “the reduction itself [is thus] the rediscovery of vertical [B]eing” and as such it is, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, a “return to [the Claudelian principle of] *Sigè* [Silence] the abyss.”⁶³³ The vertical Being that Merleau-Ponty here speaks of is the abyssal Being⁶³⁴ as the principle of Silence the Abyss. In Section One of my dissertation I interpreted this Claudelian principle as the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. I also interpreted the *Weltthesis* (the world thesis) in a respiratory and aerial manner as there is inspiration and expiration of the world, there is the immense lung of the world, or there is the aerial world. I interpreted *Offenheit* [openness] as the word of Being to mean respiratory-aerial openness as the word of Being. In my aerial and chasmological interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s “dehiscence of Being”, I mutated this notion to mean the common atmosphere of the free, open and gaping air that yawns perpetually between us and things. This means

ophy, eds. John Panteleimon Manoussaki (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 5.

- 630 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 21. The translation is altered. Heidegger rarely uses the notion of “reduction” in his work. He even disavows it as it is connected to Husserlian idealist and transcendental phenomenology. However as it can be seen in this quotation from *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger uses the notion of reduction in an ontological sense. In Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation, Heidegger’s philosophy is impossible without the phenomenological reduction. Merleau-Ponty writes of this in the “Preface” of *Phenomenology of Perception* as follows: “Far from being, as was believed, the formula for an idealist philosophy, the phenomenological reduction is in fact the formula for an existential philosophy: Heidegger’s ‘*In-der-Welt-Sein*’ [being-in-the-world] only appears against the background of the phenomenological reduction.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxviii. In my dissertation I follow strongly this Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of Heidegger.
- 631 Merleau-Ponty quoted by Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Paul B. Milan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 157n26. The translation is slightly altered. See the original French quotation of Merleau-Ponty, Renaud Barbaras, *Le désir et la distance: Introduction à une phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1999), p. 79n2.
- 632 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 179.
- 633 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 178 and 179.
- 634 According to Merleau-Ponty “vertical (=abyssal)”. See Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 49-50. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 367.

that in Section One of my dissertation I already implicitly moved within the respiratory and chasmologico-aerial sphere of ontological reduction. In Section Two of my dissertation, I am making explicit this Section One's implicit respiratory and chasmologico-aerial movement within the methodological sphere of ontological reduction. The path of this explication is the mutation of Merleau-Ponty's ontological reduction as a "reduction to the pre-personal and meta-personal *Weltthesis*, to the 'there is...'", to there is *not nothing*, to *Offenheit* [openness] as the structure of Being" into a newly transformed reduction as a reduction to the *Weltthesis* as there is inspiration and expiration of the world, and to the respiratory and chasmologico-aerial *Offenheit* as the structure of Being. If I would also reinterpret Heidegger's words "phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of Being", I could understand them as saying that the phenomenologico-ontological reduction leads phenomenological vision back to the understanding of inspiration and expiration of Being and dehiscence of Being. These new respiratory-chasmologico-aerial interpretations of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger could be said to mean that, in my dissertation, the method of ontological reduction is transformed and perhaps deepened into something that I might now call by the name *ontologico-respiratory reduction*, or more briefly *respiratory reduction*.

If this idea of a possible method of ontologico-respiratory reduction, or respiratory reduction, as a way of leading us back to "inspiration and expiration of Being" as the ontological atmosphere of we breathe air (a barbaric conviction), seems somehow phenomenologically illegit, mistaken or impossible, or perhaps just simply strange, it is important to remember that, first of all, reduction as the method of phenomenological philosophy means to lead, or bring, one back to the beginning or the origin. If this beginning or origin is understood as ontologico-respiratory "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", then I would argue that it is not at all so strange or phenomenologically illegit or impossible to call this method that returns us to this ontological atmosphere according to this notion. It is also important to remember that, within the phenomenological tradition, the method of reduction has had many different adjectives attached to it in addition to Husserl's *transcendental* and *eidetic*, depending of where the reduction is supposed to lead us back to. For example, Emmanuel Levinas' method has been called "ethical reduction" as it leads us back to the ethical relation with the Other that is understood as the beginning of philosophy, that is, as the first philosophy.⁶³⁵ Kearney speaks of four separate reductions in his article "Epiphanies of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology." He names these different reductions 1) transcendental, 2) ontological, 3) donological and 4) eschatological or micro-eschatological. The transcendental reduction refers to Husserl's reduction,

635 See, for example, Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 183–4 and Dave Boothroyd, *Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 43 and 101.

which leads one back to “the ‘essences’ of meaning” and to “an inner realm of transcendental consciousness”. The ontological reduction, to which we have already referred, leads one back to Heidegger’s Being. The donological reduction refers to “Jean-Luc Marion’s return to the gift.” Regarding the fourth reduction, Kearney writes as follows:

a fourth reduction...might eventually lead us back (*re-ducere*) to the *eschaton* curled at the heart of quotidian existence...We might call this reduction *microeschatological*, in so far as it leads us through the horizons of (1) ‘essence,’ (2) ‘being,’ and (3) ‘gift’--*back to the everyday*: that is, back to the natural world of simple embodied life where we may confront again the other ‘face-to-face.’...This fourth reduction, in short, would reverse the first three reversals (while fully acknowledging their invaluable findings) and bring us right back to the beginning: the face-to-face encounters of our ordinary universe.⁶³⁶

Kearney’s fourth reduction is quite similar to Levinas’ “ethical reduction” as this also returns us to the face-to-face relationship with the Other. With regards to these different interpretations and variations of the method of reduction as a return to the beginning it is very telling to quote Paul Ricoeur’s famous words, in which he said that the phenomenological tradition can be described as “the sum of the variations of Husserl’s work and heresies which have sprung from Husserl.”⁶³⁷ I would be happy to admit that the ontologico-respiratory reduction, which becomes possible as a mutation and deepening of Heidegger’s and Merleau-Ponty’s “ontological reduction”, is just one of these heresies in the phenomenological tradition that Ricoeur refers to. Or perhaps it is even more accurate to say that this ontologico-respiratory reduction is one of the heresies of the heresies, as it is fundamentally possible only as a variation of this so-called “ontological reduction”, which is already itself a heresy of Husserl’s method of reduction.

To express how this ontologico-respiratory reduction, or briefly respiratory reduction, is in another way a mutation of the ontological reduction as a return to Being, I can borrow the words of Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism”, in which he states his “completely new method of thinking” as “the thinking of Being”.⁶³⁸ In ontologico-respiratory reduction I mutate Heidegger’s thinking of Being into a completely new method of respiratory thinking as the thinking of inspiration and expiration of Being, and as the thinking of dehiscence of Being. Heidegger writes of this ontological method as follows: “the thinking that is to come must learn to experience [the truth of Being: there is principally Being] and to say it.”⁶³⁹ Through respiratory reduction, this methodological statement of the task of the thinker as a perpetual beginner is transformed to say: the respiratory thinking that is to come must learn to experience the truth of Being as the truth of breath: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being

636 Kearney, “Epiphanies of the Everyday,” pp. 5–6.

637 Paul Ricoeur quoted by Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction, Volume Two*, 2nd edn. (Dordrecht: Springer, 1971), p. 564.

638 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, p. 196.

639 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, p. 210.

and, in addition to this, it also has to learn to say this ontological experience of the truth of breath.

Perhaps without even knowing it, Merleau-Ponty and Husserl are actually also showing a way towards the phenomenological method of ontologico-respiratory reduction in a way that I have not yet shown before. How is this so? One of the ways that Merleau-Ponty defines the method of ontological reduction is as follows: the “reduction...brings us back to the soul of Heraclitus [*l'âme d'Héraclite*], to an interweaving of horizons, to one open Being.”⁶⁴⁰ This description of the Merleau-Ponty's ontological reduction implicitly speaks about the ontologico-respiratory reduction if it is interpreted in the right manner. How is this so? It all has to do with the “soul” of Heraclitus. It is very interesting from the perspective of phenomenological philosophy of breathing that the word “soul” for Heraclitus is *psyche*, and this Heraclitean *psyche*, to use Bachelard's expression, is a “word of breath.”⁶⁴¹ Here it is worth remembering that, in Section One of my dissertation (Chapter Five), it was already mentioned that Pettigrew compared Merleau-Ponty's “inspiration and expiration of Being” to “the breath-soul” of Heraclitus as he wrote:

In an interesting and revealing sense, Merleau-Ponty's ontological allegory of the “inspiration and expiration of Being”...could be said to reinscribe the psyche as breath-soul within the question of [B]eing. [Merleau-Ponty's “inspiration and expiration of Being” can be understood as a] return to...Heraclitus's account of a soul [*psyche*] as an exhalation with no boundaries.

In his book *Heraklit*, Heidegger also connects the *psyche* of Heraclitus to breathing when he says: “*Psyche* means breathing [*Hauch*], breath [*Atem*]”⁶⁴². This means that Heidegger takes the Greek word “psyche” in its etymological meaning, as this word comes from the verb *psycho*, “to breathe.”⁶⁴³ After this etymologico-respiratory definition of Heraclitus' *psyche*, Heidegger connects it with the Open (Being) in a following way: “The exhaling and inhaling of breath [*psyche*] named here...means that basic trait of the living arises into the Open....The essence of *psyche*, hence, rests in the arising self-opening into the Open.”⁶⁴⁴ This means that, in Heidegger's interpretation, the essence of the *psyche* of Heraclitus as breath is respiratory openness that opens itself to the Open (Being). In addition to Heidegger and Pettigrew, Levin's article “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing” also connects the psyche of Heraclitus with breathing.⁶⁴⁵

640 Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours: Collège de France 1952-1960*, p. 152. See in the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 176. The translation has been altered.

641 Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, p. 4. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xx. The translation has been altered.

642 Martin Heidegger quoted by Michael Zimmerman, trans. Michael Zimmerman in “Heidegger and Heraclitus on Spiritual Practice”, *Philosophy Today*, 27:2 (1983), p. 97.

643 Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 32.

644 Ibid.

645 Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, p. 123.

It is interesting that both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty interweave the *psyche* of Heraclitus with “the Open” (Heidegger) or with “one open Being” (Merleau-Ponty). Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty describes this interweaving of horizons, that is, the interweaving of horizons of “the soul of the Heraclitus” and “one open Being”, as follows:

All consciousness is consciousness of something or of the world, but this *something*, this *world*, is no longer, as “phenomenological positivism” appeared to teach, an object that is what it is, exactly adjusted to acts of consciousness. Consciousness is now “the soul of Heraclitus”, and Being, which is around about it rather than in front of it, is one oneiric Being which is by definition hidden.⁶⁴⁶

This description of the relationship between consciousness and the world is one way of stating the mystery of the world thesis as *there is the world* and the ontological interpretation of this thesis as *there is Being*. In Chapter Two of my dissertation, one of Merleau-Ponty’s formulations of the “there is” and of the true *cogito* was the wording “there is consciousness of something”. This formulation of the “there is” thesis is important in connection to the above quotation as Merleau-Ponty also speaks of a “consciousness of something” in it. In this citation above, Merleau-Ponty understands this consciousness as the soul of Heraclitus. In reference to this, he says: “It is certain that *Bewußtsein* [consciousness] no longer means the same thing [as it used to] when it is Heraclitus’ soul.”⁶⁴⁷ Here the concept of consciousness, according to Merleau-Ponty, goes through a “mutation”.⁶⁴⁸ If I enlist the help of Heidegger, Pettigrew and Levin to interpret this *psyche* of Heraclitus as breath, as breathing, or as breath-soul, then again this concept of consciousness would go through again another mutation, as Merleau-Ponty does not explicate the concept of consciousness as the “soul of Heraclitus” in a respiratory manner. This new mutation, as a respiratory mutation of the concept of consciousness, would say that consciousness is now breathing, or the exhaling and inhaling of breath. With this kind of “mutation of [the] concept” of consciousness that goes from phenomenological positivism to respiratory negativism via ontological transformation, I can reach the ontological thesis of respiration as a new point of departure of philosophy, which I already stated in Chapter Five of my dissertation. How is this so? In *Phenomenology of Perception*,

646 Maurice Merleau-Ponty quoted by Gary Brent Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 195. These words of Merleau-Ponty should be read in connection to the following words of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*: “Dasein tends to understand its own being in terms of that being to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related – the ‘world.’ In Dasein itself and therewith in its own understanding of Being...the way the world is understood is ontologically reflected back upon the interpretation of Dasein.” Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 59. Here I read “Dasein” (openness-to-Being) as consciousness even if it is totally against Heidegger’s own wishes. I do this conscious misinterpretation of “Dasein” for my own purposes in order to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the mutation of consciousness in reference to “the soul of Heraclitus”. In reference to this quotation from Heidegger it could also be said that as the understanding of the world is transformed the mutation of consciousness follows. In the first section of my dissertation I have shown that the bodily consciousness and the world are inseparable from each other.

647 Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 53.

648 Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 53.

consciousness is defined within the context of phenomenological positivism, even if this book contains many trains of thought which deeply question this positivism. The ideas that question phenomenological positivism are, for example, phenomenological descriptions concerning the process of falling asleep, and the phenomenon of the night which I investigated in Chapter Three. Although *Phenomenology of Perception* includes these radical explorations into the roots of “consciousness, or experience,”⁶⁴⁹ the basic definition of consciousness in this book can still be stated in terms of phenomenological positivism with the following phrase: “Consciousness is being toward *the thing* through the intermediary of the body.”⁶⁵⁰ This definition of consciousness, or experience, is a phenomenologically positivistic definition as *the thing* is in front of consciousness as “a being” (a positive being), to use Heideggerian terminology. In comparison to this positivism, in ontological negativism *something*, or *the world*, is not in the first place in front of the consciousness but around about it. This ontological negativity has been defined earlier in Chapter Four of this dissertation as follows: Being⁶⁵¹ is *not* a being (a thing or an object), or anything real like a fact, but the field of all fields, the open region, the clearing, the universal dimensionality or the atmosphere which is something imaginary or oneiric⁶⁵² and which surrounds all beings (things, objects, human beings, animals, etc.). Here it can be seen that, from the perspective of phenomenological positivism, that is, from the perspective of beings or a being, this statement “Being is *not* a being” is a form of negativism. Since Merleau-Ponty’s ontological turn at the end of 1950’s, consciousness is not in the first place any more consciousness of things or objects, but of fields, horizons, dimensionalities and elements, that is, of Being⁶⁵³, that makes the consciousness of these objects possible. Merleau-Ponty states this new concept of consciousness, or experience, which has gone through this kind of ontological mutation, for example in a November 1959 working note from *The Visible and the Invisible* (which I already quoted in Chapter Five) in which he writes: “Perception [perceptual consciousness or perceptual experience] is not first a perception of things, but a perception of *elements*”

649 See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 96.

650 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), pp. 138-139. My emphasis.

651 This means that if we would want to use the notion of science in connection to this discussion concerning beings and Being, then we could say following Heidegger’s idea from *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* that says: “all non-philosophical sciences have as their theme some being or beings [and as them study some being or beings we shall call all of them] positive sciences. Positive sciences deal with that which is, with beings; that is, to say, they always deal with specific domains, for example, nature... [P]hilosophy as science of Being [perhaps could be called instead of a positive science]... the science of nothing”. So if we want to call philosophy as phenomenological ontology a science then instead of being a science of some being or of beings, that is, a positive science, it is a negative science, that is, the science of Being, the science of negativity, “the science of nothing”. See Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 13. Phenomenological ontology could also be called “the science of the inverted world”. *Ibid.*, p. 17 to which I briefly referred to earlier in this dissertation.

652 Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 187.

653 See, for example, Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 82n82 which states “Horizon = new Being.”

as fields. Through this Heraclitean notion of consciousness, which brings ontological transformation, the phenomenologically positive definition of *Phenomenology of Perception* as “consciousness is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body” could be reformulated to say, in the ontologically negative manner, *consciousness is being toward Being through the intermediary of the body*. In ontological terminology this would mean that consciousness is not in the first place a consciousness of beings, but a consciousness of Being as the atmosphere of beings. This mutation of the concept of consciousness goes through an even more extensive transformation if the soul of Heraclitus is interpreted in its etymological sense as “breath” following the lead of Heidegger, Levin and Pettigrew. As within this kind of interpretative horizon this Heraclitean definition is a respiratory definition of consciousness, and as Being is the openness, the universal dimensionality and the atmosphere, I could also reformulate it as follows: consciousness as the *psyche* of Heraclitus is openness toward the open and universal atmosphere through the intermediary of the respiratory body. If consciousness as the *psyche* of Heraclitus is the “exhaling and inhaling of breath” (Heidegger), then one could begin to speak about *respiratory consciousness* or *respiratory experience*, and as consciousness is now consciousness of Being, this respiratory consciousness could be interpreted as a respiratory consciousness of Being. As the consciousness of Being is understood in this kind of respiratory manner it could be interpreted as breathing of Being, or exhaling and inhaling of Being. In the terminology of “true *cogito*” of *Phenomenology of Perception*, I could express this respiratory mutation of the concept of consciousness with the thesis: *there is respiratory consciousness of inspiration and expiration of Being*. How is this possible? In Chapter Two of my dissertation, Merleau-Ponty’s “true *cogito*” was defined with the thesis: “there is consciousness of something”. So, as consciousness is understood as the soul of Heraclitus, and as this Heraclitean concept of consciousness is now, with the help of Heidegger, Levin and Pettigrew, interpreted as respiratory consciousness, I could initially state this “true *cogito*” as *there is respiratory consciousness of something*. As Merleau-Ponty states that *something* is now *Being* in his quotation above, that means that I could change this notion of “something” into “Being” in my previous formulation of the true *cogito*, which would mean that I could now state it as follows: *there is respiratory consciousness of Being*. I am still short of the total respiratory mutation of the notion of true *cogito* that I just a few lines ago stated as *there is respiratory consciousness of inspiration and expiration of Being*. In order to arrive at this kind of formulation, it is important to remember that, according to Merleau-Ponty, “[p]erception and the perceived necessarily have the same existential modality, since perception is inseparable from the consciousness that it has”. The latter part of Merleau-Ponty’s wording means that perception as perceptual consciousness, or perceptual experience, is inseparable from the something that it is conscious of. The “perceived” as the perceived something is, according to Merleau-Ponty, also equal with the “perceptual”⁶⁵⁴ as the perceptual something. If I take this idea of the “same existential modality” seriously, I

654 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 170.

could say in a more general manner, speaking of more than only of perception as the perceptual experience, that experience and the experienced have also necessarily the same existential modality. In respiratory terms, this would then mean that breathing and the breathed, respiration and the respired, or the respiratory and the respired, also have the same existential modality. So when I speak of respiration, I am also speaking at least implicitly of the respired, since respiration as the respiratory consciousness is inseparable from the consciousness of the respired something. This "something" as respired, or respiratory, something in a Merleau-Pontian interpretation of the Heraclitean consciousness is "Being, which is around it rather than in front of it", and "this" Being is respiratory Being or respired Being, since the consciousness is "inseparable from the consciousness that it has". Following this train of thought I can say that the ontologico-respiratory reformulation of the "true *cogito*" as "there is consciousness of something" could now be stated as *there is respiratory consciousness of respired Being*. If I would understand the respiratory process as a perpetual movement of inspiration and expiration, then I could change this phrasing to the following form: there is respiratory consciousness of inspiration and expiration of Being. With this last rephrasing, I would have arrived at what I suggested above. If this is the case, then the "true *cogito*" has now been expressed as "there is consciousness of something". It is important to remember that Merleau-Ponty also expressed this true *cogito* with formulations such as "something appears to me," "there is always something facing/confronting" us, as well as simply "there is something". If I take the simplest form of these wordings as "there is something" and reinterpret it in a respiratory manner, the same way I did with "there is consciousness of something", I would end up with the formulation "there is inspiration and expiration of Being". This is, of course, the same wording as the first respiratory interpretation of the intertwining of "true *cogito*" and the soul of Heraclitus, with the difference that in this formulation the notion of consciousness has been omitted. In this way I have arrived at almost exactly the same respiratory phrasing as Merleau-Ponty's "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being" from *Eye and Spirit*. As one can see, the only difference is that it is missing the expression "really and truly" (*vraiment*). All of this shows that Pettigrew's basic intuition (which he himself never explicates in any manner whatsoever) that Merleau-Ponty's respiratory thesis of "inspiration and expiration of Being" can very well be interpreted as a reinscription of Heraclitus' "*psyche* as breath-soul" has an important validity to it.

As I have, with the help of Heidegger, Pettigrew, Levin and Merleau-Ponty, interpreted the soul, or the *psyche*, of Heraclitus as breathing, as respiratory consciousness, and as respiratory openness, this means that Merleau-Ponty's definition of the method of phenomenologico-ontological "reduction [that] brings us back to the soul of Heraclitus, to an interweaving of horizons, to one open Being" can now very well be understood as a reduction that brings us back to the respiratory consciousness, to the respiratory openness and to the open "Being, which is around [this respiratory consciousness] rather than in front of it" as objects, that is, as beings, are. This method of reduction also

brings us back “to an interweaving of horizons”. Here these horizons that are interwoven can be understood as a “double horizon”⁶⁵⁵ of respiratory openness and open Being as inspiration and expiration of Being.

Even if this view concerning the concept of consciousness as respiratory consciousness is very strange to many philosophers and people in general, it is not only stated in this manner in my dissertation: in his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, William James writes the following about the essence of consciousness: “breath, which was ever the original of ‘spirit,’ breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness”.⁶⁵⁶ So, according to James, the essence of consciousness, or “the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness”, could very well be the breath. In connection to James’ insights, Lenart Škof has spoken of “James’ intuitive primacy of breath”.⁶⁵⁷ If one follows the respiratory clues given by Merleau-Ponty, and if one thinks alongside him by trying to follow these clues as radically as possible, I suggest that one could come to understand that the root, or the original source, of consciousness as subjectivity is actually breathing, that is, a respiratory body-subject. By following these Merleau-Ponty’s respiratory clues, it is also possible that we begin to understand the connections between the primacy, or priority, of breathing and the root and essence of consciousness as the respiratory consciousness. How is this so? According to Merleau-Ponty, “all consciousness is perceptual, even the consciousness of ourselves.”⁶⁵⁸ This perceptual consciousness is always bodily, or embodied, consciousness, as he states: “The perceiving spirit/mind is an incarnated spirit/mind.”⁶⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty’s discoveries come through his method of reduction as a return to the beginning, about which he writes regarding his desire for radicalism as a desire to bare all the roots as follows: “I have sought, first of all, to reestablish the roots of the mind/spirit in its body and in its world”.⁶⁶⁰ So the roots of the spirit, or of consciousness, are to be found in

655 In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty speaks of “the double horizon” of external horizon and internal horizon, for example, in the case of the phenomenon of space. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 103. See also how this “double horizon” is also temporal interweaving of the “originary past” and the “originary future”, pp. 72, 249 and 447.

656 William James quoted by Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 154. See also Lenart Škof and Emily A. Holmes, “Towards Breathing with Luce Irigaray,” in *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, ed. Emily A. Holmes and Lenart Škof (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 1 and Lenart Škof, *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), p. 51. In addition to these articles see also, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, “The Legacy of William James: Lessons for Today’s Twenty-first Century Neuroscience”, in *Pragmatist Neurophilosophy: American Philosophy and the Brain*, ed. John R. Shook and Tibor Solymosi (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 30–37 and 43.

657 Lenart Škof, “Body and Religion: A Phenomenologico-empirical Interpretation of Rorty’s Neopragmatism”, *Sophia* (2011) 50, p. 97.

658 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 13.

659 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 3.

660 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 283. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 3.

the body-subject's being-in-the-world. These roots of consciousness can be found within "the umbilical bond that binds [consciousness] always to Being"⁶⁶¹, that is, to the perceived world. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological method of "[d]igging down to the [depths of the] perceived world" in order to "rediscover" its various structures, dimensions, horizons, levels, depths and roots is "similar to that of an archaeologist."⁶⁶² This philosophico-archaeological digging into the roots of consciousness, of spirit, or of experience takes us, according to Merleau-Ponty, into "the world of childhood", which is the "common ground"⁶⁶³ ("the wild region") from which all different forms of consciousnesses, as well as cultures, originate. This means, according to Merleau-Ponty, that "if there is to be for the adult one single intersubjective world"⁶⁶⁴ it would always be founded upon the world of childhood in which we have learned little by little to see and understand things, others and the world.⁶⁶⁵ But then again, if one would dig into the very depths of the untamed world of childhood, into its very beginning within the ontological reduction, one would come to "our first ways of being."⁶⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty connects these very first ways of being, as the sources of the world of childhood, with "our first breath."⁶⁶⁷ This could be interpreted to mean that the ontological reduction, in its most radicalized form, discloses the way towards the ontologico-respiratory reduction as it gives us a chance to try to reach out towards "our first breath".

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes the "child's...first breath" as "a global and inarticulate grasp of the world"⁶⁶⁸ which is "prior to perceiving and reaching a relational life".⁶⁶⁹ In his text "The Child's Relations with Others" from 1951, Merleau-Ponty speaks of this priority of breathing as he writes: "at the beginning of the child's life...the body is already a respiratory body. Not only the mouth but the whole respiratory apparatus gives the child a certain experience of space. After this, other regions of the body intervene and come into prominence."⁶⁷⁰ So the child's first breath is the respiratory body's "global and inarticulate grasp of the world" before other regions of the body, for example, "the life of...eyes, hands and ears"⁶⁷¹ take their prominent "holds

661 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 107.

662 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 5. See more detailed analysis of phenomenological archeology in Burkhard Liebsch, "Archeological Questioning: Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur," in *Merleau-Ponty in Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Patrick Burke and Jan Van der Veken (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), pp. 13-24.

663 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 355.

664 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 355.

665 See, for example, about this phenomenological meaning of "the world of a child" in Himanka, *Phenomenology and Reduction*, pp. 173-178.

666 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 21.

667 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 21.

668 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 463. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 426. The translation has been altered.

669 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 162.

670 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 122.

671 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 216.

on the world.”⁶⁷² Kleinberg-Levin also quotes these words from “The Child’s Relations with Others” with regards to the priority of the “respiratory body” in his great article “Logos and Psyche: A Hermeneutics of Breathing”⁶⁷³, which I have already cited in Section One of my dissertation, as well as earlier in this chapter. According to Kleinberg-Levin, Merleau-Ponty’s observation concerning the priority of the “respiratory body” “is an observation of great importance, but Merleau-Ponty leaves it to us to draw out the ontological implications.”⁶⁷⁴ With this statement, Kleinberg-Levin actually follows late Merleau-Ponty’s own stance toward his earlier philosophical investigations, especially the investigations of *Phenomenology of Perception*, as he understood in 1959 that there is a “[n]ecessity of bringing them to ontological explication.”⁶⁷⁵ This would mean then, if I would also follow these words of Merleau-Ponty, that there is a necessity to bring this priority of the respiratory body to ontological explication and thus interrogate what could be the ontological meaning of the priority or the primacy of this respiratory body. In my dissertation I take both Kleinberg-Levin’s and Merleau-Ponty’s words very seriously as, in a deep sense, my philosophico-phenomenological task is to draw out the ontological implications of the respiratory body in particular and of our fundamental faith and barbaric conviction we breathe air in general. But what are these ontological implications that could perhaps be drawn out of Merleau-Ponty’s textual fragment concerning the respiratory body? One of these implications, according to Kleinberg-Levin, is that “*the Self and breathing are related*”⁶⁷⁶, and that the most fundamental dimension of this relatedness is that “[t]he human Self (*Psyche*) begins with, and begins as, a breathing body (a *psyche*).”⁶⁷⁷ Kleinberg-Levin’s statement is based on the Merleau-Pontian idea that the body as the body-subject (the embodied consciousness or embodied subjectivity) is “a *natural self*”⁶⁷⁸, and as such it is the foundation of the selfhood and all the other forms of self-development. Within this train of thought concerning the priority or the primacy of the respiratory body, I could begin to see the possible outline of how respiration could perhaps be understood as the root of consciousness and how all the “other regions of the body[-subject]”, that is, of the bodily consciousness, are perhaps founded upon the *respiratory consciousness*, the *respiratory subjectivity* or the *respiratory selfhood*.

It is now important to ask: what is the connection between the consciousness as the *psyche* of Heraclitus and the child’s first breath? Could one now perhaps say that consciousness, or subjectivity, is primordially a respiratory consciousness or a respiratory subjectivity as subjectivity, according to Kleinberg-Levin, “begins with, and begins as, a breathing body”? The answer to this latter

672 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 18.

673 Kleinberg-Levin quotes these words of Merleau-Ponty’s “The Child’s Relations with Others” also in his reformed version of this article titled “The Song of the Winds”, in his book *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 79.

674 Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, p. 129.

675 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 183.

676 Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, p. 123.

677 Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, p. 124.

678 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 171.

question is definitely positive. The follow-up question would then be: what are the philosophical, or ontological, implications that could be drawn out of this respiratory mutation of the concept of consciousness? One of the most important philosophical implications would be that the respiratory body's global and inarticulate grasp of the world "does not merely occur at the beginning of my life."⁶⁷⁹ With the help of Merleau-Ponty I could say that, actually, the respiratory body-subject "gives every subsequent perception its sense, [meaning and direction], and it is recommenced at each moment."⁶⁸⁰ This would mean "if [our constitutional analyses are] true that every particular piece of knowledge is established upon this first perspective,"⁶⁸¹ that is, upon this first respiratory openness. And in order to put this foundational phrase concerning the respiratory body or the embodied respiratory consciousness as *the beginning* into ontological terms, let me borrow the following words from Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism": "The history of Being is never past but stands ever before; it sustains and defines every *condition et situation humaine* [human condition and situation]."⁶⁸² In Section One of my dissertation I have shown many times that I interpret Being as "inspiration and expiration of Being". In relation to Heidegger's words concerning the history of Being, my respiratory interpretation means in the first place that there is a history of inspiration and expiration of Being as a history of barbaric conviction: we breathe air. What could one say of this ontological history of we breathe air? If there is the history of Being as the history of inspiration and expiration of Being, that would mean that, if one follows Heidegger, this history of inspiration and expiration of Being is "never past but stands ever before; it sustains and defines every human condition and situation." This would mean that my first breath as a global and inarticulate grasp of the world in the name of we breathe air, that is, as the beginning of my being-in-the-world, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, "is an ever-present event, an unforgettable tradition [and for this reason] even as a thinking subject, I still am this [initial respiratory body-subject], the continuation of that same life inaugurated by it".⁶⁸³ What kind of ontological implications could these formulations have in relation to my dissertation? It could be said that these formulations concerning the respiratory body give flesh to the ontological thesis of the primacy of respiration: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being as our first truth. This means that, in the respiratory body's global and inarticulate grasp of the world, or of Being, this world, or Being, is "not in front" of the respiratory body, but rather "around about it" as respiration within Being, and as such it is not only our first truth in the chronological sense but also in "the all-temporal" sense, that is, in the sense that it

679 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 265.

680 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 294. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 265. The translation has been altered.

681 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 426.

682 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", p. 194.

683 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 430.

“holds throughout all time”⁶⁸⁴ as “it is recommenced at each moment” “sustaining and defining every human condition and situation.” This means that, each and every moment, the truth of breath as our first truth is the abyssal ground, foundation or background upon which all the other ways of being, or dimensions of consciousness, are founded or engulfed. The first way of being, or the founding consciousness, constitutes all the other ways of being which means that, in this process of respiratory constitution, to use Merleau-Ponty’s phrasing once again, “it [also] gives every subsequent perception [and every other form of consciousness] its sense.” This means that not only our perceptual life, but “all our life [in general]...breathes [the ontological primacy of respiratory] atmosphere, without its being possible to identify a single content of consciousness which is purely [respiratory] or which is not [respiratory] at all.”⁶⁸⁵ This ontological primacy of respiratory atmosphere of our experience is a constant “background” as it breathes its meaning of respiratory openness to “everything we do.”⁶⁸⁶ This idea that breathing remains a perpetual background of our being-in-the-world is one of the fundamental “ontological implications” (Kleinberg-Levin) of Merleau-Ponty’s words, “at the beginning of the child’s life...the body is already a respiratory body. Not only the mouth but the whole respiratory apparatus gives the child a kind of experience of space. After that, other regions of the body intervene and come into prominence.” It is the respiratory body that falls into the background of our being-in-the-world the moment these “other regions of the body intervene and come into prominence.” When something rises to the foreground, something else falls into the background, and this is what happens to the respiratory body’s openness to Being when these “other regions” of our carnal consciousness (for example, seeing, touching, speaking) commence their ways of being.

I mentioned earlier that the phenomenological reduction as a return to the “soul of Heraclitus” is not only connected to Merleau-Ponty, but also to Husserl. It is originally from Husserl’s *The Crisis of European Sciences* that Merleau-Ponty gets his inspiration to interpret consciousness as the soul of Heraclitus and to connect this consciousness to the method of phenomenological reduction. In his *Crisis* Husserl writes:

if we could equate this subjectivity [or consciousness] with the *psyche* of Heraclitus, his saying would doubtless be true of [the method of reduction]: “You will never find the boundaries of the soul, even if you follow every road; so deep is its ground.” Indeed, every “ground” [*Grund*] that is reached points to further grounds, every horizon opened up awakens new horizons, and yet the endless whole, in its infinity of flowing movement, is oriented toward the unity of one meaning; not, of course, in such a way that we could ever simply grasp and understand the whole.⁶⁸⁷

So, according to Husserl, if we “equate” subjectivity, or consciousness, “with the *psyche* of Heraclitus”, we can interpret this fragment of Heraclitus that Hus-

684 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 49.

685 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 172n1.

686 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 328.

687 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 170.

serl cites in the quotation above to open up the method of phenomenological reduction for us. This connection between the *psyche* of Heraclitus and the method of reduction has been mentioned earlier in relation to Merleau-Ponty, who wrote, "reduction...brings us back to the soul of Heraclitus." If one would read these words of Husserl within the respiratory atmosphere of the mutated concept of consciousness, or of subjectivity, as I have already done in connection to Merleau-Ponty's "soul of Heraclitus," it would mean, in my opinion that, in this citation, Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction as the method of beginning could be radicalized as the method of phenomenologico-respiratory reduction. This would mean that this fragmentary saying of Heraclitus concerning the *psyche* in Husserl's *Crisis* would, in my breathful interpretation, be transformed from Husserl's original version to my respiratory version, which takes seriously the idea that Heraclitus' *psyche* means in the first place "breath". This means that I transform Husserl's version of Heraclitus' saying, "You will never find the boundaries of the soul, even if you follow every road; so deep is its ground" to the following breathful formulation, "You will never find the boundaries of the breath, or of the respiratory consciousness, even if you follow every road; so deep is its ground."⁶⁸⁸ Would this kind of translation, as a respiratory mutation of the concept of consciousness imply, if I would try to interpret the meaning of this new respiratory consciousness in relation to the method of phenomenological reduction, that when entering the path, or road, of respiratory reduction, the philosopher as a perpetual beginner would actually enter the atmosphere, or horizon, of what Husserl calls, "infinite tasks"⁶⁸⁹? Could this kind of respiratory reduction then give to the philosopher an absolutely new "set of infinite tasks"⁶⁹⁰? Yes, it truly would: philosophy can never find the boundaries, or the limits, of the breath as it is abyssal. Here one needs to remember Merleau-Ponty's words, which were quoted in Chapter Six of my

688 Kleinberg-Levin understands this fragment of Heraclitus also in respiratory manner as in *Before the Voice of Reason* he quotes it in the following way: "You could never in your going find the limits of the breath-soul, though you travelled as far as you could: so deep is its law, its gathering [logos]." See Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 71. I would argue that Kleinberg-Levin sees a connection between this respiratory fragment of Heraclitus and Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis even if he does not make any explicit investigation between them. I say so because in this text by Kleinberg-Levin he quotes immediately after this fragment of Heraclitus Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis of "inspiration and expiration of Being". As we have seen earlier also Pettigrew made very briefly a connection between the breath-soul of Heraclitus and Merleau-Ponty's "inspiration and expiration of Being" without going any further into it.

689 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 279. Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen write about Husserl's idea of phenomenological philosophy as "a set of infinite tasks" in a following way: "It can never be finished; new clarifications are called for and new connections constantly manifest themselves." Moran and Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 3. Thus the role of the philosopher is to be a "servant to [this] unending advancing" project. Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928-1938* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 351. Maurice Natanson has written a book about Husserl's philosophy which is titled *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973). See also, for example, Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 177.

690 Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 2.

dissertation: “so-called *Grund* [ground] is *Abgrund* [abyss]”, and to reconnect Merleau-Ponty’s words to Husserl’s interpretative translation of Heraclitus’ words “so deep is its ground.” This means that if the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, was to “follow every road,” or path, of breathing, that is, of respiratory subjectivity, his investigation, which could be called respiratory archaeology as it always digs into the depths of experience, would never finish, come to any end point or reach any bottom because “so deep is its ground”. It is so deep as all our life breathes and yawns respiratory atmosphere. This means that, within the respiratory reduction, to paraphrase Husserl words, “every ‘ground’ that is reached points to further grounds, every horizon[, or atmosphere,] opened up awakens new horizons,” or atmospheres, as dimensions of inspiration and expiration of Being in the name of we breathe air as our basic barbaric conviction. “[T]he reduction [as the method of beginning] opens a different space”⁶⁹¹, a space of the vertical world, that is, a dimension of the “fundamental faith: there is something”. In the respiratory reduction this opening of the “different space” means a perpetual return to the respiratory faith: *there is the breathing and aerial world* as the respiratory and chasmological principle of philosophical interrogation. This new spatial background of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, which is like “a vast new continent” mediating and surrounding everything (all phenomena) discovered by “an explorer”⁶⁹², provides philosophical interrogation with a “set of infinite tasks” that it has not previously encountered. As our whole life breathes and yawns respiratory and chasmological atmosphere, *everything* needs to be reinterrogated through this new opening or beginning, that is, needs to be re-examined within this respiratory openness to the aerial dehiscence of Being in the name of our barbaric conviction: we breathe air. Everything really and truly means here and now, as well as always everything, as all phenomena and matters of life have to be opened and explicated again and again within the atmosphere of respiratory reduction as questions of primordial respiratory openness (respiratory consciousness) and as questions of the clearing of open and free air, that is, as questions concerning all the dimensions of our barbaric conviction: we breathe air or the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. This means that this ontologico-respiratory reduction, as an absolutely new way of philosophizing and wondering (Husserl and Merleau-Ponty), gives the philosopher a set of infinite tasks as everything must be reopened, rethought, re-examined and re-experienced within the atmosphere of our first truth as the truth of breath (the truth of Being), in which we ourselves always already are in the first place (principally) as the silence of respiration (respiratory openness). In this different space of “an immeasurable astonishment” (Fink) over the mystery of we breathe air, respiratory reduction leads us back to the common atmosphere of open, free and gaping air wherein *everything* is engulfed. This *everything* includes ourselves. We are within this common aerial world as inspiratory and expiratory openness to inspiration and

691 Bettina Bergo, “Philosophy as *Perspectiva Artificialis*: Merleau-Ponty’s Critique of Husserlian Constructivism”, p. 164.

692 Morley, “It’s Always About the *Epoché*”, p. 225.

expiration of the open, free and gaping air (inspiration and expiration of Being, dehiscence of Being). This everything that is engulfed or swallowed up within the yawning aerial world includes, for example, the phenomenon of space⁶⁹³, time⁶⁹⁴, freedom, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, consciousness, thinking⁶⁹⁵, community⁶⁹⁶, perception, embodiment, language, expression, knowledge, culture⁶⁹⁷, nature, science, religion⁶⁹⁸, history, truth, ethics⁶⁹⁹, hospitality⁷⁰⁰, economics, politics⁷⁰¹, law, art, morality, love, sexuality, war and peace⁷⁰². All of

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- 693 I have briefly interrogated the respiratory space from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in a following article Petri Berndtson, "The Respiratory Constitution of Space and its Connection to the Origin of Space," *Scientific Papers University of Latvia* 765 (2011): pp. 80-86.
- 694 David Ciavatta has briefly investigated the temporality of breathing as a dimension of the natural time within the Merleau-Pontian context. David Ciavatta, "Merleau-Ponty on the Temporality of Practical Dispositions," in *Time and Philosophy of Action*, ed. Roman Altshuler and Michael J. Sigrist (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 244, 253 and 254n6. I have briefly interrogated the possibility of respiratory time from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in a following unpublished conference presentation Petri Berndtson, "Time and Respiration: The Possibility of a Merleau-Pontian Inspired Notion of Respiratory Time" (a paper presented at the annual conference for the Nordic Society for Phenomenology, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland, April 21-23, 2016).
- 695 See Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (ed.), "Introduction", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*. In this text Škof and myself investigate the possibilities of "respiratory thinking" and "respiratory philosophy".
- 696 I have investigated the "community of breathing body-subjects" and the "community of the primordial breath" in the following article, Petri Berndtson, "The Primordial Respiratory Peace and the Possibility of Cultivation of Breathing as a Method of Peacemaking," in *The Poesis of Peace: Narratives, Cultures and Philosophies*, ed. Klaus-Gerd Giesen et al. (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 57-67.
- 697 Luce Irigaray has in preliminary way spoken of our need of "culture of breathing" and how "cultivation of breathing" is essentially connected with it. See Luce Irigaray, *Conversations* (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 41, 67 and 131 and Irigaray, *Between East and West*.
- 698 I have briefly interrogated in a respiratory manner the questions concerning the Holy Spirit and the body as the temple in St. Paul's thinking from the perspective of phenomenological concept of breathing in a following article Petri Berndtson, "The Temple of the Holy Breath as the Place of Conspiracy Between the Respiratory Body and the Space of Open Air," in *Art and Common Space*, ed. Anne-Karin Furunes et al. (Norway: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2013), pp. 39-47.
- 699 Lenart Škof has investigated the questions concerning the ethics of breathing. See Lenart Škof, "Ethics of Breath: Towards New Ethical Spaces of Intersubjectivity," *Poligrafi* 17 (2012): pp. 199-208 and Lenart Škof, *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics, and Peace* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015). Also it is interesting to acknowledge that Bachelard briefly speaks of "aerial ethics" in his book *Air and Dreams*. The goal of this Bachelardian aerial ethics would be to "become as aerial as our breath". This aerial process of becoming is "a transmutation of all values." Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 142, 146 and 241. See in this dissertation the chapters 9 and 10 in which I speak of this Bachelardian project of becoming as "aerial as our breath".
- 700 Lenart Škof and myself have both investigated the question concerning the "breath of hospitality" or the "respiratory hospitality". I have also briefly explored the hospitality of air as aerial hospitality. See Lenart Škof, "Breath of Hospitality: Silence, Listening, Care," *Nursing Ethics* 23, no. 8 (2016): pp. 902-909 and Petri Berndtson, "Cultivating a Respiratory and Aerial Culture of Hospitality," in *Borders and Debordering: Topologies, Praxes, Hospitableness*, ed. Tomaž Grušovnik et al. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), pp. 165-180.
- 701 Magdalena Górska has investigated breathing as a question concerning feminist politics. See Magdalena Górska, "Breathing Matters: Feminist Intersectional Politics of Vulnerability" (PhD diss., Linköping University, 2016) and Magdalena Górska, "Fem-

these phenomena are engulfed within this fundamental, primordial and atmospheric experience of we breathe air. As the method of respiratory reduction gives us a chance to discover and explore this new vast respiratory-chasmological continent, it also opens up a new set of infinite tasks and research projects for the philosopher as from now on all phenomena need to be rethought, re-examined and re-experienced within this atmospheric experience of we breathe air, which is in the first place always already a condition of possibility for any of these phenomena listed above to exist. These future research projects, for example, would include the interrogation of how different aspects of space, time, community, religion and knowledge are constituted and gain their existence and meaning within the respiratory, chasmological and aerial depths of atmosphere of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. But before these infinite tasks can be properly investigated, I try within the method of ontologico-respiratory reduction “to formulate”, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, “philosophically our ontology, which remains implicit, *in the air*”⁷⁰³. In this way, one may learn little by little to experience and understand how “all the paths [of our life] lead out to the free air,” that is, to the barbaric conviction we breathe air⁷⁰⁴

inist Politics of Breathing,” in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. 247–259. See also Marijn Nieuwenhuis, “The Politics of Breathing: Knowledge on Air and Respiration,” in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. 199–218.

702 I have briefly interrogated the primordial respiratory peace from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy in a following article Berndtson, “The Primordial Respiratory Peace and the Possibility of Cultivation of Breathing as a Method of Peace-making”.

703 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 166. The translation by Mauro Carbone in his book *The Thinking of the Sensible: Merleau-Ponty’s A-Philosophy*, p. 64n3. My emphasis.

704 This process of disclosing the aerial, respiratory and chasmological atmosphere of “all the paths [of life]” might, for example, also in a long run help us to truly understand how in the first place other phenomena can be compared to “the air we breathe”. In the very beginning of the Chapter One of my dissertation we witnessed Edward S. Casey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Lawrence Hass and David Detmer making this comparison in reference to the phenomenon of place, of language and of life-world. In addition to these philosophers there are so many instances in which people make the comparison to “*the air we breathe*” in order to clarify the phenomenon they are speaking of. Here are few examples of this comparative usage of this phrase. John K. Roth writes of religion as follows: “Religion is like the air we breathe. It is all around and within us...Religion’s importance, again like the air we breathe, gets taken too much for granted.” John K. Roth, *Private Needs, Public Selves: Talk about Religion in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), p. 59. Henry Drummond does the following comparison: “The liberty of the press...is like the air we breathe...[as] if we have it not, we die.” Henry Drummond, *On Government by the Queen, and Attempted Government from the People* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1842), pp. 97–98. Raman Selden writes of ideology in respiratory-aerial terms as follows: “[I]deology is like the air we breathe and is the seemingly natural discourse which makes possible our sense of existence as human ‘subjects’ (socially and psychologically).” Raman Selden, *Practising Theory and Reading Literature: An Introduction* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 153. Frederick Erickson compares culture and air as he tries to explicate what the phenomenon of culture is: “Culture is in us and all around us, just as is the air we breathe.” Frederick Erickson, “Culture in Society and in Educational Practices,” in *Multicultural Education: Issues*

as the initial and “greatest mystery of all”. To receive aid and teaching in this philosophical task of learning to experience how all paths might lead out to the free air, let us listen to and follow poets who Bachelard calls the aerial and respiratory poets in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

The Question of Thinking as a Question of Thinking in Breathing: The Possibility of Rebirth of Philosophy as a New Respiratory Philosophy Inspired by the Aerial Poets

As a project of “infinite tasks” opening within the atmospheric “vast new [abysal] continent” of “inspiration and expiration of Being”, the method of ontologico-respiratory reduction has deep similarities with Merleau-Ponty’s new philosophy of vision “which is still to be made”, and which is inspired and guided by the great painters like Paul Cézanne and Paul Klee as the masters of vision.⁷⁰⁵ In order for one to understand these similarities between Merleau-Ponty’s new philosophy of vision and the new philosophy of inspiration and expiration of Being, let us listen to what Merleau-Ponty writes in *Eye and Spirit* concerning this new philosophy of vision:

No longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making the space and the light that are there speak. There is no end to this questioning, since the vision on which it is addressed is itself a question. All the investigations we believed closed have been reopened. What is depth, what is light, *ti to on?* [what is Being?] What are they – not for the spirit that cuts itself off from the body but for the spirit Descartes says is suffused throughout the body? And what are they, finally, not only for the spirit but for themselves, since they pass through us and around/englobe us [*nous englobent*]? This philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the painter – not when he expresses opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne’s words, he “thinks in painting.”⁷⁰⁶

The similarities between Merleau-Ponty’s new philosophy of vision as ontological interrogation of Being and my dissertation as a commencement and clarification of a new philosophy of inspiration and expiration of Being can be pointed out in reference to Merleau-Ponty’s quotation as, also within the atmosphere of phenomenological ontology of breathing in a similar manner to Merleau-

705 Richard C. McCleary, translator’s preface to *Signs*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. xvii.

706 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, pp. 367-368.

Ponty's new philosophy of vision, "all the investigations we believed closed have been reopened", or at least there is an urgent need for them to be reopened as soon as possible within the respiratory reduction as a methodological return to the atmosphere of we breathe air. This was declared at the end of the previous chapter as I stated that all the phenomena need to be reopened, re-thought, re-examined and re-experienced within the respiratory and chasmological openness of we breathe air. In addition to this, it was also pointed out in the last paragraph of the previous chapter that, within the respiratory reduction inspired by the fragment of Heraclitus, the interrogative path will never come to any end point as the ground is an abyssal ground, that is, the groundless ground of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. In this above citation from Merleau-Ponty concerning his new philosophy of vision, I pick the following words "[t]here is no end to this questioning, since the vision on which it is addressed is itself a question." These words once more reveal the similarities between Merleau-Ponty's philosophical task and the task which is investigated in my philosophical dissertation as I can express the essential dimension of the ontologico-respiratory reduction by transforming Merleau-Ponty's words concerning vision into words concerning breath as follows: *there is no end to this respiratory questioning, since the barbaric conviction of we breathe air on which it is addressed is itself already a bottomless openness of respiration and yawning and as such a constant question.* This means that, within this abyssal respiratory openness, the philosopher can open, tune and direct himself or herself in a listening manner to fundamental questions such as: What is depth? What is space? What is time? What is freedom? What is community? and what is Being? It is, to once again borrow Merleau-Ponty's words, "no longer...a matter of speaking about space", time, freedom and community, "but of making the space", time, freedom and community "that are there speak" to him or her as he or she listens their speech within the principal atmosphere of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air. In these words, which I have taken to serve my own purposes, Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the relation between speaking and listening, between the one "who speaks and [the one] who listens".⁷⁰⁷ This relational theme of speaking and listening is a highly important methodological theme in Merleau-Ponty's late "philosophy as interrogation" of Being.⁷⁰⁸ In relation to this theme, he also says that it is essential for philosophy "to let [the world and Being] speak [and] to listen in."⁷⁰⁹ The thing that makes this kind of listening possible, that is, a listening that would let the world, space, depth, and so on speak, is silence, and for this reason "[t]he philosopher...should keep silent, coincide in silence", which is extremely difficult for him or her as he or she "speaks."⁷¹⁰ As, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, "philosophy is language"⁷¹¹, that is, it is speech, it is almost inevitable that the philosopher, as a speaking being, as a being of lan-

707 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 264–65.

708 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 260 and *In Praise of Philosophy*, pp. 177–78.

709 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 107.

710 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125.

711 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 126 and 213.

guage names beings, things and the world, that is, philosophy speaks about them before letting them speak. In his phenomenological ontology of Being, Merleau-Ponty is seeking a new way of understanding the relation of speaking and listening. In this interrogative approach there is a perpetual "circularity" of "[s]peaking-listening" in which "one no longer knows who/what speaks and who/what listens."⁷¹² This "strange domain"⁷¹³ where "one no longer knows" is a domain to which I have referred already in Section One of my dissertation, and it is a domain that the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, is always striving for as it is the beginning or the source. This strange domain is the same domain in which, in the words of *Eye and Spirit*, "one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted". This strange domain where one no longer knows is the domain of philosophy, as it is the domain of wonder, that is, of consciousness of strangeness. When one already knows, there is no more wonder. When "one no longer knows", there is wonder, consciousness of strangeness. In the previous chapter it was stated that the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, is in a constant state of wonder in which he no longer knows what others believe they know as he does not accept it anymore as an established truth. What is crucially important in these relations of speaking and listening and seeing and being seen from the perspective of the perpetual beginner, even if one no longer knows who or what speaks, listens or sees, is that the gap or hiatus between them all, as a dehiscence of Being, makes this circularity or reversibility of seeing and being-seen, speaking and listening possible. In my dissertation this strange domain of the perpetual beginner (as the domain *between* the seer and the seen and the speaker and the listener) is the atmosphere of we breathe air. This strange domain of we breathe air was previously defined as follows: *first of all we ourselves always already are as bodily openness the silence of respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where as our first truth as the truth of breath inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the yawning atmosphere of the open and free air as the aerial world. As everything is engulfed within this clearing of respiratory air, it means that seeing and being-seen, as well as speaking and listening, in their circular movements, also become possible only within it. Thus, the questions concerning space, time, community, etc. are questions that are essentially penetrated by our barbaric conviction we breathe air as they are also engulfed within this aerial Chaos as the open and free air, and these questions would not exist without it. This means that phenomenological ontology of breathing needs to ask, in a Merleau-Pontian fashion, what these dimensionalities (space, time, community, etc.) of inspiration and expiration of Being are "for the spirit", which "is suffused throughout the body" as "spirit incarnate"⁷¹⁴, that is, for the consciousness which is spread throughout the respiratory body, as it is this questioning consciousness that originally rises from the respiratory body's openness to this gaping and open air as res-*

712 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 264–65.

713 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 140.

714 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 75.

piratory consciousness. It must also be asked how spatiality, temporality, communality, etc. of the respiratory body, as embodied respiratory consciousness, reveals itself within the atmosphere of the chasmologico-aerial world? As there is the questioning consciousness, as a speaking and thinking being who asks these questions within the aerial world, it is also important to interrogate the relation between this questioning consciousness, the respiratory consciousness and the respiratory body-subject within the aerial world. In this interrogation of their relation to each other, an investigation concerning the process of constitution of these different levels of consciousness is required. In this constitutive investigation one would try to seek out how the embodied respiratory consciousness finds, in a meaning-bestowing process, the other levels of consciousness, for example the perceptual consciousness (the life of eyes, ears and hands) and the speaking consciousness. This would include investigations of the dimensionalities (spatiality, temporality, communality, liberality, etc.) of these different levels of consciousness or subjectivity. As consciousness in all of its levels and dimensionalities is always consciousness of something, it is important to ask how this something (for example, spatial something, sexual something, linguistic something, perceptual something, theoretical something) appears within the plane or the strange domain of *we are respiration within Being*. *Something* is very often equal with a thing or an object. This means that it would be important to interrogate the appearance of things within the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. How does this respiratory and aerial atmosphere make it possible that we can experience things? Would this give us a possibility to elaborate a new phenomenological concept of a thing that would be a respiratory, chasmological and aerial concept of a thing?⁷¹⁵ How is it possible that we can have access to things through perceptual openness to the world, and how does that perceptual access presuppose the respiratory openness to the aerial world which, for example, offers the perception of things the necessary distance between the perceiver and the perceived. As the barbaric conviction that we breathe air, as an atmospheric relation, makes it possible that we can have thing-relations, it is also important to interrogate the possibility of a pure atmospheric-relation which is not at all mediated by the things. What kind of relation to Being would that be? This also evokes the respiratory philosopher, that is, a philosopher that philosophizes within the ontologico-respiratory reduction, to ask: what are, for example, spatial, temporal, liberal and communal atmospheres of inspiration and expiration of Being and dehiscence of Being, and how in this kind of ontologico-respiratory interrogation of these phenomena he could transform them into aerial-chasmologico-respiratory phenomena which would perhaps give him a possibility to let these phenomena speak to him in a completely new manner. Thus, he could have a chance to develop totally new concepts of, for example, sexuality, politics, religion and philosophy. These new concepts could perhaps be called concepts of aerial-chasmologico-respiratory

715 These questions I am briefly interrogating in the following article, Petri Berndtson, "The Possibility of a New Respiratory Ontology", in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, ed. Le-nart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018).

sexuality, aerial-chasmologico-respiratory politics, aerial-chasmologico-respiratory religion and aerial-chasmologico-respiratory philosophy. This would also mean that the philosopher (who always begins from the phenomenon of we breathe air as he philosophizes within the respiratory reduction) would try to hearken these phenomena within the atmospheric principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air in a sense that he or she could discover what perhaps the spatial, temporal, liberal and communal atmospheres of aerial-chasmologico-respiratory sexuality, politics, religion or any other phenomenon would be, as everything is engulfed within this aerial-chasmologico-respiratory openness of Chaos (the yawning of the aerial world). Finally, this train of questions inspired by the aerial-chasmologico-respiratory openness itself could evoke us to ask what the original spatiality, temporality, liberality, communality, etc. of the basic barbaric conviction of we breathe air itself could be. These are just few of the questions connected to the dimensionalities, horizons, possibilities and potentialities concerning the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air if it would be taken seriously as a new beginning of philosophy as true thinking. The perpetual accomplishment of the ontologico-respiratory reduction means that thinking does not forget this principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, and it always returns in its interrogation to this aerial-chasmologico-respiratory principle and takes each and every moment as its point of departure, no matter what it examines and re-examines within this atmosphere of *we ourselves always already are as bodily openness the silence of respiratory openness within the yawning and gaping abyss of the aerial world, wherein everything is engulfed and where as our first truth as the truth of breath inhaling and exhaling openness opens to inhalation and exhalation of the common yawning atmosphere of the open and free air as the clearing of air*. This new philosophy as respiratory philosophy or phenomenological ontology of breathing, to borrow Merleau-Ponty's words regarding philosophy of vision, there "is still [very much] to be made". Could we find any help or guidance other than Merleau-Ponty's inspiration and the general influence of the phenomenological attitude of investigating matters with regards to how to investigate and approach respiration as the fundamental experience of Being? This help might be just behind the corner, if we have the patience to wait.

If it is the case, as Merleau-Ponty claims, that "this philosophy" of vision "which is still to be made is what animates the painter — ...in that instant when his vision becomes gesture when, in Cézanne's words, he 'thinks in painting'", this makes me ponder what could I say about this new philosophy of respiration that I am striving for. Could there be some people who would be animated by this philosophy of respiration which is still to be made? If I were to take advice from Bachelard, he would suggest that I should pay attention to a rare⁷¹⁶ group of poets that he calls "the poet[s] of air" or the "aerial poet[s]".⁷¹⁷ Why should I listen to these aerial poets? Because, according to Bachelard, these po-

716 This group of poets are rarer than other poets as their source of inspiration is rarer. See Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 162.

717 See Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 4 and 44.

ets “follow the very life of cosmic breath”⁷¹⁸ and “aerial life.”⁷¹⁹ These aerial poets take the “life of cosmic breath” as their source of poetic “inspiration” or the “creative force of imagination” which “animates”⁷²⁰ them to create “aerial poetry”, “poetry of joyful and vital breath” and “respiratory poetry”⁷²¹. If it is the philosophy of vision that animates the painters, could it be that there is a philosophy of “cosmic breath” that animates the aerial poets? Could I, then, perhaps say that, as Merleau-Ponty follows the painters, the one who is seeking a new philosophy of respiration should follow the aerial poets? Should a respiratory philosopher (who always commences his or her thinking from the experience of respiration) follow the aerial poets who themselves follow the very life of cosmic breath and aerial life? Before making any decisions concerning this matter, let us listen in more detail to what Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard have to say about the relation between art, poetry and philosophy.

The idea to follow the poets, or the painters, in order to “philosophiz[e] in a new way” (Husserl) comes from both Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard. In the words of Merleau-Ponty, “[p]hilosophy will find aid in poetry [and] art”, and this aid can be truly transformative to philosophy as “in a much closer relationship with [poetry and art, philosophy] will be reborn.”⁷²² It is not only Merleau-Ponty who thinks in these kind of lines: Bachelard actually goes even further as he writes, “we take *all our philosophical teaching* from the poets”⁷²³. Both of these quotations by these two French philosophers for the benediction of philosophers who want to philosophize or to think “in an absolutely new way” (Merleau-Ponty) are truly remarkable. I would say that, if they are taken seriously, these are exceptionally strong statements with far-reaching implications. However, how could it be possible that philosophers as perpetual beginners could learn philosophy as true thinking from poets and painters? The question is not only how this is possible, but much more strongly how it is possible that, according to Merleau-Ponty, with the help of poetry and art, philosophy will not only learn something new, but will actually be *reborn* as a new philosophy? How is it possible that, according to Bachelard, the phenomenological philosopher can learn his whole philosophy anew from the poets? The clue to understanding one possible way to encounter these remarkable statements can perhaps be found in Bachelard’s book *The Poetics of Space*, in which he quotes the Dutch phenomenologist J. H. van den Berg’s words: “Poets and painters are born phenomenologists.”⁷²⁴ It is not only Bachelard who agrees absolutely with

718 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 303. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 234. The translation has been altered.

719 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 117.

720 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, pp. 9, 21 and 23.

721 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 80 and 134 and Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 272.

722 Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France*, p. 39. Merleau-Ponty’s idea of “rebirth” of philosophy is inspired by Husserl. See Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 299.

723 Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace*, p. 169. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 185. The translation has been altered. It is also very telling that in *Air and Dreams* Bachelard’s leading motto is essayist Joseph Joubert’s words: “A philosopher who seeks to understand man should concentrate on studying poets.” Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 1.

724 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxviii.

this statement, as he is the one who quotes it in his book, but the same absolute agreement with these words, in my opinion, can also be found in Merleau-Ponty. If “poets and painters are born phenomenologists,” then philosophers may truly learn from them (Bachelard) or in collaboration with them (Merleau-Ponty) what phenomenology is really about. What could it mean that “poets and painters are born phenomenologists”? First of all, it is important to remember that the true philosopher is always understood in the phenomenological context as a perpetual beginner, that is, a perpetual commencer. In Chapter Eight of Section Two of my dissertation I quoted Merleau-Ponty, who wrote the following in total agreement with this idea of the perpetual commencer in relation to the artist: “The artist is not content to continue the past by veneration or revolt. He *recommences* his attempt from the ground up. The reason why the painter takes up his brush is that in a sense the art of painting *still remains to be done*.” So, for Merleau-Ponty, the painter as a perpetual beginner, a perpetual commencer, does not “continue the past”, but “*recommences* his attempt from the ground up”, that is, from the beginning and root of things, and as such it is always an “entirely new point of departure”, as Bachelard and Husserl emphasized. In Chapter Eight of my dissertation I also cited Bachelard, who pointed out that “[i]n principle, phenomenology liquidates the past and confronts what is *new*.” So painters and poets, as born phenomenologists, “liquidate the past and confront what is new.” This is exactly what Merleau-Ponty said here about the painter not being content to continue the past, but always recommencing his attempts from the beginning, from the roots. Regarding the poets as “born phenomenologists”, Bachelard says that they dwell “in a state of constant renewal”⁷²⁵, that is, they perpetually confront “what is new”, and this becomes possible as they always “*begin* with the original amazement.”⁷²⁶ As Bachelard says that he takes all of his philosophical teaching from the poets, it could be said that perhaps the greatest teaching of the poets is this fundamentality of the “original amazement.” The philosopher can learn to wonder at the world again by following and listening the poets. So often Bachelard says: “The phenomenologist must follow the poet”⁷²⁷ or “[w]e [the philosophers or phenomenologists] must listen to poets.”⁷²⁸ With these phrases he is saying that the phenomenologist, as the phenomenological philosopher, must listen and follow, that is, take the poets as born phenomenologists as his main teachers and learn from them. It seems that in Bachelard’s vocabulary, to “follow” and to “listen” are pretty much synonyms as, for him, to listen is to follow and to follow is to listen. To repeat myself: according to Bachelard the greatest philosophical teaching that the poets, as born phenomenologists, can offer the philosopher is a life of wonder and constant renewal. Bachelard speaks of this in a beautiful manner: “By the poet’s grace we have become the pure and simple subject of the verb ‘to marvel.’”⁷²⁹ In my interpretation, in Bachelard’s usage these expressions of

725 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 102.

726 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 107. See also *ibid.*, pp. 108 and 117.

727 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 169. See also *ibid.*, p. 220.

728 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 89.

729 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 127.

“amazement”, “wonder” and “marvel” are used synonymously. To become a phenomenologist means to “become the pure and simple subject of the verb ‘to marvel’” or the verb “to wonder”. This is very much in line with what was already said earlier (in Chapter Eight) about the essence of a phenomenological project and the method of phenomenology, which was understood to be ultimately nothing other than “*thaumazein*” (astonishment, wonder, amazement), that is, the experience of wonder before the world. Merleau-Ponty said in the “Preface” of *Phenomenology of Perception* that the best formulation of the method of phenomenological reduction was Fink’s description of it as wonder. Bachelard could not agree more with Merleau-Ponty and Fink, as he writes in his book *The Poetics of Space*: “A beginning of philosophical phenomenology...consist[s]...in our capacity to recapture the naïve wonder”.⁷³⁰ It is this state of naïve wonder and our capacity to marvel that is the greatest philosophical teaching that Bachelard has learned from the poets as “born phenomenologists”.

If the philosophers must listen to the poets, what would this mean in the case of the aerial poets. If the philosophers would listen to and follow the aerial poets, what would they be able to learn from them. What would it mean to follow the aerial poets, who themselves “follow the very life of cosmic breath” and “aerial life”? To begin with these aerial poets as born phenomenologists, it can be said that the aerial poets must be born phenomenologists of air and breathing, that is, born phenomenologists of the very life of cosmic breath and the “aerial world”.⁷³¹ This would mean that they could perhaps teach philosophers to become aerial and respiratory philosophers, which would be, to paraphrase Husserl’s words, “a total transformation of attitude”⁷³² for the philosophers. It is important to remember that, for example Husserl was striving for a total transformation of attitude or “a thoroughly new way of life” that could be compared to a religious conversion. For Husserl, this totally new way of life was the life of phenomenological reduction. One can truly take Husserl’s ideas of as words of inspiration, even if his own version of the total transformation of philosophizing and living had nothing to do with following the life of the cosmic breath. As I already spoke about Ricoeur’s idea of the phenomenological tradition being a “sum of variations of Husserl’s work and heresies which have sprung from Husserl” in relation to different dimensions and possibilities of the method of reduction (including the heretic nature of my own methodological idea of the ontologico-respiratory reduction), in this chapter I must say again that understanding Husserl’s idea of “a thoroughly new way of life” as a life of the cosmic breath, lived by the aerial poets as born phenomenologists, could yet again be understood as one of these possible heresies. I say this because Husserl’s inspiring idea goes very well together with Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard’s idea of the rebirth of philosophy. I will now leave Husserl’s idea echoing and breathing in the background and concentrate on Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard.

730 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 93.

731 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 40 and 151.

732 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 148.

With inspiration received from Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard in their hope of rebirthing philosophy, as it was suggested that philosophy could be reborn in collaboration with the poets and the painters (Merleau-Ponty), I could mutate the words of *Eye and Spirit* concerning the “philosophy which is still to be made” with the help of the aerial poets in my hope of rebirthing a new respiratory philosophy as phenomenological ontology of breathing. Let us remind ourselves of the words from *Eye and Spirit* that I now referred to and which I quoted earlier in this chapter. In words that I now want to mutate with the help of the aerial poets, Merleau-Ponty said the following with regards to the painter: “This philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the painter—not when he expresses opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne’s words, he “thinks in painting.” My suggested mutation of these words would run as follows: *this respiratory philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the poet, that is, the aerial poet—in that instant when his breath becomes gesture, when he thinks in breathing.*⁷³³ Following these aerial and respiratory poets, that is, “the poets of the air”, as I was just advised to do by these two great French thinkers, I could possibly gradually find my way to this new respiratory philosophy, to this “absolutely new way of thinking” (Merleau-Ponty) of the cosmic breath which does not “think in painting”, as Cézanne suggests, but perhaps *thinks in breathing* as a method of respiratory reduction, perpetually leading myself back to the multidimensional mystery of the fundamental faith and wonder of all wonders: we breathe air. What could the first steps on this path of respiratory reduction be as a return to the life of breath, that is, of this new respiratory philosophy, which is still to be one could perhaps call with the phrasing of “thinking in breathing”? Is it even possible that *breath becomes gesture* or that one thinks in breathing? What would it mean that the aerial poet’s breath would become gesture, and if it would be possible, what kind of gesture would that be? What kind of thinking as an “absolutely new way of thinking” (Merleau-Ponty), as a possible rebirth of philosophy, would this thinking in breathing be? Does my new idiom for respiratory philosophy, “to think *in breathing*”, air something similar to the ordinary expressions “to think *in English*” or “to think *in French*”, or should one first of all ask how Cézanne’s idiom “to think in painting”, which Merleau-Ponty cites, should perhaps be understood in comparison to thinking *in* any language? Is thinking possible without language? What is the relationship between language and painting? Is painting itself, as a way of expression, perhaps already some sort of language?⁷³⁴ With these questions concerning the question of thinking, one places oneself at the beginnings of philosophy, as Merleau-Ponty states in

733 This question of the possibility of “thinking in breathing” was briefly discussed for the first time in my article, Berndtson, “The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being: The Immense Lung and the Cosmic Breathing as the Sources of Dreams, Poetry and Philosophy” in *Thinking in Dialogue with Humanities: Paths into the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Karel Novotný, Taylor S. Hammer, Anne Gléonec and Petr Specján (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), p. 289.

734 See Merleau-Ponty’s thought on the language of painting when he speaks of “the language of Vermeer”. Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, pp. 261–262.

the "Introduction" of *Signs*: "Now as before, philosophy begins with a 'What is thinking?' and is absorbed in the question to begin with."⁷³⁵

In order to interrogate these questions in a proper respiratory manner, one needs to expand the scope of breath from the wondrous sphere of "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being", into a larger atmosphere that suspends the whole sentence of *Eye and Spirit*, which stated: "What is called 'inspiration' should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted." Within this larger textual atmosphere, I need to interpret the possible meaning of Cézanne's wording of the painter who "thinks in painting", and the possible meaning of the idea of the respiratory philosopher who perhaps thinks in breathing as he tries to follow both the cosmic respiratory path of the aerial poets (their path of the very life of cosmic breath) and the philosopher's interrogative path of "What is thinking?" It means, first of all, that one must read within the context of Merleau-Ponty's respiratory statement: "What is called 'inspiration' should be taken literally: there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted" the words from *Eye and Spirit* that stated: "This philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the painter—not when he expresses opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne's words, he 'thinks in painting.'" If, according to Merleau-Ponty, "there is really and truly...action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted", what does it mean that the painter's "vision becomes gesture" and that the painter "thinks in painting"? From the perspective of the fundamental philosophical question "What is thinking?", it becomes even more interesting and at the same time more perplexing to the interpreter as, according to Merleau-Ponty, seeing is also a form of thinking, as he paradoxically says in one of his late lectures: "To see is to think without thinking."⁷³⁶ What kind of thinking can this be? Earlier in this chapter I quoted the words from *Eye and Spirit* which could give us a clue to this question. In these words, Merleau-Ponty stated that "vision is itself a question". Similarly, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, he says: "[i]t is not only philosophy, it is first the gaze that interrogates the things".⁷³⁷ Would this then mean that vision's manner of thinking is interrogation and questioning? This is exactly the case as, in *The*

735 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 14.

736 Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 283.

737 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 137. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 103. The translation has been altered. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 369 which states similarly: "one can say literally that our senses interrogate things and that things respond to them." See also the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. 319. The translation has been altered.

Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty calls perception “interrogative thinking”⁷³⁸. This vision’s “interrogative thinking” is “an original manner of aiming at something”⁷³⁹. To be a vision, that is, to be a question, is “an original manner of aiming at something” and, as perception, as visual perception in particular is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the “fundamental experience” of Being, in *The Visible and the Invisible* he can say that “we ourselves are one sole continued question”⁷⁴⁰. Nobody knows this as well as the painter, who constantly “lives in fascination” and astonishment with the mystery of the “there is” (*il y a*) – that there is something⁷⁴¹, that there is the world, that is, that there is “a visible world”.⁷⁴² This means that the painter, as a “born phenomenologist”, perpetually dwells in the “wonder of all wonders” as the “obscurity of the ‘there is’”⁷⁴³, which is the mysterious openness of vision as a fundamental access to things. This is possible as “the painter’s vision is”, according to Merleau-Ponty, “a continued birth”⁷⁴⁴. This means that the painter’s vision is in a perpetual state of beginning, that is, in a state of mysterious wonder that there is something. Thus the painter, as a born phenomenologist, is a perpetual beginner. It also means that the painter does not try to build any “models” or “instruments”⁷⁴⁵, for example, of knowing, as science does, between himself or herself as a vision and the thing in order to tame this “obscurity of the ‘there is’”, this “perceptual openness to the [visible] world”⁷⁴⁶ as a “continued question” and as a perpetual wonder of the “there is”. To be a question and wonder means to be an openness, that is, a “perceptual openness to the world”.⁷⁴⁷ The painter’s constant task is to “return from [the] perception fashioned by culture [cultural models, instruments, belief-systems, knowledge, etc.] to the ‘brute’ or ‘wild’ perception”⁷⁴⁸ as he “is not satisfied to be a cultured animal but takes up culture from its inception and founds it anew”. This path of the painter, which we could call the painter’s reduction,

738 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 102.

739 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 129.

740 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 103.

741 Galen A. Johnson, “Ontology and Painting: ‘Eye and Mind’”, in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Galen A. Johnson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 45.

742 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 166.

743 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 177.

744 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 168.

745 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, pp. 177–178.

746 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 212.

747 In his wonderful article “Listening at the Abyss” Patrick Burke intertwines Merleau-Ponty’s themes of the “there is”, perception, openness, interrogation and wonder together in a way that has influenced my reading of these themes. Burke raises the phenomenon of wonder as the key element of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. In this article he, for example, writes: “The ‘there is,’ as the most rudimentary openness at the core of perception, is wonder”. This rudimentary openness or “originary openness is interrogative.” What Burke says of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy shows how in a sense it could be said that Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy moves in the same atmosphere as the painter does. Burke writes: “The spirit that animates Merleau-Ponty’s writing from beginning to end is *wonder that there is something* to see and *something* to say.” (My emphasis.) The same could be said of the painters as I could paraphrase Burke by saying: the spirit that animates the painters is *wonder that there is something* to see and something to paint. Burke, “Listening at the Abyss”, pp. 94–96.

748 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 212.

“is earned by exercise [and] it is not in a few months, or in solitude, that a painter comes into full possession of his vision....[H]is vision in any event learns only by seeing and learns only from itself.”⁷⁴⁹ This “brute” or “wild” vision, which the painter “learns only by seeing and learns only from itself”, Merleau-Ponty calls “prehuman”⁷⁵⁰. It is prehuman as it is not conditioned by our cultural models as human creations, and these cultural models are actually possible only as modifications of this prehuman vision. The painter’s vision is also called “prehuman” as it goes through “continued birth”, which means that it never grows itself beyond the original question and wonder as the mystery of the perceptual faith: “there is something” as perceptual openness to something.

How should we understand Merleau-Ponty’s words, “this philosophy which animates the painter the instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne’s words, he ‘thinks in painting.’”? It is important to remember that, for Merleau-Ponty, philosophy is “true thinking” and if vision is “a [continued] question”, “interrogative thinking”, then “this philosophy” is philosophy of vision, of “interrogative thinking”. The painter’s “gesture” that Merleau-Ponty is speaking about is the act of painting, and the question is then, in order to understand this new philosophy of vision, how does vision as interrogative thinking become gesture as the act of painting, that is, how does the painter “think in painting” and how does this gesture of painting change or “transform the world into painting[s]”⁷⁵¹? Merleau-Ponty writes about this in *Eye and Spirit*:

The painter ‘takes his body with him,’ says Valéry. And indeed, we cannot see how a Spirit could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the painter changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working/operative and actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.⁷⁵²

To “change the world into paintings” is synonymous with the expression “vision becomes gesture” as the meaning of the notion of “the world” is phenomenologically (in the case of the painter for whom the world is nothing but a visible world) the “vision of the world”, and vision is always, of course, vision of the world (interrogative thinking of the world) as vision sees the world and the words “change”, “transformation”, or “transubstantiation” always mean “becoming”, which takes place through the body. As *Phenomenology of Perception* states: “[t]he role of the body is to ensure this metamorphosis”⁷⁵³ from vision to gesture, from idea to thing. As the painter “transforms the world into painting” he thinks as a bodily being in which it is impossible to separate the spiritual and the carnal as “a Spirit” cannot paint, that is, cannot “think in painting”. Only the actual living body can “think in painting”. In order to understand this bodily thinking, or carnal thinking, of the painter, according to Merleau-Ponty, “we must go back to the working/operative and actual body”. Of this actual body,

749 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 165.

750 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 168.

751 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 258.

752 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 354.

753 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), p. 167.

Eye and Spirit says: "A human body is present/there when, *between* seeing and visible, *between* touching and touched, *between* one eye and the other, *between* the hand and the hand a kind of *crossover is made*, when the spark of the sensing-sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not stop burning until some accident of the body unmakes what no accident would have sufficed to make...."⁷⁵⁴ If there is a human body only when a crossover is made between the seeing and the visible, that is, between the interrogative thinking and the world, does this then mean that it is very difficult, or perhaps impossible, to separate the vision and the visible and the thinking and the thought from each other? This is exactly what the second part of Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory statement says as it states that "there is... action and passion so slightly discernible that one no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted." The painter, as he "thinks in painting", does not anymore know "who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted." The perfect example of this was the painter André Marchand's following words which I have already quoted in Chapter Six of my dissertation: "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, were speaking to me....I was there, listening....I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it....I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out." To dwell within this "strange domain"⁷⁵⁵, "this strange system of exchanges"⁷⁵⁶ *between* seeing and the visible is to live within the "obscurity of *there is*", and within the state of wonder before the cultural models separate and differentiate these from each other. As the painter "no longer knows" who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted and who/what thinks and who/what is thought, Cézanne can say paradoxically and completely insanely, against our traditional and cultural perspectives, that "[t]he landscape thinks itself within me [*se pense en moi*] and I am its consciousness."⁷⁵⁷ From the cultural perspective, these words of Cézanne's that Merleau-Ponty quotes of course sound insane, as we have normally understood thinking as an activity of the rational subject who separates himself from the objects. If the painter has really and truly entered into the mysterious and "strange domain" where the normal boundaries between the subject and the object are blurred and where, for this reason, this painter no longer knows who/what thinks and who/what is thought, then it is not at all "strange" to suggest that, in this world of strangeness, perhaps it is the landscape that thinks itself within the painter.

With this last formulation from Cézanne in mind, we can once more truly ask the fundamental philosophical question: "What is thinking?" Let us also remember that Merleau-Ponty understood this question as the beginning of philosophy. If vision "thinks without thinking", is "a question" as well as "interrogative thinking", and if also "the landscape thinks itself within me", then

754 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 355.

755 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 140 and 152.

756 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 164.

757 Paul Cézanne quoted by Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 17.

indeed “what is thinking?” According to *Phenomenology of Perception*, “if I wanted to express perceptual experience with precision, I would have to say that *one* perceives within me [*on perçoit en moi*], and not that I perceive.”⁷⁵⁸ This distinction between *one* and *I* made by Merleau-Ponty is very important and one should take it seriously in one’s effort to understand the mysteries that we are interrogating here. It is also important to notice that, in this quotation, Merleau-Ponty uses the same expression “within me” [*en moi*] as Cézanne also used in the previous citation concerning the landscape. Who or what is the “one”? Could it be that perhaps the “one” and the “landscape” are the same, as the “one” is not “I”? Or could it be more like that the “one” that “perceives within me” and the “one” that “no longer knows who/what sees and who/what is seen, who/what paints and who/what is painted” are the same “one”? Or can they all be the same “one”? These are truly difficult questions to think about. But let us leave these questions *up in the air* for a while and turn to a quotation from *Eye and Spirit* that gives us more to chew on regarding this topic as it simultaneously functions as a crossing between the roles of the painter and of the poet. In this citation, Merleau-Ponty quotes the words of Max Ernst, who was both a painter and a poet. Would this make him a “born phenomenologist” times two? Ernst says the following: “Just as the role of the poet since [Rimbaud’s] famous *Lettre du voyant* consists in writing under the dictation of that which (*ce qui*) thinks itself [*se pense*], that which (*ce qui*) articulates itself within him [*s’articule en lui*], the role of the painter is to circumscribe and project that which (*ce qui*) sees itself within him [*se voit en lui*].”⁷⁵⁹ In this quotation from Ernst, we again see this same expression “within him” that we saw in the words of Cézanne and Merleau-Ponty in the form of “within me”, as this time there is “that which thinks itself, that which articulates itself *within him*” and “that which sees itself *within him*”. Here we have the notion of “that which” (*ce qui*), which is an even more generalized and open notion than the previous notion of “one”. The “that which” can, for example, stand for the “one” or the “landscape”, as well as an infinite number of other possibilities. If I take Cézanne’s wording “the landscape thinks itself within me and I am its consciousness” and apply it to Ernst’s formulation on the role of the painter, the role of the painter would then be to circumscribe and project the landscape which sees, or thinks, itself within him. If I would connect this with what I have previously said about the painter’s gesture of transforming the world into painting, this application could then be phrased as follows: the role of the painter is to transform the landscape which thinks itself within him into painting. This *transforming* of the landscape into painting is also, of course, an essential dimension of “thinking in

758 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 223. The translation is slightly altered as Landes translates “*en moi*” as “in me” and I prefer to translate it as “within me”. See the original wording, Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 249.

759 Max Ernst quoted by Merleau-Ponty, *L’Œil et l’Esprit*, pp. 30-31. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 358. The translation has been altered. The most accurate English translation of these Ernst’s words are from Alphonso Lingis. See “52. Editor’s footnote” in Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 208n52. My translation is alteration of Lingis’ translation.

painting" (Cézanne), that is, of "vision becoming gesture", which means that, in the whole task of the painter, "action and passion [are] so slightly discernible that one no longer knows" who/what thinks and who/what is thought. Does it then mean that "this philosophy [as true thinking]...which animates the painter" is "the landscape" that "thinks itself within" him? Would this kind of thinking be the source for an "absolutely new way of thinking" that Merleau-Ponty strives for in his quest to rebirth philosophy as a new philosophy in a close relationship with the painters? I leave these questions resonating in the air as I now turn to the role of the poet, and especially to the role of the aerial poet in my quest to find an entirely new point of departure for philosophy as a respiratory philosophy.

The words that I already quoted from *Eye and Spirit* say: "the role of the poet since [Rimbaud's] famous *Lettre du voyant* consists in writing under the dictation of that which thinks itself, that which articulates itself within him [*ce qui se pense, ce qui s'articule en lui*]" . Let me then try to use Ernst's words again to do something similar to the role of the poet as an aerial poet as I just did with the role of the painter when I enlisted the help of Cézanne to give it new possibilities. Instead of Cézanne, let me take my inspiration from Bachelard. If previously Ernst's words "that which thinks itself" were replaced with "the landscape" as "the landscape thinks itself", then what could the words "that which" stand for now in the case of the role of the poet. Let us begin with something more general than the landscape. It is a good approach to begin with something as general as possible before perhaps broaching more particular examples. Let us begin with something that has been one of the main themes, especially in Section One of my dissertation. What is it? In the most general terms, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, the notion of "the world in general" has been understood as the "greatest mystery of all". This means that I could initially rephrase Ernst's words concerning the role of the poet to say: the role of the poet...consists in writing under the dictation of the world in general that thinks itself, that articulates itself within him. If Ernst's "that which thinks itself", with regards to the role of the poet, is interpreted as the "world in general", that is, as the *Weltthesis* or the General Thesis, then Bachelard's view of the role of the poet is quite similar to Ernst's, as he writes in *The Poetics of Reverie*: "The poet listens and repeats. The voice of the poet is a voice of the world."⁷⁶⁰ How is Bachelard's view similar to Ernst's understanding of the role of the poet? Let us explore. When Ernst writes that "the role of the poet...consists in writing under dictation of that which thinks itself, that articulates itself within him", it is important to ask how is it possible to write "under the dictation"? To write in such a way is, of course, possible only if one listens to what has been dictated. The one who is writing under the dictation has to hear the voice and articulation of the one who dictates. In this sense, Bachelard's words concerning the role of the poet supplement Ernst's phrase. For writing under the dictation to be possible, the poet must first listen and then, when he truly writes under the dictation, one must ask what he then does. Bachelard's words on the role of the poet give an answer,

760 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 188.

as he writes that “the poet...repeats”, that is, he repeats by writing down what has been dictated. If I interpret Ernst’s wording “that which” as “the world”, then the poet listens to what the world thinks and articulates within him. And then, under the dictation of the world, he repeats the thinking and the articulation of this world by writing it down. Thus, in Bachelard’s words: “The voice of the poet is a voice of the world.” This means that, according to Bachelard, the true poet’s voice is not his own personal voice, but the voice of the world.

One can also find other important similarities and supplements in the words of Bachelard and Ernst concerning the role of the poet. In the case of Bachelard, however, these similarities and supplements are not only limited to Ernst’s phrase as they can also be found in connection to Merleau-Ponty and Cézanne. One of these connecting factors, between all four (Cézanne, Ernst, Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard), is the verbs found before the notions “within me”, “within him” or “within us”. Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne and Ernst have used the verbs “to think” (Cézanne and Ernst), “to perceive” (Merleau-Ponty), “to articulate” (Ernst) and “to see” (Ernst). Of course, it is important to remember to differentiate between Ernst and Cézanne on one hand and Merleau-Ponty on the other, but at the same time it is Merleau-Ponty who has quoted both Ernst and Cézanne in his texts in a way that I will interpret shows that he was in full agreement with both of them, which then would mean that, in a sense, Merleau-Ponty could have formulated these wordings himself. The proof of that, if one needs it, can be found from *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which he uses the notion “thinks itself within me” as he speaks of the phenomenon of “the blue of the sky” by writing “the blue of the sky...‘thinks itself within me.’”⁷⁶¹ Even here we can notice that the words “thinks itself within me” are still placed between quotation marks, but this time Merleau-Ponty does not mention who he is quoting.⁷⁶² He prefers to simply let the reader know that this phrasing is not his own invention, but at the same time he uses it in a way that it expresses his own idea of the phenomenon of the “blue of the sky”.

I already mentioned that Bachelard had something to offer this topic of “within me”, so let me now welcome him into this conversation. What does he have to say about it? Bachelard does not use the verbs “perceives”, “sees”, “articulates”, or “thinks” itself *within me*, but rather uses the verbs “to imagine” and “to dream”.⁷⁶³ In *Air and Dreams* he writes: “the world *dreams within us* [*rêve*

761 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 222. The translation is slightly altered as again Landes’ translation of “in” has been retranslated as “within”.

762 In Colin Smith’s view this quotation refers to Paul Valéry’s poem *Le Cimetière marin*. See Colin Smith’s note as (Translator’s note) in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, p. 214. The other possibility is that this quotation is again from Cézanne as it is exactly the same wording as the one which Merleau-Ponty quotes “Cézanne’s Doubt.” This wording from this text is the one that I have quoted in my dissertation. Ted Toadvine ponders between these two possibilities. See Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), p. 144n10.

763 Also Merleau-Ponty uses the phrasing “dreams within us” as he writes of “that which dreams within us [*ce qui rêve en nous*]” in his text “The Problem of Passivity: Sleep, the Unconscious, Memory,” in *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 116. The translation has been slightly altered as again “in” has been retranslated as “within”.

en nous] dynamically.”⁷⁶⁴ The same book also states: “The world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie. [*Le monde vient s’imaginer dans la reverie humaine.*]”⁷⁶⁵ What could I understand from this that Bachelard may offer to the conversation, and how should I interpret his words in connection to what has been already said? If I begin by pondering what Bachelard says here in connection to the question of thinking (“What is thinking?”, Merleau-Ponty’s *Signs*) in the context of seeking “an absolutely new way of thinking” (Merleau-Ponty), which has been the major question in this chapter, one could ask: are the phenomena of thinking and dreaming, or thinking and imagining, very different from each other with regards to the way that Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard speak of them? I would argue that, in the context I have been building in my dissertation, these phenomena are not very different from each other and can perhaps even be very similar to each other in reference to Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard. In addition to this, there is even a slight possibility that, in the depth-dimension, they might be synonymous to each other. How could this be possible? In Merleau-Ponty’s view⁷⁶⁶ the landscape, or in a more general manner the world, thinks itself within me. I have shown that this world’s thinking is essentially connected to vision, or perception in general, which thinks interrogatively, that is, in a questioning manner as a phenomenon of crossing, or reversibility, where one no longer knows who/what thinks and who/what is thought. As this is the case, it then becomes possible to say that it is not only I who thinks, but also the landscape or the world within me. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty states this as follows: “the existing world exists in the interrogative mode.”⁷⁶⁷ This interrogative mode of the world always involves “a germ of dream” on a primordial level, as Merleau-Ponty writes: “Every sensation includes a germ of dream or depersonalization, as we experience through this sort of stupor into which it puts us when we truly live at the level of sensation.”⁷⁶⁸ What could it mean that every sensation or perception of the world includes a “germ of dream”? If vision, according to Merleau-Ponty, is already interrogative thinking, this means that when one sees things or the world this vision, as interrogative thinking, already includes a germ of dream. Merleau-Ponty makes this point very strongly in the following words: “Our waking relations with objects and others especially have an oneiric character as a matter of principle: others are present to us in the way that dreams are, the way myths are, and this is enough to question the cleavage between the real and the imaginary.”⁷⁶⁹ For this reason there is always “the imaginary texture of the real.”⁷⁷⁰ One dimension of this imaginary texture of the world is “a germ of dream” of every perception.

764 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 150 and *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 194. My emphasis.

765 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 22. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 14. The translation has been altered. My emphasis.

766 For awhile I will now focus on the comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard on this issue and incorporate Cézanne and Ernst as part of Merleau-Ponty’s view.

767 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 103.

768 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 249. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 223. The translation has been altered.

769 Merleau-Ponty, “The Problem of Passivity”, p. 116.

770 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 356.

This “imaginary texture” is “oneiric Being” which is ever-present context, or dimensionality, of the real, that is, of beings. I already pointed to Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about this in Chapter Five when I stated that “the imaginary equals Being or at least is a fundamental dimension of Being.” Therefore, in a depth-dimension, it can very well be said that the landscape, the world or Being that thinks itself within us also dreams and imagines itself within us. In this sense the role, or the task, of the poet consists in writing under the dictation of the world which thinks, dreams and imagines itself within him, and for this reason “the voice of the poet is a voice of the world.”

As the world dreams within us, and as these dreams of the world are the voice of the world, Bachelard can say that “[p]oetry is not a tradition; it is a primitive dream; it is an awakening of premier images.”⁷⁷¹ These premier images are not the poet’s own invention and their origin is not in any human tradition. Their origin is in the imagination or dreaming of the world, which imagines itself within us. If Merleau-Ponty can say that “the existing world exists in the interrogative mode”, then, in a similar manner, Bachelard can say that the existing world exists in the imaginary or oneiric mode. Dreaming in the sense that Bachelard speaks of it is something deeply primordial or primitive, and thus “[o]ne does not dream with taught ideas”.⁷⁷² For a true dreaming to awaken within us, “we must”, according to Bachelard, “forget all that we have learned from mythology and school books”.⁷⁷³ Without this process of forgetting it is impossible to learn to hear the “primitive” dreaming “voice of the world”.⁷⁷⁴ One of the examples that Bachelard gives of this is that no true “poet has ever dreamed that the earth revolves around the sun”⁷⁷⁵, as this is possible only as a by-product of a “taught idea” from our scientific tradition. This would be impossible, for Bachelard, as “poetry is not a tradition; it is a primitive dream”. All “taught ideas” put our “primitive cosmic reveries”⁷⁷⁶ as the “voices of the world” to sleep. In Bachelard’s understanding, all “great poet[s]”⁷⁷⁷ are “great dreamers”⁷⁷⁸ who dream with the dreaming world, and their dreams are not really their own dreams, but cosmic dreams which the world dreams and imagines within them and with them.⁷⁷⁹ The task of the poet is to discover the words to name these dreams of the world, that is, to give them a voice and put them into words to create “cosmic poetry”.⁷⁸⁰ This notion of “cosmic poetry”

771 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 179.

772 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 188.

773 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 49.

774 This idea “forgetting” reminds me of what Heidegger wrote about “unlearning” as in both cases one needs to either “forget” or “unlearn” in order to experience something more original. In Bachelard’s case it is the “primitive” dreaming and in Heidegger’s case more original way of thinking. What is here interesting is that I have just above been pondering if there is such a big difference at depth-dimension between dreaming and thinking. I referred to Heidegger’s “unlearning” in the Chapter Eight when I understood it as a part of the phenomenological method.

775 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 188n31.

776 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 188.

777 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 33, 39, 63, 143 and 198.

778 For example, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 20, 74 and 97.

779 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 13.

780 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 22, 162 and 239.

means the expression of the voice of the world. This creative, or poetic, process is an infinite task as “there are so many dreams in the [world] which poetry, encumbered by old words, has not been able to name.”⁷⁸¹ This means that poetry has to reinvent itself perpetually, that is, it needs to always find new ways to name the mystery of the world and give it a literary image. This perpetual reinvention of poetry tells us that the true poet, as a great dreamer, is a born phenomenologist as a phenomenologist always perpetually begins from the beginning, which is in this case the dreaming of the world. How does Bachelard understand dreaming or reverie? The answer might be surprising to many as, according to Bachelard, on a fundamental level dreaming is wondering. He writes: “First reverie—or wonder. Wonder is instant reverie.”⁷⁸² This is a highly important point in Bachelard’s understanding of dreaming. This statement, which essentially intertwines reverie and wonder, cannot be over emphasized as this idea is the foundation of understanding Bachelard’s poetic thinking. Through this fundamental idea of Bachelard, I can bring back the philosophical teachings that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. It was said that the poets are born phenomenologists as they dwell perpetually in a state of “original amazement”, which is connected to “constant renewal”. Thus, according to Bachelard, the greatest philosophical teaching that the philosopher can learn from the great poets is that we can “become the pure and simple subject[s] of the verb ‘to marvel’”, that is, we can “recapture the naïve wonder” that we truly are. Later in this chapter it was said that all the great poets are “great dreamers”. If it is taken truly seriously that the “first reverie”, or the “primitive dream”, is equal with wonder and that “[w]onder is instant reverie”, then in Bachelard’s poetic thinking the great poets could equally be called great wonderers who dwell perpetually in a state of “original amazement” and “marvel”.

To dream or to imagine, that is, to wonder, “frees us”⁷⁸³ because it “allows us to leave the ordinary course of things”⁷⁸⁴, of “old words” and see and understand in a “completely new”⁷⁸⁵ way, as though for the first time launching the dreamer, as a wonderer, out “toward new images”⁷⁸⁶, “toward a new life”⁷⁸⁷ and “to experience new space”.⁷⁸⁸ This constant wonder as perpetual commencement is one of the essential dimensions that underlies Bachelard calling the great poets, as great dreamers, “born phenomenologists”.

In this chapter I have been interrogating the role or the task of the poet with the help of Ernst, Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard. When Bachelard speaks of the role or the task of the poet, he understands that there is a certain kind of hierarchy of tasks because there is something that he calls the “first task of the poet”. He writes of this as follows: “The first task of the poet is to release within

781 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 175.

782 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 167.

783 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 1.

784 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 3.

785 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 2.

786 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 2.

787 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 3.

788 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 206.

us [*en nous*] matter that will dream."⁷⁸⁹ This will bring us to the aerial poets and their poetic role. But before that we must ask, what does Bachelard mean by this "first task of the poet"? And what is this "matter that will dream"? How can the poet release this dreaming matter within us? For Bachelard, matter is not, *in the first place*, anything real in the sense of the natural sciences or even in the sense of our ordinary experience of finite, limited and closed objects or things. Matter is, in the first place, imaginary, infinite, immense, unlimited and open.⁷⁹⁰ Matter is nothing inert, but something which dreams and imagines. It is something radically different from what we traditionally understand by matter. Bachelard equates matter with element, which means that elements also dream and imagine. This leads him to speak of "material imagination"⁷⁹¹ and "elemental imagination"⁷⁹² as synonyms. Matter is divided in a classical manner into four elements (earth, water, fire and air) as the imaginary earth, the imaginary water, the imaginary fire and the imaginary air. These four elements are, according to Bachelard, the "fundamental material elements",⁷⁹³ and as such they are the four fundamental elements, or imaginary dimensions, of the world. Each of these four imaginary elements, or matters, is a "source"⁷⁹⁴, or "root"⁷⁹⁵, of their own manner of imagination and dreaming, named the terrestrial imagination (the dreaming of the earth), aquatic imagination (the dreaming of the water), igneous imagination (the dreaming of the fire) and aerial imagination (the dreaming of the air).⁷⁹⁶ Bachelard calls these imaginary elements "the hormones of the imagination"⁷⁹⁷, or "the creative forces of imagination"⁷⁹⁸, which set the imagination in motion within psyche. In an important way, this is connected to what was said before in connection to the dreaming world. It was said that, for Bachelard, it is the world that dreams or imagines itself within us or within human reverie. This means that, as these four imaginary elements are the most fundamental dimensions of the world, it is these elements of the world that dream or imagine themselves within us or within human reverie. The world dreams and imagines itself, in the most fundamental manner, either terrestrially, aquatically, igneously or aerially within us. In a similar manner, as Bachelard divides the modes of imagination into four categories depending on the element, or matter, so he also divides the poets into four categories, depending on which element, or matter, of the world their poetry as poetic creation is

789 Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, p. 245. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 190. The translation has been altered.

790 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 1, 4-6, 9, 11, 24, 42, 44-45 and 47.

791 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 7-8, 15 and 38 and Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves: Essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (Librairie José Corti, 1942), pp. 7-8.

792 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 26.

793 Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves*, p. 10.

794 Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves*, p. 22.

795 Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves*, p. 8.

796 Bachelard has devoted books to each one of these elements. In *Psychoanalysis of Fire* and in *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire* Bachelard speaks of the elemental imagination of fire. In *Water and Dreams* he speaks of the elemental imagination of water. In *Air and Dreams* he speaks of the elemental imagination of air. In *Earth and Reveries of Will* and in *Earth and Reveries of Repose* he investigates the elemental imagination of the earth.

797 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 11.

798 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 14.

mostly inspired, or animated, by. Thus, the four categories of poets are the poets of the earth as the terrestrial poets, the poets of the water as the aquatic poets, the poets of the fire as the igneous poets and the poets of the air as the aerial poets. So now we can better understand what Bachelard means when he says: "The first task of the poet is to release within us [*en nous*] matter that will dream." This means that, in the first place, dreaming and imagination of the world are not our own inventions, but elemental creations within us. It also means that the task of the poet "instead of experiencing a naive anthropomorphism [is to] turn man over to elemental and deep forces"⁷⁹⁹ of the world. But this first task of the poet is not only to "turn man over to [these] elemental deep forces", but turn him over to his "own particular elemental imagination"⁸⁰⁰, that is, to that "matter that will dream." Each poet has a tendency toward a particular element that will dream within himself or herself in a more natural way than the other elements do. The first task of the poet is to find that particular element, and then devote oneself to it.

Now it is time to turn our attention to the aerial poets, that is, to the ones who awaken all the air of the world in their lives. Earlier I said, with the aid of Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard, that this new philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the aerial poet—in that instant when his breath becomes gesture, when he thinks in breathing. I also stated that these aerial poets "follow the very life of cosmic breath" as the source of poetic inspiration, or as the creative force of imagination, which animates them to create aerial poetry and respiratory poetry, that is, to repeat in poetic language the primitive aerial and respiratory dreams. Let us see what these words mean in connection to the role of the poet, and especially to the role of the aerial poet. For the aerial poets, the world is, in the first place, "an aerial world"⁸⁰¹ and "a respiratory world".⁸⁰² For example, Bachelard writes the following of Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the most prominent aerial poets there is: "With all his soul, Shelley lives in an aerial world, in the highest world."⁸⁰³ In order to understand what Bachelard means when he writes this about Shelley one must know that, for Bachelard, the word "soul" is "a word of breath"⁸⁰⁴. Bachelard is very sensitive and aware that the French word for soul "*âme*" has its etymological root in the Latin word *anima*, which does not mean only "soul", but in the first place "breath". It is not only the French *âme* in connection to the Latin *anima* that names "soul" as a word of breath. This etymological connection between "soul" and "breath" can be found in many languages. Earlier in Section Two of my dissertation (Chapter Eight), I spoke of this matter in relation to the "*psyche* of Heraclitus" when we found out that the Greek word *psyche* originally meant "breath". Another great example of this connection between "soul" and "breath" is the Sanskrit word "*atman*",

799 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 41.

800 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 26.

801 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 151.

802 Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie*, p. 154.

803 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 40.

804 Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, p. 4. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xx. The translation has been altered.

which is translated and understood traditionally either as “soul” or “self”, but which originally means “breath”.⁸⁰⁵ When Bachelard says that “soul” (*âme*) is “a word of breath” he makes special reference to the following words of Charles Nodier, whom he calls his “good mentor”⁸⁰⁶, “[t]he different names for the soul, among nearly all peoples, are just so many breath variations, and onomatopoeic expressions of breathing.”⁸⁰⁷ With this knowledge about Bachelard’s understanding of the word “soul” as a “word of breath”, his words on Shelley, who lives “with *all his soul*...in an aerial world, in the highest world”, truly receive a respiratory meaning. Thus, in this instance, we could perhaps use for “soul” the wording “breath-soul” that Kleinberg-Levin and Pettigrew use in translating the “*psyche* of Heraclitus” or the notion of respiratory consciousness, which I launched in my dissertation in Chapter Eight. The aerial world that Bachelard speaks of in reference to Shelley is an imaginary world, that is, not the real world of beings but a reality of the unreal imaginary elemental air. If one were to use Merleau-Pontian terminology to name this unreal imaginary elemental air, it would be “the imaginary texture of the real.” For the aerial poets, the imaginary elemental world of air always has priority over the real world of things and objects. The element of air becomes the driving factor of all life. Everything is understood from this aerial perspective. All things, objects, events, happenings, relations and interactions receive an aerial meaning in the understanding of the aerial poet. For this reason, “[a] true poet”, according to Bachelard, “wants [always] the imagination to be a *journey*”⁸⁰⁸, an “imaginary and infinite journey”⁸⁰⁹, that is, a journey of the “imaginary air”⁸¹⁰ or an aerial journey. This imaginary journey of the air is “a *continuous* path...from the real to the imaginary”; “a journey to the land of the imaginary, into the very domain of the imaginary.”⁸¹¹ This means that the aerial poets, as “lover[s] of air”⁸¹², desire continuous “aerial travel”⁸¹³ from real things and objects to the infinite “aerial world”, to the “highest world”, and as the ones who adore this elemental and imaginary “aerial land”⁸¹⁴ they live with all their breath-souls, as was already said of Shelley, “in the air, by the air, for the air...[and] free as the air”.⁸¹⁵ Human existence is also understood as being completely restructured by the imaginary air. From the aerial poet’s perspective, this means that “[o]ur *terrestrial*

805 Hermann Oldenberg, *The Doctrine of the Upanisads and the Early Buddhism*, trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991), p. 33.

806 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 240.

807 Charles Nodier quoted by Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xx.

808 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 3.

809 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 6.

810 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 11.

811 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 4.

812 Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-modern* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 106.

813 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 9.

814 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 140.

815 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 145. In this same book Bachelard also states similarly in reference to sleep: “In sleep we are the being of a Cosmos...we are carried within the air, by the air where we breathe following the rhythm of our breath.” Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, pp. 48-49. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 36. The translation has been altered.

being must become *aerial*”,⁸¹⁶ that is, “as aerial as our breath”.⁸¹⁷ The aerial poet’s path “from real to the imaginary”, from the terrestrial to the aerial, is a vertical path of perpetual ascension, rising, flight, and lightness⁸¹⁸ as it lifts all phenomena from the level earth to the air. They are not anymore seen as terrestrial beings but as aerial beings. It is a transformative path in which “everything...passes through air”⁸¹⁹, transmutating all things into “aerial phenomena”.⁸²⁰ As everything goes through an aerial transformation and becomes aerial phenomena, the aerial poet can air this fundamental experience as the “aerial experience”⁸²¹ by declaring that “everything breathes anew”.⁸²² If the goal of the philosopher, through the method of reduction was, in Husserl’s, Heidegger’s and Merleau-Ponty’s words, a “total transformation of attitude”, “a complete transformation”, a “transformation in the spectacle of the world and in our existence” and “a thoroughly new way of life” comparable to a “religious conversion”, I would say that, to become as aerial as our breath and transform all phenomena into aerial phenomena by following the aerial poets is an even more complete transformation than even philosophers of the phenomenological tradition might have wished for. If one is able to transform one’s *terrestrial* being to become *aerial*, I would say that this kind of transformation can truly be compared in its radicality to a “religious conversion” because one’s focus is totally changed, and what one values as important is also totally changed. What takes place in a phenomenological reduction, if it is accomplished, is a complete disavowal of our familiarity with world as a habitual world of our everydayness. This complete transformation is, in Fink’s words, as was already mentioned earlier, “essentially a catastrophic event” in which the world turns upside down. Here it is important to know that Fink uses the word “catastrophic” in its etymologically sense as “an overturning”, which means that the reduction, as a total transformation of attitude, is an overturning event of the habitual world. For Heidegger, “the world of philosophy”, that is, the world that has gone through a phenomenological reduction, is “topsy-turvy, an inverted world.”⁸²³ Heidegger even defines philosophy by saying: “philosophy [is] the inverted world”⁸²⁴, that is, the upside-down world compared to our everyday understanding of the world. Our everyday world is the world of terrestrial being, in

816 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 142.

817 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 241.

818 These notions of “ascension”, “rising”, “flight” and “lightness” play important role throughout Bachelard’s book *Air and Dreams*.

819 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 30n5.

820 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 9.

821 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 35.

822 René Cazellas quoted by Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 52. The translation has been altered. For Bachelard, Nietzsche is one of the most important aerial poets and in a Nietzschean way he says that when everything goes through an aerial transformation this must be called “a transmutation of all values.” This kind of ethics can be called “aerial ethics.” Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, pp. 142 and 146. In my article on respiratory and aerial hospitality, I investigate briefly how would the phenomenon of hospitality perhaps appear to us within the atmosphere of Bachelardian aerial ethics. Berndtson, “Cultivating a Respiratory and Aerial Culture of Hospitality”.

823 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 14 and 285.

824 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 23.

which we are focused on visible and material things and objects, that is, on beings. Our practical, theoretical, social and perceptual attitudes are the life of a terrestrial being as they are constantly directed towards the different levels of visible and material thing- and object-relations that are terrestrial in nature. The terrestrial way of life is a thing- and person-oriented life. What the aerial poets offer is a total transformation of attitude and a reversal of what is expected, that is, an overturning of the world from the terrestrial to the aerial. This world of the aerial poets is, in the true sense of the word, "a topsy-turvy, an inverted world." If Heidegger said that "philosophy [is] the inverted world", then I would suggest that the philosophy that one could learn from these aerial poets, as a rebirth of philosophy, is really and truly "the inverted world". To live with all one's breath-soul, that is, with all one's being in the aerial world is a life of the inverted world. The aerial poets do not focus, in the first place, on material and visible things as they live "in the air, by the air, for the air...[and] free as the air". This is a total transformation of attitude because normally people, including philosophers and painters, focus their attention on the visible things and other people, but not the invisible atmosphere of air. The aerial poets' primary attention is focused on the aerial world, and as for them all phenomena become "aerial phenomena", this means that terrestrial phenomena are now understood within a totally new atmosphere as the aerial poets do not focus on visible and material objects and other people directly, but rather how they appear within this invisible aerial world. When everything begins to breathe a new aerial life, this means that one begins to understand everything within their perpetual context of the aerial world, that is, one begins to see and experience how everything appears against the background of the aerial world. This kind of change in one's attitude is, to use Husserl's words again, "a thoroughly new way of life". In this new way of life, one's focus changes from the thing- and person-oriented way of life to the atmosphere-oriented way of life. Let us next try to find out what, according to Bachelard's aerial poetics, this aerially elemental conversion or transformation of one's attitude from a terrestrial being to an aerial being could mean if it is a way of life in which one becomes as aerial as our breath.

If the aerial poet's task is that "[o]ur *terrestrial* being must become *aerial*", that is, it must become "as aerial as our breath", then an important question is how this would take place. How does one "become as aerial as our breath"⁸²⁵? How can we accomplish this new aerial way of life as a thoroughly new way of life? In order to become as aerial as our breath, one must become, according to Bachelard, "a great breather".⁸²⁶ One of Bachelard's examples of a "great breather" in *The Poetics of Reverie* is the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who "breathes as the earth breathes. Goethe breathes with all his lungs as the earth breathes with all its atmosphere. The man who reaches/attains the glory of respiration breathes cosmically."⁸²⁷ The first thing that one can point out here con-

825 Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, p. 311.

826 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 180.

827 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 181.

cerning the “great breather” is that he “breathes with all his lungs as the earth breathes with all its atmosphere.” This is a very important description in many ways. First of all, it can perhaps give us a clue about how our terrestrial being could become as aerial as our breath as Bachelard’s words already compare the great breather to the earth when he says he “breathes with all its atmosphere.” Would Bachelard somehow think that the terrestrial being could get advice or guidance from the earth itself on how to become aerial, as he draws the comparison between the great breather and the breathing earth. This is most probably the case as, in this quotation, Bachelard says that Goethe, as a “great breather...breathes as the earth breathes.” A great breather does not focus on terrestrial things or terrestrial phenomena, but rather on how the earth itself breathes, and how he could follow this kind of breathing of the earth. This means that breathing is not thing- or a person-related, but an atmosphere-related way of being. The earth, as terrestrial, does not focus on things while it breathes, but the atmosphere. This is the way to become aerial: not to focus in the first place on terrestrial phenomena, but on aerial atmosphere. The great breather breathes as expansively as possible. He does not try to minimize his breath in any manner as he “breathes with all of his lungs.” An important point to notice from this quotation is also that Bachelard’s wording “Goethe breathes *with all of his lungs*” looks very similar to what he said of Shelley, who lives “*with all his soul*” when the “soul” is understood as a “word of breath”. Bachelard’s citation also says that, to become a great breather means to learn to “breathe cosmically”. It is important to remember that when I introduced the aerial poets I said that they follow the very life of the cosmic breath. To learn to breathe cosmically is the way to follow the very life of the cosmic breath. In “cosmic respiration”,⁸²⁸ as the aerial poet lives “with all his breath-soul in an aerial world” and as he “breathes with all his lungs”, the “unlimited enters into [his] breast”.⁸²⁹ This “unlimited” is the infinite imaginary element of air. Also, to “breathe cosmically [means to breathe] far from human anxiety.”⁸³⁰ The word “anxiety” comes from the Latin word *angustia*, which means “tightness, straitness, narrowness”.⁸³¹ The experience of anxiety is, in an essential manner, connected to the tightness of the breath, to breathlessness.⁸³² In his famous analysis of anxiety Heidegger, for example, says that anxiety “stifles one’s breath”⁸³³ and is thus completely op-

828 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 180.

829 Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, p. 180. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 197. The translation has been altered.

830 Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, p. 180. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 197. The translation has been altered.

831 Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason*, p. 78.

832 The founder of the *Gestalt Therapy* method Frederick Perls, for example, writes of the connection between anxiety and breathing as follows: “anxiety, the disturbance of breathing, accompanies any disturbance of the self-function; thus the first step in therapy is contacting the breathing.” Frederick Perls et al., *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. 401. Havi Carel investigates phenomenologically the phenomenon of breathlessness. See Havi Carel chapter “A Phenomenology of Breathlessness” in her book *Phenomenology of Illness* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 106–129.

833 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 231.

posed to the experience of unlimitedness or expansiveness⁸³⁴ that occurs when one breathes cosmically. This phenomenon of the “cosmic respiration” has some similarities with the painter’s vision as the “prehuman vision” in which, according to Merleau-Ponty, “one no longer knows which sees and which is seen” as “the roles between the painter and the visible switch.” This is also because, in the cosmic respiration, the roles between “the one who breathes and the breathed world”⁸³⁵ switch. A great example of cosmic respiration being experienced and expressed by an aerial poet can be found in Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Sonnets to Orpheus*, of which Bachelard writes: “The first sonnet in the second part of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* is a sonnet of respiration, of a cosmic respiration”.⁸³⁶ In this sonnet Rilke sings “the glory of respiration” as follows: “Breathing, you invisible poem! World-space constantly in pure interchange with our own being....Counterpoise wherein I rhythmically happen”.⁸³⁷ In this constant experiential interchange of the cosmic respiration, according to Bachelard, “I am all respiration”⁸³⁸, which means that *I* do not breathe anymore in the first place by myself. The cosmic respiration can be described as follows: “‘It breathes me.’ In other words, the world comes to breathe within me [*le monde vient respire en moi*]; I participate in the good respiration of the world; I am plunged into a respiratory world. Everything breathes in the world. The good respiration which is going to cure me of my asthma, of my anxiety, is a cosmic respiration.”⁸³⁹

Earlier in this chapter I was contemplating the notions of “within me, us, him” (*en moi, nous, lui*) in connection to the verbs “to think”, “to perceive”, “to see”, “to articulate”, “to dream” and “to imagine”, as used by Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne, Ernst and Bachelard. It can be observed in the “cosmic respiration” quotation above that Bachelard uses the notion of “within me” (*en moi*) in a respiratory context as he writes: “the world comes to breathe within me”. Would this mean that one could group this respiratory phrase into the same category as other phrases that use the notions “within me”, “within him” or “within us”? Structurally at least, one can say that it combines the elements of Bachelard’s two previously-quoted “within me”/“within us” phrases concerning the world.

834 On expansiveness of the breath, see Levin, “Logos and Psyche”, pp. 127, 129, 132–134, 141 and 143–144.

835 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 181.

836 Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie*, p. 155.

837 Rainer Maria Rilke quoted by Henri Maldiney, “Flesh and Verb in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty,” trans. Claire E. Katz, in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh*, p. 51.

838 J.H. Schultz quoted by Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie*, p. 154. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 179. The translation has been altered.

839 Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie*, p. 154. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 179. The translation has been altered. In Zen-Buddhism’s practice of *zazen* which is a meditative breathing practice something very similar takes place after one has become a long-term practitioner. In their descriptions of *zazen* the Zen-Buddhists say that it is not any more “I” who breathes, but “It” who breathes. See Shynryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1995), p. 29, Eugen Herrigel, *The Method of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 38 and Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, *Hara: The Vital Centre of Man*, trans. Sylvia-Monica von Kospoth (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), pp. 157–158 and 161.

These world-related phrases stated: 1. "The world dreams within us [*rêve en nous*] dynamically" and 2. "The world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie [*vient s'imaginer dans la reverie humaine*]". Let me now name these three phrases as; "the respiratory phrase 1", which refers to the above respiratory phrase "the world comes to breathe within me"; "the world phrase 1" which refers to the phrase "the world dreams within us dynamically"; and "the world phrase 2", which refers to the phrase "the world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie". The first important similarity between these three phrases is that they all speak of "the world" in very general manner, and in that sense they can all be connected to the fundamental mystery of the *Weltthesis*: there is the world. It could be said that the poet as a "born phenomenologist" always perpetually discloses the world thesis as, in Bachelard's words, "[t]he voice of the poet is a voice of the world." In both "the respiratory phrase 1" and "the world phrase 2", "the world comes [*le monde vient*]" either to "breathe within me" or to "imagine itself within the human reverie". In both "the respiratory phrase 1" and "the world phrase 1", "the world" acts in some manner, that is, either it breathes or it dreams, within me/us. Neither of these phrases uses the word "itself" [*se*], however, as "the world phrase 2" and, a similar way, Merleau-Ponty's same category phrases do. One question is: should we understand of Bachelard's use of the French words "en" and "dans" in these phrases as synonyms? In this context I would say "yes", and for this reason I translate both of them as "within". The major difference is that "en" (as "within") ambiguously expresses "within me" or "within us", but "dans" (as "within") more clearly expresses the place within us, that is, "within human reverie". In addition to these phrases, I refer to another respiratory phrase from Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie* as "the respiratory phrase 2". This reads: "Within the happy human breast, the world breathes itself [*Dans l'heureuse poitrine humaine, le monde se respire*]"⁸⁴⁰ If I would follow the textual order of the world phrases, which begin with "the world...", I could change the order of this respiratory phrase to run as follows: "The world breathes itself within the happy human breast." Now this phrase belongs to the same category as Bachelard's three other phrases. Structurally speaking, this respiratory phrase is the most similar to "the world phrase 2" without the wording "comes to" as it also uses the notions of "itself" (*se*) and *dans* as "within": it expresses the place more clearly than just "within me" by saying "within human breast" instead of "within human reverie", as "the world phrase 2" does. In addition to this, it is important to notice that, in both these placial notions, Bachelard airs not only the notions of "reverie" and "breast", but "human reverie" and "human breast" too.

Let me now try to interrogate the meaning of these Bachelard's phrases within the context of the aerial poets. First of all, the world, according to the aerial poets, is the "aerial world" as the "highest world", "the respiratory world" and "the breathed world". If I would interpret both of Bachelard's "world phrases" within the context of the aerial poets, they would speak of the "aerial

840 Bachelard, *La poésie de la rêverie*, p. 155. See the English translation, Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, p. 180. The translation has been altered.

world" and the "respiratory world". This interpretation is completely valid as both of these "world phrases" appear in Bachelard's book *Air and Dreams*, in which he investigates only the aerial poetics of the aerial poets. This means that already these two "world phrases" implicitly speak of the aerial and respiratory world. Let me, then, rephrase both of Bachelard's "world phrases" in explicit aerial and respiratory terms. The "world phrase 1" stated: "The world dreams within us dynamically." The "world phrase 2" stated: "The world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie." My rephrased "world phrase 1" would now run in two different ways. 1) *The aerial world as the highest world dreams within us dynamically.* 2) *The respiratory/breathed world dreams within us dynamically.* In a similar manner "the world phrase 2" would air either 1) *"the aerial world as the highest world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie"* or 2) *"the respiratory/breathed world comes to imagine itself within the human reverie"*. Through this rephrasing, I now have four phrases inspired by Bachelard that express the respiratory and the aerial world. All four phrases disclose the world thesis either as *there is the aerial world as the highest world* or as *there is the respiratory, or breathed, world*.

What would be the meaning of these "respiratory and aerial world phrases" in the context of the aerial poets if they would be interpreted with the help of Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty? Let me begin by saying that "with all his breath-soul", "with all his lungs", the aerial poet as a "lover of air" lives in the aerial and respiratory world which, according to Bachelard, dreams, imagines and breathes itself within him. If the aerial poet is a great breather, then the aerial world breathes within his happy breast. He therefore breathes as openly as possible, which also means that he breathes free of anxiety, that is, free of narrowness. When the aerial poets were introduced at the beginning of this chapter, it was said that they listen to and "follow the very life of cosmic breath". Thus, the role or the task of the aerial poet is to live the life of the cosmic breath in which "the world comes to breathe within" him. Now I have come to understand better what this life of cosmic breath or cosmic respiration means as an experience of being breathed by the aerial and respiratory world. This means that the role of the aerial poet is similar to the role of the painter, of which *Eye and Spirit* said, "the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it." Now the role of the aerial poet, in the words of *The Poetics of Reverie*, is to "plunge into this respiratory world" and become penetrated by it, which means to let this unlimited cosmic respiration breathe him. A great breather experiences the cosmic respiration as "It breathes him." The major difference between the painter and the aerial poet is the world in which they dwell. In the words of *Eye and Spirit*, "The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible".⁸⁴¹ On the contrary, the aerial poet's world is always, in the first place, the invisible and imaginary world of air and breathing, of which Rilke said "breathing, you invisible poem". This invisible poem is the respiratory and aerial world. It is this primitive invisible poem, as the "voice of the world", the

841 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 166.

respiratory dream of the world, that the poet adores and desires to air and express in words.

This could be the meaning of the words I uttered earlier when I introduced the aerial poets by saying that they “follow the very life of cosmic breath” as the source of poetic inspiration, or as the creative force of imagination, which animates them to create “aerial poetry” and “respiratory poetry”. I also stated, based on my conjoining of Merleau-Ponty’s and Bachelard’s ideas, that this philosophy, which is still to be made, is what animates the aerial poet—in that instant when his breath becomes gesture, when he thinks in breathing. In addition to this, I transformed Max Ernst’s words into a form that stated: the role of the poet consists in writing under the dictation of the world which thinks, dreams and imagines itself within him. If one remembers that, according to Bachelard, reverie and wonder are in some sense synonymous, then one could also speak of the world that wonders within the poet.⁸⁴² This would mean that perhaps it is not only the poet who is in a constant state of “original amazement”, as the world wonders itself also within the poet and the poet listens this life of the world’s wonder within himself. My formulation of the role of the poet, if I would include it in the formulation of what I just briefly said about the wonder of the world, it should now be changed to be phrased as follows: the role of the aerial poet consists in writing under the dictation of the aerial and respiratory world which thinks, dreams, imagines, wonders and breathes itself within him. I interpret this aerial formulation to be quite synonymous with Bachelard’s wording: “The poet listens and repeats. The voice of the poet is a voice of the world”, which then turns into the following wording: *the aerial poet listens and repeats. The voice of the aerial poet is a voice of the aerial and respiratory world, that is, of the cosmic respiration.* Could there be an aerial poet that we could truly listen to and follow? I must also ask if there could be an aerial poet who could perhaps teach us what thinking in breathing could mean as an absolutely new way of thinking. An answer to these questions will be hopefully revealed in the following chapter.

842 Burke has similar idea concerning Merleau-Ponty’s late ontology as in his interpretation it is Being that wonders within us. Burke, “Listening at the Abyss”, pp. 94 and 96.

CHAPTER 10

Paul Claudel as an Aerial Poet of the Sacred Respiration: The Claudelian Principle of Silence the Abyss as the Respiring God and the Claudelian Adoration in Respiration as Thinking in Breathing

I have briefly mentioned Shelley, Rilke and Goethe as representing in some form the aerial poets, but I have not really delved more deeply into their poetry as aerial and respiratory poetry. However, if I take Merleau-Ponty's and Bachelard's suggestion seriously that philosophy could be given a rebirth with the help of poetry, then I should truly follow and listen to some aerial poet as my goal is to create respiratory philosophy which *thinks in breathing* and accomplishes *respiratory reduction* in which one perpetually returns to the mystery of the *Weltthesis* as *there is the respiratory world*, as *there is the aerial world*. Who could be that aerial poet that could perhaps help me in my philosophico-respiratory efforts? Should I follow Shelley's, Rilke's or Goethe's aerial and respiratory poetic creations more carefully, or should I look for some new aerial poet that I have not yet mentioned? Actually, my path does not travel in either of these directions, as I have already found my aerial poet and followed him in the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty from the very beginning of this philosophical dissertation on breathing and yawning air. This poet is the one who inspired me, in the first place, to formulate my respiratory and chasmologico-aerial principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air from his own principle of Silence the Abyss. This poet is, of course, Paul Claudel. But is Claudel an aerial poet or a respiratory poet? In my interpretation, he is definitely one of them. How can I say that? Does Claudel adore the aerial dimension as a "lover of air" who wants to live and breathe with all his breath-soul in the "highest world," in the "aerial

world” and in the “respiratory world”? My initial answer to this question is definitely “yes.”⁸⁴³

We learned already in the beginning of my dissertation that, according to Merleau-Ponty, the method of phenomenological ontology as the ontological reduction means a constant “return to [Caudelian] *Sigè* [Silence] the abyss”. This means that, in a sense, Merleau-Ponty’s late phenomenological ontology is deeply inspired by this Claudel’s principle, at least in an implicit manner. What I mean by “implicit” here is that it is implicit in the sense that he explicitly mentions this return to the principle of Silence the Abyss only twice in his books. The question for me now is if Merleau-Ponty say anything more about Claudel in connection to this principle of “Silence the Abyss”. Let us look into this second explicit mention of Silence the Abyss. In a brief text “On Claudel” in *Signes*, Merleau-Ponty writes of this principle as follows:

If [the] world is a poem, it is not because we see the meaning of it at first but on the strength of its chance occurrences and paradoxes. “I see Waterloo; and out there in the Indian Ocean I see at the same time a pearl fisherman whose head suddenly breaks water near his catamaran.” Although Claudel, as we know, never ceased adoring the principle at work in all this mess, he once called it Silence, Abyss; and he never took back this ambiguous word: “Time is the means offered to all that will be to be no longer. It is the *Invitation to die*, to every phrase to decompose itself in the explicative and total accordance, to consummate the speech/word [*la parole*] of adoration in/to the ear of *Sigè* [Silence] the Abyss [*à l’oreille de Sigè l’Abîme*].”⁸⁴⁴

843 Claudel’s poetry has, of course, been interpreted in many different ways. If one where to speak of these possible interpretations in the Bachelardian context of the elemental poetics, then, for example, one could say that Jean-Louis Chrétien in his book *Hand to Hand* interprets Claudel as an aquatic poet. Chrétien names one of the chapter titles of this book with Claudel’s words “like a liquid bond”. For Claudel this “liquid bond” is one of our fundamental relations with God. In this chapter “Like a Liquid Bond” Chrétien quotes the following words from a poem by Claudel: “Thus water continues the spirit, and supports it, and feeds it / And between / All your creatures up to you there is something like a liquid bond.” After quoting these Claudel’s words Chrétien writes: “This liquid bond, which is circulation, flux, [is] the incessant and always renewed excess of desire that we have for God, and that God has for us...This bond is also the bond of blood.” Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), p. 142. To this Chrétien’s emphasis of Claudel’s poetry as aquatic poetry I would say that even if Claudel has definitely strong tendencies toward liquid phenomena in my interpretation he has even more stronger tendencies toward aerial phenomena and aerial poetry. A good example of this priority of breathing air over liquidity in Claudel’s poetry is actually this poem that Chrétien himself quotes and that I also just quoted which states: “water continues the spirit, and supports it”. One can wonder how would these words somehow express the priority of breathing air over water and blood as the most fundamental relation to God. In order to understand this I will demonstrate in this chapter of my dissertation that for Claudel “spirit is respiration” which means that these words of Claudel could be interpreted to mean that “water continues the spirit as respiration, and supports it”. This means that, according to Claudel, spirit as respiration comes before water as a relation with God and this is one of reason why I will say that Claudel’s poetry is, in the first place, aerial and respiratory poetry.

844 Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 395. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 317. The translation has been altered. Perhaps the only Merleau-Ponty scholar (at least to my knowledge) who has been interrogating this quotation from Merleau-Ponty of Claudel’s “Silence the abyss” is Patrick Burke. See Burke, “Listening at the

In this quotation, rich in meaning, in which Merleau-Ponty quotes Claudel himself twice, I can find important themes to help rebirth philosophy in a relationship with poetry. First of all, in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, for Claudel the "world is a poem." This is, of course, a similar view to Rilke's idea that "breathing", as the cosmic respiration, is an "invisible poem" in which the respiratory world and the great breather are "constantly in pure interchange" with one another. If there is any important connection between these two poetic ideas, we will come to see it after we have shown how Claudel is an aerial and respiratory poet. In this quotation, Merleau-Ponty also brings up the phenomenon of adoration, as well as speaking and listening (ear) which we earlier named as important dimensionalities of the role of the poet since we said that the "poet listens" in order to speak the "voice of the world", and that in Merleau-Ponty's view there is a "circularity" between speaking and listening in which "one no longer knows who speaks and who listens." Also, according to Merleau-Ponty, "Claudel...never ceased adoring the principle at work in all this mess". What Merleau-Ponty means by "this mess" of Claudel is the world as a poem. I could then say that, in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, Claudel's poetic path (the method of the poet or the role of the poet) is perpetual adoration of the principle of Silence, Abyss at work in the world as a poem. However, what is interesting in connection to Silence the Abyss is that, according to Merleau-Ponty, Claudel actually only "once called [this principle with the name of] Silence, Abyss". Well, if this is the case, then an important question is: what did he call it at other times, or most of the time, as Merleau-Ponty says that Claudel "never ceased adoring [that] principle"? Most commonly Claudel called the principle of Silence the Abyss "God", which is not surprising at all as he is a deeply Catholic poet. His profound Catholic faith is the most fundamental inspiration of his poetry. He is not only a Catholic poet, but actually and more accurately a Catholic mystical poet (a "poet-as-mystic"⁸⁴⁵ as Adrianna M. Paliyenko calls him). What do we mean by a mystical poet, that is, a poet-as-mystic? J. Spencer Trimingham defines a mystic in any religious tradition as a human being who seeks "direct experience of communion with God".⁸⁴⁶ In Christian mysticism, this means that the mystic desires to attain a direct experience of communion with "the mystery of God"⁸⁴⁷, with a "hidden God"⁸⁴⁸ or with a "mystical

Abyss", pp. 82-83 and Patrick Burke, "Prefatory Meditations", in *The Barbarian Principle: Merleau-Ponty, Schelling, and the Question of Nature*, ed. Jason M. Wirth and Patrick Burke (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 31.

- 845 Adrianna M. Paliyenko, *Mis-reading the Creative Impulse: The Poetic Subject in Rimbaud and Claudel, Restaged* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), p. 98. Of this idea that Claudel is a "poet-as-mystic" Paliyenko also, for example, says that "Claudel marries the poet and the mystic and thus discovers his own creative identity." See *ibid.*, p. 7. See also Barbara Newman, "Gender," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Julia A. Lamm (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), p. 52.
- 846 J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 2.
- 847 Don E. Saliers, "Aesthetics," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, p. 79
- 848 Michael F. Cusato, "Mysticism in the Spiritual Franciscan Tradition," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, p. 325.

God".⁸⁴⁹ In Paliyenko's words, "C Claudel's poetic sight...derives from the soul in communion with God".⁸⁵⁰ So I can call Claudel a Catholic mystical poet because the source of his poetic inspiration is the mystical communion with God. All these words, "mystical," "mystic," "mystery" and "mysticism", that I have used are etymologically connected as they are all derived from the Latin word *mysticus*, from the Greek word *mystikos* which means "secret, mystic, connected with the mysteries". This Greek word derives from *mystes*, which means "one who has been initiated". Finally, if I look into the root of this word *mystes*, I will find the Greek word *myein*, which means "to close" or "to shut." This word *myein* is used in the sense of "closing one's eyes," "to not see what is secret," and "closing one's mouth," to silence, "to not reveal anything." The Greek adjective *mystikos* refers then to a secret matter, something that the eyes cannot bear to see or cannot, in principle, see, and of which the mouth must not speak of or cannot, in principle, speak of as it is unspeakable.⁸⁵¹ From this Greek *myein* also comes the English word "mute" and the French word "muet" via the Latin *mutus* "silent, speechless, dumb." *Myein* as mute is connected to the meaning "closing one's mouth." Following this etymological chain of words one can understand important aspects of mysticism. Thus I can say that that which is mystical (hidden, secret) cannot be seen with one's eyes and cannot be spoken of at least in any normal or everyday manner and must be encountered in silence. For this reason, it must be perhaps encountered with closed eyes and a closed or silent mouth in a state of speechlessness. If that which is mystical needs to be encountered in a manner which is so radically different from our normal ways of approaching and studying visible things, with our eyes open and our mouths speaking of them, then to learn this kind of other way one needs initiation from someone who already knows about these secret or hidden matters of life. All the mystical traditions have their own secret initiation rituals and teachings, as well as methods to approach the mystical or the hidden in a direct experiential manner. Also *myein*, as "closing one's mouth", refers to the prohibition that the member of a certain mystical group or tradition must not speak of the secret teachings and methods of their mystical tradition to people who are not initiate, as these teachings can be completely misunderstood so very easily as they are very difficult to grasp, and because normally people are used to visible and sensible beings that can be spoken of with everyday language.

In Catholic mystical theology, which is also called negative theology, God as the mystical, or hidden, God is often understood as either "Silence" or as "Abyss".⁸⁵² For example, one of the most famous Catholic mystics, Meister Eck-

849 Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 343.

850 Paliyenko, *Mis-reading the Creative Impulse*, p. 125.

851 Cecilia Muratori, *The First German Philosopher: The Mysticism of Jakob Böhmne as Interpreted by Hegel*, trans. Richard Dixon and Raphaëlle Burns (Dordrecht: Springer, 2016), p. 162.

852 Alain Martin Boase, *The Fortunes of Montaigne: A History of the Essays in France, 1580–1669* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1935), p. 79. It is interesting that the working note of *The Visible and the Invisible* in which Merleau-Ponty speaks of Claudel's principle of Silence the Abyss to where ontology by saying that ontology returns to Silence the Abyss he says that his ontology has similarity with "negative theology". In another

hart, often calls God in his negative theology “silence”, “stillness” and “the nameless One which eludes all names”. In His silence and namelessness, God, according to Eckhart, is “hidden” and “abyss” (*Abgrund*).⁸⁵³ Another example from Catholic mysticism would be the thirteenth-century mystic and poet Hadewijch of Antwerp, who wished “to remain in [God’s] deepest abyss”.⁸⁵⁴ I can generally say that the Catholic mystical tradition, with its understanding of God as “Silence” and “Abyss”, has deeply influenced Claudel and has inspired him to call God with this notion of “*Sigè* [Silence] the Abyss”. In addition to this Catholic mystical tradition, I also suggest that Victor Hugo, who had a huge influence on Claudel’s poetry, might have been a highly important inspiration with regards to Claudel’s wording “Silence the Abyss” as, in one of his poems, Hugo connects “God” and “Silence, abyss” by writing: “O holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God! Silence, abyss!”⁸⁵⁵

In the Catholic mystical tradition, the path, or the method, to commune with God and conceive God in a mystical “experience”, that is, in a living “mystical encounter with God” or a “mystical union with God”⁸⁵⁶, is often called the “mystical adoration”⁸⁵⁷ of God. For Claudel, this means that true poetry as a form of worship of God is constant adoration of the mystery of God (Silence the Abyss), who is always at work in the world in a hidden manner. Before it is possible to say what this poetry as adoration of the hidden God is, one has to first understand Claudel’s concept of God, as well as his concept of adoration. My clarification of these concepts will also pave the way for us to understand how I am justified in calling Claudel an aerial and respiratory poet who creates respiratory poetry. First let me briefly interrogate his concept of God. Claudel declares famously in his play *L’otage*: “God is not above but beneath us. [*Dieu n’est pas au-dessus, mais au-dessous de nous.*]”⁸⁵⁸ Elsewhere he formulates his idea of God as follows: “God is not only above us as a demand/requirement. He is at the bottom of us as a source, as a living source [*Dieu n’est pas seulement au-dessus de nous comme une exigence. Il est au fond de nous une source, une source vi-*

working note Merleau-Ponty sees a similarity between Being and “the hidden god”. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 179 and 211.

- 853 Meister Eckhart quoted by Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought*, pp. 106, 108 and 128–9. In this same book Caputo even calls the Godhead in Eckhart “the abyss of the nameless One.” *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- 854 Hadewijch of Antwerp quoted by Julia A. Lamm, “A Guide to Christian Mysticism,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, p. 9.
- 855 Victor Hugo, *Selected Poems of Victor Hugo: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. E.H. and A.M. Blackmore (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2001), pp. 514–515. Paliyenko writes about Claudel’s “significant debt to Hugo” (p. 97) in her book *Mis-reading the Creative Impulse*. Claudel writes of Hugo’s significance on religion for him, for example, as follows: “The Religion without religion of Victor Hugo, it is something like wine without alcohol, coffee without caffeine”. See Paul Claudel quoted by John Andrew Frey, *A Victor Hugo Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 66.
- 856 Julia A. Lamm, “A Guide to Christian Mysticism”, in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 8 and 13–14.
- 857 Boase, *The Fortunes of Montaigne*, p. 79, and George Newlands and Allen Smith, *Hospitable God: The Transformative Dream* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 181.
- 858 Paul Claudel, *L’otage: drame en trois actes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 122.

vante]".⁸⁵⁹ Here Claudel follows the Augustinian tradition which says, following St. Augustine, that God is "within me more myself than I," *intimior intimo meo*.⁸⁶⁰ In this Augustinian concept of God, "God is more ourselves than we."⁸⁶¹ In both of Claudel's formulations of God, he emphasizes that "God is beneath us" or "at the bottom of us" as a source, as a hidden source. In the other quotation, Claudel emphasizes that this hidden source is a "living source," that is, a source which is the constantly active source of our life and, following the Augustinian tradition, it could be said that God as a living source is more ourselves than we. On the other hand, in the first quotation Claudel says that "God is not above...us", and in the second one he says perhaps the opposite, that "God is not only above us as a demand". How could we understand this? It can be said that in the first sentence, in my opinion, Claudel does not really deny that "God is above us," but wants to very much emphasize that the concept of God he is interested in is one in which God is, first of all, understood as something "beneath us", in opposition to the traditional view which sees God, in the first place, above us in Heaven as a purely transcendent external force. In the second sentence, this comes across more clearly as he says that "God is not *only* above us as a demand". This means that God, as Silence the Abyss, is in the first place a living source, that is, a hidden principle of the world as well as of ourselves, at the bottom of us, with whom we can have a continuously intimate relationship. According to Claudel, the proper manner in which to approach God is adoration, or what is called the mystical adoration, as he writes: "We adore a God". But what makes this declaration much more interesting from the perspective of my dissertation is that he actually not only writes that "we adore a God", but more precisely "we adore a God who breathes. [*Nous adorons un Dieu qui respire.*]"⁸⁶² Elsewhere he proclaims: "We adore a living, desiring and respiring God. [*Nous adorons un Dieu vivant, désirant et respirant.*]"⁸⁶³ Before we investigate this "God who breathes," that is, "a respiring God", let us ask what is understood by the mystical method of adoration. It is important to under-

859 Paul Claudel, *Oeuvres complètes de Paul Claudel*, Vol. 22 (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 314.

860 St. Augustine quoted by Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 174. According to French Jesuit and theologian François Varillon, who was also a commentator and editor of Claudel's work, "Claudel says when translating St. Augustine (*intimior intimo meo*), 'God is in me more myself than I am.'" François Varillon, *Joy of Faith, Joy of Life: Lectures on the Essential Points of the Christian Faith*, ed. Bernard Housset, trans. Maurice Verrier (Sherbrooke, QC: Éditions Paulines, 1993), p. 357. Claudel also expresses this Augustinian wording as follows: "Christ is in me more myself than I". Paul Claudel quoted by André Lacocque, "Repentance," in *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, Expanded edn., ed. Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York & Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), p. 164. This Claudel's variation of Augustine could be said to be mixture of this Augustine's phrase and Paul's famous words from *Galatians* stating: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20)

861 Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 174.

862 Paul Claudel, *Commentaires et exégèses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 72. See also Saint Aubert, "La 'co-naissance.' Merleau-Ponty et Claudel," p. 271n118 and Paul Claudel, *The Essence of the Bible*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 54.

863 Paul Claudel quoted by Saint Aubert, "La 'co-naissance.' Merleau-Ponty et Claudel," p. 271n118.

stand that the mystical adoration is deeply intertwined with the phenomenon of listening, as one of the most prominent Catholic theologians of the 20th century, Hans Urs von Balthasar, points out by using such expressions like an “adoring act of listening”⁸⁶⁴ and “listening in adoration”⁸⁶⁵ while describing this mystical way of approaching God. But if God is the principle of Silence the Abyss, how does one listen to silence, as normally listening is listening of sounds, voices and speech? According to Claudel, there are at least two different ways of listening. One way is our normal way of listening with ears to the world of sounds, but the other way of listening, which is a deeper way, is connected with the hidden mystery of silence. As Claudel understands this difference, and has developed his ability for this deeper listening, Bachelard calls him “a great listener”⁸⁶⁶. First of all, a “great listener” understands that “before speaking, one must [always] listen.”⁸⁶⁷ And secondly, a great listener does not listen only to the world of noise and voice, but always also to “the world of silence”⁸⁶⁸, which is *beneath* this world of noise. How does Claudel, as a great listener, understand this difference between listening to voice and silence? First of all, it is very telling that Claudel himself calls Blaise Pascal “a bad listener” because he is not able to listen “Silence” as it “terrifies him.”⁸⁶⁹ This is a proof that, according to Claudel, a person who is not able to listen to Silence can never be a great listener. This also means that the most important level of listening, for Claudel, is listening of silence. Claudel speaks of the two ways of listening as follows: the poet as a great listener listens “not only with the ears [*les oreilles*], but by the gills [*les ouïes*] of our respiratory soul [*âme respirante*] in the manner of fish”⁸⁷⁰. What can this mean? How could the poet listen by “the gills of our respiratory soul”? And does our respiratory soul have “gills”? Gills are, of course, the respiratory organs of the fish. In order to try to interpret Claudel’s sentence, one must first know that the French word “*les ouïes*” not only means “gills” but also, at the same time, “ears.” This means that, in this sentence, Claudel is using this word purposefully in its double meaning in order to express another way of listening. But what would it mean that the poet listens “by the gills/ears of our

864 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work: In Retrospect*, trans. Kelly Hamilton, et. al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), p. 39.

865 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 116.

866 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 180.

867 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 180.

868 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 182.

869 Paul Claudel, *The Essence of the Bible*, p. 6. Here Claudel refers to Pascal’s famous words from *Pensées*: “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me.” Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 73. These Pascal’s words are often referred to or quoted by French phenomenologists for different purposes. See, for example, Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 75. Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 58 and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks For an Ethics*, trans. Davd Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 494.

870 Paul Claudel, *Connaissance de l’Est/L’Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 142. See also Paliyenko, *Mis-reading the Creative Impulse*, pp. 104 and 107n35 and in addition to this the English translation of *Connaissance de l’Est* titled *Knowing the East*, trans. James Lawler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 103.

respiratory soul in the manner of fish"? Are our respiratory organs, for example, our lungs, able to listen? Would the ability of listening in this fishy way be deeply connected to what Bachelard meant by calling Claudel a "great listener"? Does it mean that the proper manner of "listening in adoration", or the "adoring act of listening", as adoration of a living and respiring God as Silence the Abyss, is listening by the "gills/ears of our respiratory soul in the manner of fish"? Could it be that only the gills/ears of our respiratory soul can listen, that is, adore "a God who breathes"? Whatever the possible answer to these questions, one could at least say that Claudel is referring to some sort of hidden, mystical, or secret ear within us, of which we are not normally aware of in our ordinary experience of the world. One could perhaps understand this mystical or hidden ear of our respiratory soul with the help of the following words from Trimmingham: "Mysticism is a particular method of approach to Reality [, that is, to God]...[by] making use of intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties which are generally dormant and latent unless called into play through training under guidance."⁸⁷¹ The "gills/ears of our respiratory soul" could very well be interpreted in a mystical manner as one of the "spiritual faculties which are generally dormant and latent" in our everydayness. It becomes even clearer that the "gills/ears of our respiratory soul" could be understood as a way of approaching the mystical God if we read Claudel's whole sentence, of which the "gills/ears of our respiratory soul" is a part, in relation to the etymology of the word "mysticism" as *myein*, "to shut, to close". One of the meanings of *myein* was "to shut/close one's eyes". Claudel's whole sentence says: "But if the night shuts/closes [*occlut*] our eyes, it is in order that we listen more, not only with ears, but by the gills/ears of our respiratory soul in the manner of fish."⁸⁷²

In order to more deeply understand these questions that I have raised concerning the possible meaning of "the gills of our respiratory soul", one must ask where it could be that Claudel finds his most profound guidance concerning mysticism and the possibility of mystical adoration as respiratory adoration of "respiring God" as a method of intimately communing with "God who breathes"? His religious guidance grows, in the first place, out of the Bible, as it is, of course, the primary source of the Christian faith in all its dimensions, including the Christian mysticism traditions. The primary guidance for the Christian mystics comes, for example, from *1. Corinthians*, in which St. Paul speaks about the wisdom of God. There is "God's wisdom, a mystery [Gr. *μυστηριω*; Lt. *mysterio*] that has been hidden... 'what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard'....these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit [*πνευμα*] investigates [*ερευνα*] all things and the depths of God [Gr. *τα βαθη του θεου*]." (*1. Cor. 2:7-10*)⁸⁷³ "God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden", from the eyes and the ears for example, is exactly what the mystic seeks with the "spiritual faculties, which are generally dormant and latent" in our lives. Earlier,

871 Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, p. 1.

872 Paul Claudel, *Connaissance de l'Est/L'Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 142.

873 See Paul Claudel, *I Believe in God: A Meditation on the Apostles' Creed*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 71.

I pointed out that the words “mysticism,” “mystic” and “mystery” all derive from the Greek word *myein* “to close, to shut”, for example, in the sense of “closing one’s eyes” as a way to experience something *mystikos*, that is, something so secret, hidden and mysterious that the eyes cannot see it. In the ultimate sense this can be said to be the invisibility of God as, for example, St. John says: “no one has ever seen God”. (John 1:18 and 1. John 4:12) To be able to awaken in oneself the ability to experience something *mystikos* especially the invisible mystery of God one needs to become *mystes*, that is, the one who has been initiated into knowledge as secret knowledge and practice as mystical practice of these “spiritual faculties which are generally dormant and latent” within us. These words of St. Paul express these various mystical ideas. According to *The Gospel of John*, Jesus guides his disciples concerning the adoration of God in connection to the Spirit (perhaps as a “spiritual faculty” to seek the hidden and invisible wisdom of God) as follows:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers/adorers will adore the Father in the Spirit and in truth [Lt. *veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et veritate*; Fr. *les vrais adorateurs adoreront le Père en esprit et en vérité*], for they are the kind of worshipers/adorers [Lt. *adorent*; Fr. *les adorateurs*] the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and those who adore Him must adore in the Spirit and in truth. [Lt. *Spiritus est Deus et eos qui adorant eum in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare*; Fr. *Dieu est Esprit et il faut que ceux qui l'adorent l'adorent en esprit et en vérité.*]” (John 4:23-24)

In this quotation, Jesus gives his disciples and future worshipers, that is, future adorers, a method, or a path, of adoration of God. It can be said that here Jesus is initiating his disciples into the art of true adoration which then, from the perspective of Christian mysticism, would be understood as an initiation into secret, hidden and mystical knowledge of how to awaken one’s dormant spiritual capacities in order to investigate and adore, in the words of St. Paul, “the depths of God”.

One might wonder what Jesus’, as well as St. Paul’s, guiding words have to do with adoring and investigating respiring God by the gills/ears of our respiratory soul? In order to understand the possible connection between Jesus’ (as well as St. Paul’s) words and Claudel’s idea of respiratory adoration of respiring God, we must dig deeper into this teaching of Jesus from *The Gospel of John*. This becomes possible as I will interpret Jesus’ words with the help of Claudel. First of all, I must ask what could it be that Jesus’ phrase “God is Spirit” really expresses? What is this “Spirit” that Jesus is speaking of? Claudel’s answer is the following: “God is spirit: and the spirit is respiration. [*Dieu est esprit: et l’esprit, c’est la respiration.*]”⁸⁷⁴ This quotation is not at all the only time when he

874 Paul Claudel, *Commentaires et exégèses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 72. Claudel is not alone with his idea that “the spirit is respiration” as, for example, Catholic reverend professor Denis Edwards has written a book titled *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* in which he understands “the Spirit as the *Breath of God*” and as “the *Breath of Life*”. Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 2–3. Edwards also writes: “In the Scriptures, the Spirit first appears as the breath of life, God’s breath.” Denis Edwards, *Human Experience of God* (New York & Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 52.

connects spirit and respiration, as his poetry and other writings are full of phrases which air: "Spirit breathes [*L'Esprit souffle*]..."⁸⁷⁵ This statement that "the spirit is respiration" means that Claudel interprets Spirit [*l'Esprit*] in its etymological meaning. In the original Greek text of *The Gospel of John* the word "Spirit" is *pneuma*, and the original text states: "*pneuma o theos*", which says literally "pneuma the god," that is, either "God [is] *pneuma*" or "*pneuma* [is] the god." The Greek word *pneuma* means originally "breath, movement of air, wind, and finally air"⁸⁷⁶, and it comes from the verb *pnein*, "to blow, to breathe." To understand the respiratory meaning of the word *pneuma* it is insightful to see that it is, for example, the root word of *pneumon*, a Greek word meaning "lungs", and as such it gives us the word "pneumonia" as "inflammation of the lungs." In addition to this, *pneuma* is also, for example, the root of the word *pneumatikos*, "of wind, of air", from which comes the English word "pneumatic", meaning "of the wind, belonging to the air."⁸⁷⁷ The word "pneumatic" is used, for example, in connection to tyres. A "pneumatic tyre" is a tyre inflated with air. These examples show that the respiratory and aerial meanings of *pneuma* are essential dimensions of the semantic field of this word, and that these root meanings have not been lost, even in our contemporary English discourse. This can make one wonder why it is that all the biblical traditions translate *pneuma* as either Spirit or as Ghost, and never with any of the possible respiratory or aerial notions.⁸⁷⁸ But even if this is the case, these respiratory and aerial dimensions of *pneuma* do not disappear, as we can notice within the Latin-based tradition like, for example, the English and the French language. In the Vulgate, the Greek *pneuma* is translated with the Latin word *spiritus* and the words of Jesus "*pneuma o theos*" are translated in this Latin Bible to say: "*spiritus est Deus*" ["*spiritus* is God," "God is *spiritus*"].⁸⁷⁹ The French "*esprit*" and the English "*spirit*" originate from the Latin "*spiritus*." This Latin word originally means

875 Paul Claudel, *Œuvres complètes de Paul Claudel, Volume 22* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 168. See also, for example, Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 161 in which he writes: "It is not in the body that the Son is united to the Father, but in the Spirit, in that breathing which is common to them." In addition see *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 134, 165, 167, 168, 252, 262, 287 and 311. Claudel is not the only one in the Catholic tradition who connects the Spirit and breathing together. Similar phrases to Claudel can be found, for example, from the Catholic mystic St. John of the Cross who writes of "the breathing of the Holy Spirit in God". St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991), p. 543-44 and 714.

876 F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 160-161. Clint Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma: Communication with the Spirit World in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), p. 307

877 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 238

878 See Berndtson, "The Temple of the Holy Breath", pp. 40-43.

879 It is, of course, important to make it clear that nobody knows for sure what Jesus said as he did not speak to his disciples in Greek or in Latin, but in Aramaic. This means that the Greek wording "*pneuma o theos*" is an interpretative translation of what Jesus might have said. This is, of course, true about all the sayings of Jesus to be found in the Gospels.

both “breath” and “wind”⁸⁸⁰, just like the Greek *pneuma*, and it originates from the verb *spirare* meaning “to breathe,” “to blow” just as the Greek verb *pnein* does. This meaning of spirit as breath is still easily seen, for example, in the Latin-based French and English words “respiration” as “breathing again,” “inspiration” as “breathing in,” and “expiration” as “breathing out”. These three words, of course, as we have seen so many times, play a crucial ontological role in my dissertation, as I am interrogating “inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. It is also important to remember that, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, these words “should be taken literally.”

If one were to take Claudel’s remark that “the spirit is respiration” seriously, as well as the etymological considerations of this word “spirit”, upon which Claudel’s remark is most probably based, it would be possible to retranslate the words of Jesus from *The Gospel of John* which stated “God is Spirit” to say “God is Respiration”.⁸⁸¹ In addition to this, other possible translations of “*pneuma o theos*” (“*pneuma* the god”) would also be “God is Wind”, or “wind the god”, and “God is Air”, or “air the god”.⁸⁸² But for now let us stay within the Claudelian atmosphere of “God is Respiration.” Through this new Claudelian-inspired translation of *The Gospel of John*, Claudel’s words “we adore a God who breathes” and “we adore a respiring God” begin to appear more understandable and more contextualized. Retranslation through this respiratory insight on the nature of spirit does not end here, however, as we must also go through the part in which Jesus speaks about adoration of God. This would mean that the whole of *John* 4:23-24, which previously said “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers/adorers will adore the Father in the Spirit and in truth [*les vrais adorateurs adoreront le Père en esprit et en vérité*], for they are the kind of worshipers/adorers [*les adorateurs*] the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and those who adore Him must adore in the Spirit and in truth [*Dieu est Esprit et il faut que ceux qui l’adorent l’adorent en esprit et en vérité*],” would now be translated to say “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true adorers will adore the Father in Respiration and in truth [*les vrais adorateurs adoreront le Père en respiration et en vérité*], for they are the kind of adorers the Father seeks. God is Respiration, and those who adore Him must adore in Respiration and in truth. [*Dieu est Respiration et il faut que ceux qui l’adorent l’adorent en respiration et en vérité.*]” Through this new translation, according to Jesus, “the true adorers will adore the Father in Respiration” and “those who adore [God] must adore in Respiration”. With this same Claudelian respiratory

880 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 238. See also Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 20.

881 Also Neil Douglas-Klotz interprets this same verse of the *Gospel of John* in a similar manner within the Aramaic language context as “God is breath.” Neil Douglas-Klotz, “The Holy Breath: Breath in the Cosmology and Spiritual Practice of the Aramaic Jesus”, in *The Revelation of the Breath: A Tribute to Its Wisdom, Power, and Beauty*, ed. Sharon G. Mijares (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 168.

882 In reference to this idea that God could be understood as air it is interesting to note that, for example, according to Cicero, “Anaximenes determined that air is a god”. This Cicero quotation is from Patricia Curd (ed.), *A Presocratics Reader*, p. 20.

logic I could retranslate St. Paul's words from *1. Corinthians* (1. Cor. 2:7-10) (that I already quoted earlier) in the following manner by changing the word "Spirit" to "Respiration": there is "God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden... 'what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard'....these are the things God has revealed to us by his Respiration. Respiration investigates all things and the depths of God." Previously I stated that listening is essentially connected with adoration, and if true adoration of God is adoration in respiration, then Claudel's words that the poet listens "not only with ears [*les oreilles*], but by the gills/ears [*les ouïes*] of our respiratory soul [*âme respirante*] in the manner of fish" begin to make more sense if they are especially taken as the words of a "true adorer" and a poet-as-mystic who seeks "what no ear [in the normal sense of the word] has heard".

If, according to Jesus, "God is respiration, and those who adore Him must adore in respiration," then what does this actually mean? Should this phrase perhaps be understood in a similar manner as *1. John* 4:16 states regarding God as love? St. John writes: "God is love. Whoever dwells within love dwells in God, and God in them. [Lt. *Deus caritas est et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo*; Fr. *Dieu est amour: celui qui demeure dans l'amour demeure en Dieu, et Dieu demeure en lui.*]" (*1. John* 4:16). It is interesting that in the Catholic tradition, the Holy Spirit and love are identified. For example, the Spanish mystic St. John of Cross writes on this matter in his book *The Living Flame of Love*.⁸⁸³ Claudel writes about this identification as follows: "The Holy Spirit is love".⁸⁸⁴ Here again, if I take Claudel's words "the spirit is respiration" seriously, Claudel's words could be interpreted to say something like *the Holy Spirit as Holy respiration is love*. Claudel, in my opinion, proves this kind of interpretation correct as he also, in a very explicit manner, writes: "the Holy Spirit, or...Love...is...the Breath".⁸⁸⁵ So if God is love and God is respiration, and the Holy Spirit as the Holy Respiration is love and Love is the Breath, then what can one make of this. I would suggest that, in the Claudelian spirit, in the words of St. John above, "love" could be changed or mutated into "respiration" or "breath". It would, then, be interesting to see what St. John's words would look like after this kind of interpretative move. If I would do that, *1. John* 4:16 would read: *God is respiration. Whoever dwells within respiration dwells in God, and God in them*. If this kind of interpretation would be taken seriously, would Jesus' adoring in respiration mean that, as God is respiration, then whoever dwells within respiration dwells in God, and God in them, as is now stated in the mutated words of St. John. Would this mean that respiration is a kind of pathway, or bridge, between the adorer and God? Could it be that this is what Claudel is speaking of when he states: "I breathe God and He also breathes me [*Je respire Dieu, et Lui aussi me*

883 St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, pp. 543-44 and 641.

884 Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 160.

885 Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 7. What is interesting is that in his philosophy Schelling, for example, connects breath and love in a deep manner when he speaks of "the breath of love". In his book *Breath of Proximity* Lenart Škof investigates with this inspiration of Schelling this connection between breath and love and ponders "[i]s then 'breath' the first name of love?" Lenart Škof, *Proximity of Breath: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace*, p. 41.

respire]”⁸⁸⁶? If this would be the case, it would also mean that, to use Claudel’s own words again, “I breathe and I am breathed,”⁸⁸⁷ that is, “I am breathed” by a respiring God.⁸⁸⁸ What kind of respiratory communication between the poet as the adorer and God this could be? If I am to listen to a philosopher who is inspired by Claudel, that is, Jean-Louis Chrétien⁸⁸⁹, we could call this kind of respiratory relationship “conspiration,” that is, “conspiracy.” Chrétien writes: “the movement of the breath; we receive it from God, we ‘inspire’ it from him, in order to give it back to him, to ‘expire’ it into him. This circulation of the breath taken and given, received and returned, this ‘conspiration’ of the human and the divine”.⁸⁹⁰ In this citation, Chrétien uses the word “conspiration”, that is, “conspiracy” in its etymological meaning. This word comes from the Latin *conspiratio* (*con* – with, together + *spiratio* – breathing,) meaning “breathing together” and “breathing with”, so the verb “conspire” originally means “to breathe together” and “to breathe with” someone or something.⁸⁹¹ This would mean that

886 Paul Claudel, *Je crois en Dieu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 342. See the English translation, Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 255. The translation has been altered.

887 Claudel, *Commentaires et exégèses*, p. 101.

888 This idea that the poet is breathed by the respiring God is very similar idea than Merleau-Ponty’s “some immense exterior lung” Bachelard’s “cosmic breathing”. In sleep some immense exterior lung takes over the breath of the sleeper and thus the sleeper is breathed by the immense lung. Also in cosmic breathing “it breathes me.”

889 See, for example, of this Claudel’s influence on Chrétien, Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, pp.130–146.

890 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 30. See also Paul Claudel on conspiracy as the conspiracy of the Holy Spirit in Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 160. Also in following quotation Claudel speaks of conspiracy even if he does not mention this notion if one understands the spirit as respiration and the soul as the respiratory soul: “Not only do the souls communicate with each other through God, but they carry on a direct communication among themselves. Just as body perceives body, and matter apprehends matter, so spirit discerns spirit. There is a spiritual equivalent of space in which ‘distances’ are measured no longer by physical remoteness but by harmonic intervals. It is no longer through symbols but simply through their existence that the souls will communicate with one another.” Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 314. It is also important to mention here in relation to this Christian context of conspiracy that originally the Christian notion of “conspiratio” has its beginning already in the first century Christianity as Ivan Illich writes: “In the Christian liturgy of the first century, the *osculum* [kiss] assumed a new function. It became one of two high points in the celebration of the Eucharist. *Conspiratio*, the mouth-to-mouth kiss, became the solemn liturgical gesture by which participants in the cult-action shared their breath or spirit with one another. It came to signify their union in one Holy Spirit, the community that takes shape in God’s breath. The *ecclesia* came to be through a public ritual action, the liturgy, and the soul of this liturgy was the *conspiratio*. Explicitly, corporeally, the central Christian celebration was understood as a co-breathing, a con-spiracy, the bringing about of a common atmosphere, a divine milieu.... [In the early Christian celebration of the Eucharist] [c]onspiratio became the strongest, clearest and most unambiguously somatic expression for the entirely nonhierarchical creation of a fraternal spirit in preparation for the unifying meal.” Ivan Illich, “The Cultivation of Conspiracy”, in *The Challenges of Ivan Illich: A Collective Reflection*, eds. Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 240.

891 Cleo McNelly Kearns, “Irigaray’s *Between East and West*: Breath, Pranayama, and the Phenomenology of Prayer”, p. 115 and B. Keith Putt, “‘Too Deep for Words’ The Conspiracy of a Divine ‘Soliloquy’”, in *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, eds. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 148. Jason M. Wirth writes the following on respiratory meaning of the word “conspiracy”

there is a perpetual conspiracy, “conspiracy”, between the poet as the adorer of God and God Himself, with both breathing each other in a constant circular movement in which the inspiration of one is the expiration of the other and vice versa.

This conspiring dwelling would then be the dwelling in which the poet adores in respiration and therefore dwells in God, and God in him or in her. This means that a true adorer/worshiper, or the aerial poet, has his or her emphasis on respiration and not on God Himself as a separate entity as, for him, either dwelling in respiration means dwelling in God as “God is respiration”, or it is this bridge between them which communicates God immediately for him or her. The true adoration of God is dwelling in respiration, as those who dwell in respiration dwell in God who breathes. The emphasis is given to respiration since it is understood as the most important dimension of the adorer’s, or aerial poet’s, life. This means, in Claudel’s words, that “[t]he whole character of man is within respiration. [*Tout le caractère de l’homme est dans la respiration.*]”⁸⁹² I understand the word “character” here as “defining quality.” This means that, in my interpretation, Claudel says that “the whole defining quality of man is within respiration.” Claudel’s idea is fundamentally based on the divine creation of man, which is respiratory creation as *The Book of Genesis* states: “God who formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being/soul.” (Gen. 2:7)⁸⁹³ In a reverse manner this means, as *The Book of Job* says, that: “if...[God] withdrew his spirit and breath, all humanity would perish together and mankind would return to the dust.” (Job 34:14.15) This respiratory relationship, or “the bond of

especially in Schelling’s philosophy: “In the 1809 *Freedom* essay, perhaps Schelling’s most daring work and one of the treasures of the nineteenth-century German philosophical tradition, he spoke of a ‘unity and conspiracy,’ a *Konspiration* (I/7, 391). When something or someone falls out of the conspiracy, they become inflamed with sickness and fever, as ‘inflamed by an inner heat.’ Schelling used the Latin-German *Konspiration*, which stems from *conspire*, to breathe or blow together. *Spiro*, to breathe, is related to *spiritus* (the German *Geist* is the progression of difference, the A, the breathing out of the dark abyss of nature into form and the simultaneous inhaling of this ground, the retraction of things away from themselves. *The conspiracy is a simultaneous expiration and inspiration, and each thing of nature is both inspired yet expiring. This is what I call the conspiracy of life* [(my emphasis)], that is, the life beyond and within life and death.” Jason M. Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 2. Škof also refers to Schelling’s idea of conspiracy in Škof, *Breath of Proximity*, pp. 42–3. See also my two articles on the theme of respiratory conspiracy. Petri Berndtson, “The Temple of the Holy Breath as the Place of Conspiracy Between the Respiratory Body and the Space of Open Air”, in *Art and Common Space*, ed. Anne-Karin Furunes et al. (Trondheim, NO: NTNU, 2013), pp. 39–47 and Petri Berndtson, “The Primordial Respiratory Peace and the Possibility of Cultivation of Breathing as a Method of Peacemaking”, in *The Poesis of Peace: Narratives, Cultures and Philosophies*, ed. Klaus-Gerd Giesen et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2017). pp. 59–60 and 64.

892 Paul Claudel quoted by Saint Aubert, “La ‘Co-naissance.’ Merleau-Ponty et Claudel,” p. 271n118. See also Saint Aubert, *Du lien des êtres aux éléments de l’être*, p. 253n6.

893 In connection to this see, for example, James R. Mensch, “Prayer as Kenosis”, in *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 67–68.

breath"⁸⁹⁴ between God and man began as God breathed the breath of life into man. This conspiracy is a perpetually ongoing process between them as, at any moment, God could withdraw his spirit and breath and all humanity would perish. This means that, from this biblical perspective, respiration is the perpetually defining quality of man as "the creative breath"⁸⁹⁵. In this ongoing conspiracy (co-breathing)⁸⁹⁶ between man and God, according to Claudel, nothing has changed since the respiratory creation of man began with Adam because "at every breath, the world remains as new as it was at the first gulp of air out of which the first man made his first expiration".⁸⁹⁷ As God is respiration, this means that respiration is "at the bottom of us as a source, as a living source," that is, as a principle. He is as respiration, in the Augustinian manner, "within me more myself than I". As respiration is the divine source or defining quality of our being as human beings, it could then be argued that respiration, according to Jesus, is sacred, or should be sanctified, that is, set apart from other phenomena as the highest value in human life because without it there is no human life and no other phenomena and values. For this reason, it could perhaps be that Jesus often calls respiration by the name "*Hagion pneuma*", which is translated in the Vulgate as "*Spiritus Sanctus*". In French, this biblical notion is traditionally translated as "*le Saint Esprit*", and in English either as "the Holy Spirit" or "the Holy Ghost". If I keep taking Claudel's phrase seriously that "the spirit is respiration", I could very well translate this notion either as "the Holy Respiration" or "the Sacred Respiration." Other translation options would, of course, also be either "the Holy Breath" or "the Sacred Breath".⁸⁹⁸ As the Sacred Respiration is, according to Jesus, the highest value of human existence, he states: "Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Sacred Respiration [*to pneuma to hagion*, the Holy Spirit] will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark 3:28-29)⁸⁹⁹ That which is of the highest value deserves our adoration, and that value is God as respiration, that is, as the Sacred Respiration. But to adore God as the Sacred Respiration in a proper manner the true adorer, or worshipper, must adore in respiration to avoid being "guilty of an eternal sin." Let us leave it up in the air for now what the meaning of Jesus' concept of "an eternal

894 Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres: Volume I: Bubbles. Microspherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), p. 42.

895 Mensch, "Prayer as Kenosis", p. 67.

896 Škof, *Breath of Proximity*, pp. 42-43, 195 and 197.

897 Claudel, *Poetic Art*, p. 27. See also Jessica Wiskus, *The Rhythm of Thought: Art, Literature and Music After Merleau-Ponty* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2013), p. 112.

898 Of translation of Holy Spirit as "holy breath" Granville C. Henry writes as follows: "The original Greek word for both air and spirit is *pneuma*. We have pneumatic tires, for example. Also, the word for spirit in the New Testament is *pneuma*. A literal translation of Holy Spirit is thus 'holy air,' but not quite. A better translation would be 'holy breath,' that is, the breath of God." Granville C. Henry, *Christianity and the Images of Science* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1998), p. 37. Lenart Škof also refers to the relationship between *pneuma* and "the Holy Breath." Škof, *Breath of Proximity*, p. 137.

899 Jesus expresses this same idea also in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 12:31) and the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 12:10) as well as in the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas (Th. 44).

sin" might be. To adore in respiration is possible only with respiration we have received from "respiring God", and as we adore in respiration, in Claudel's words, "It is the consecration of our breath that we dedicate to [God]".⁹⁰⁰ This could perhaps mean that in adoration, in respiration through the act of adoring, of worshipping, our breath becomes consecrated, that is, it becomes in a way uplifted from the ordinary breath of our mundane everydayness to the Holy Breath which we dedicate to God as we adore God with this consecrated breath that we originally received from Him as the defining quality, or character, of our human existence. In general, it can be said that the breath, as it is understood as the Holy Breath, will be separated from all things mundane as it connects us not with the Created, but with the Creator who Himself breathes. This means that in adoration in respiration, we also understand that the consecrated breath as the Holy Breath is Holy, or Sacred, ultimately because we have received this Breath in the first place from God as respiration, and as we have received it from God, who is the highest value of our life, the most worthy thing to do for the true adorer is to offer back to God the most precious gift of our life, even if it is not ultimately ours to begin with, the consecration of our breath as thanksgiving and a dedication. Here again I can say that this adoration in respiration, as dedication of our consecrated breath to the Sacred Respiration, is constant *conspiration* between the adorer and God.

The adoration of God, or Silence the Abyss, as adoration in respiration, is also in a deep manner intertwined with the phenomenon of listening, as I earlier quoted Claudel via Merleau-Ponty speaking of "the invitation...to consummate the speech/word of adoration in/to the ear of *Sigè* the Abyss". Let us once more interrogate why these words of Claudel perhaps breathe out content which makes Bachelard call him "a great listener". It is important to remember that "a great listener" is one who first always listens before speaking, and secondly listens not to the world of voices and noises but to the world of silence, that is, *Sigè* the Abyss. I could interpret Claudel's words in a way which would state that the role of the poet, according to him, is to consummate poetry as the speech of adoration in Silence the Abyss that listens. This would mean that I interpret "the speech of adoration" as poetry, and "the ear of *Sigè* the Abyss" as Silence the Abyss that listens. As *Sigè* the Abyss equals God, for Claudel, could this also mean that, as he speaks of "the ear of *Sigè* the Abyss", he could in a similar manner speak of "the ear of God"? This is actually true as he writes in one of his poems: "an ear of God within us for listening our core/heart, an ear of God within us for listening the core/heart of God! [*une oreille de Dieu en nous pour écouter notre coeur, une oreille de Dieu en nous pour écouter coeur de Dieu!*]"⁹⁰¹ According to this quotation, "an ear of God within us" is not for listening to sounds in the outside world, but for listening to "our core" and "the core of God". In my interpretation, "our core" is the "character of man", that is, the defining quality of our human existence. Claudel defines this as respiration. It can

900 Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, trans. E. Pell (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1969), p. 227. See also Angelo Caranfa, *Claudel: Beauty and Grace* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), p. 143.

901 Paul Claudel, *Je crois en Dieu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 201.

be said to be the essence of human existence. Our core can be understood as the soul of human being, which is respiratory in nature, that is, essentially respiration as man became a living soul through God's breath. "Our core" is within respiration or, as Claudel wrote: "The whole character of man is within respiration." "The core of God" is to be found within us as God is our living source, that is, the principle who is "within me more myself than I", and as God is Respiration, then this "core of God" within us can be said to be Respiration. As the defining quality, the soul or the essence of man is breathing and is within respiration, that is, within God who breathes and who is within us more ourselves than we, so it can be said that the "our core" and "the core of God" are intertwined in a way that "one no longer knows" where the separation is and if there is any separation on the core level. If "the core of God" is respiratory in nature, then would that not mean that, at least in some essential manner, the "ear of God", or the "ear of Silence the Abyss", would also be respiratory in nature? Could it then perhaps also be possible to call this ear of God by the name of *the ear of Respiration* as God is Respiration? And would that also mean that the ear of Respiration would be the ear of Respiration within us, as the respiring God is within us? If the answer to these questions would be positive, what would the relationship between the ear of Respiration and what Claudel calls the "gills/ears of our respiratory soul" then be? As these "gills/ears of our respiratory soul" are definitely not the two ears located on our heads, and the ear of Respiration within us is neither an ear located in a similar fashion in any particular place on the outer surface of the body, how could we then understand these ears? I suggest that we listen to Heidegger in order to try to comprehend this question of the ear.

In the book *Introduction to Metaphysics* and an article entitled "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)", Heidegger ponders the question of listening as hearkening and the meaning of the ear through Heraclitus' fragments and especially through his fragment B 50 which famously says: "If you have heard not me, but *logos*, then it is wise to say accordingly: all is one".⁹⁰² In this fragment, according to Heidegger, "Heraclitus wants to say: human beings do hear, and they hear words, but in this hearing they cannot 'hearken' to – that is, *follow* – what is not audible like words, what is not talk but *logos*."⁹⁰³ In Heidegger's interpretation, the *logos* of Heraclitus is Being, that is, mute Being. What does this true hearkening as following the *logos* mean? In Heidegger's words we can notice that he makes a difference between "hearing" and "hearkening" as "following". Hearing seems to be connected with that which is "audible like words" and hearkening is connected with "*logos*" as mute Being. The highly important matter from my perspective is that Heidegger denies the intimate connection between hearkening and the ear as an "acoustical sense apparatus" which hears "audible like words" but not inaudible *logos* as mute Being. In "Logos", Heidegger empha-

902 Heraclitus quoted by Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 135-136.

903 Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 136. My emphasis.

sizes this as he writes, "What is heard comes to presence in hearkening. We hear when we are 'all ears.' But 'ear' does not here mean the acoustical sense apparatus."⁹⁰⁴ Additionally, in *Introduction to Metaphysics* he says the following about hearkening:

genuine hearkening has nothing to do with the ear and the glib tongue, but instead means obediently following what *logos* is: the gatheredness of beings themselves. We can truly hear only when we are already hearkening. But hearkening has nothing to do with earlobes. Whoever is not hearkening is already always distant from *logos*, excluded from it, regardless of whether he has already heard with ears or has not yet heard.⁹⁰⁵

With the help of Heidegger, one can understand deep listening as hearkening and this hearkening as "obedient following" which hearkens, follows obediently: not the audible, but the inaudible. One can then connect this idea of hearkening to Heidegger's phrase: "We hear when we are 'all ears.' But 'ear' does not here mean the acoustical sense apparatus." And in another phrase, Heidegger stated this idea even more boldly: "hearkening has nothing to do with earlobes." Let us now use Heidegger's ideas of to comprehend the Claudelian question of the ear and adoration. With Heidegger's help I wanted to interrogate the following questions: what could the relationship between the ear of God as the ear of Respiration and the gills/ears of our respiratory soul be? As the gills/ears of our respiratory soul are definitely not the two ears located on our heads, and the ear of Respiration within us is neither located in a similar fashion in any particular place in the outer surface of the body, how could I understand these ears? When Claudel speaks of "the ear of Silence the Abyss," "an ear of God within us" and "the gills/ears of our respiratory soul", he is not speaking of "ear(s)" as "acoustical sense apparatus" but of something similar, as Heidegger speaks of something that is "following obediently" "the inaudible". This becomes clearer as Claudel writes in one of his poems about listening, as follows: "I listen to God who listens to me within the peace and the silence [*J'écoute Dieu qui m'écoute dans la paix et le silence*]"⁹⁰⁶ This circular listening has the same structure as Claudel's previous quote about the circularity of breathing as *conspiration*: "I breathe God and He also breathes me". These Claudel's two circular sentences concerning listening and breathing would intertwine in the ear of Respiration, that is, in Respiration that listens. What would this mean? I suggest that it would mean that breathing could be understood as listening, and listening could be understood as breathing, if listening is taken in a Heideggerian way as hearkening that obediently follows the inaudible, the silence. If the relation between breathing and listening would be understood in this manner, then I could find that there is a perpetual conspiracy, circularity, or reversibility between the gills/ears of our respiratory soul and the ear of Respiration as they obediently follow (hearken) each other in a constant cycle of inspiration and

904 Martin Heidegger, "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)," in Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 65. My emphasis.

905 Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 137.

906 Paul Claudel, *Œuvre poétique de Paul Claudel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 856.

expiration. Here it is important to remember Balthasar's expressions about adoration as the "adoring act of listening" and "listening in adoration". As adoration is deeply connected to listening, and as adoration of respiring God was understood as adoration in respiration, then how could I now understand adoration in respiration? Would this mean that one essential dimension of the adoration of respiring God would be the "adoring act of listening" in respiration? Would it now mean that to adore in respiration would mean that the true adorer obediently follows respiration, or perhaps that he obediently follows with respiration and as respiration? As he would adore in this respiratory manner, would he perhaps at the same time breathe God, listen to God and dwell within God?

If adoring listening in respiration would be one of the essential dimensions of adoration of Silence the Abyss, another essential dimension would be speaking, as the task, or the role, of the poet, according to Claudel, is "to consummate the speech/word of adoration in/to the ear of *Sigè* the Abyss." But what does this mean? If the speech of adoration is brought to completion or perfection, that is, consummated in the ear of God, in the ear of Respiration, then how is this possible when this mystical "ear" is all about silence. Paradoxically, within Silence the Abyss there is a certain kind of circularity between the ear of God and what Claudel calls "His mouth"⁹⁰⁷, that is, the "mouth of God"⁹⁰⁸, and this "mouth of God" can be heard only within Silence the Abyss as it does not speak in audible but in a hidden and mute manner, in silence. Regarding this paradox, Claudel writes in one of his poems: "the poet listens within deep silence the Spirit [as Respiration] of God who breathes the voice of Wisdom which is addressed to all men. [*le poète écoute dans un profond silence l'Esprit de Dieu qui souffle à cetter voix de la Sagesse qui est adressée à tout homme.*]"⁹⁰⁹ This respiratory "voice of Wisdom" which is a mute voice, can be followed, or heard, only by the "ears/gills of our respiratory soul". This idea is not at all Claudel's own invention as it is deeply grounded in the Bible. First of all, listening to the word of God is, of course, one of the essential themes of the Bible.⁹¹⁰ Secondly, this word of God, as the voice of wisdom, is given to the people by the breath of God. In *The Book of Job*, this is stated as follows: "it is...the breath of Almighty that gives [all people] understanding". (Job 32:8) In his book *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism*, John R. Levison interprets this to mean that "knowledge does not result from age but from possession of God's life-giving spirit or breath....[It is] the breath—the spirit in all people—[which]

907 Paul Claudel quoted by Saint Aubert, 'La "co-naissance." Merleau-Ponty et Claudel' p. 271n118. See also Aidan Nichols, *The Poet as Believer: A Theological Study of Paul Claudel* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), pp. 41 and 85.

908 In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus uses this notion of the "mouth of God" as he says: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" See also, for example, St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 439.

909 Claudel, *Œvre poétique de Paul Claudel*, p. 234.

910 "Go near and listen to all the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey." (Deuteronomy 5:28) "Here I am...Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." (1. Samuel 3:8-9)

teaches wisdom....[T]he spirit or breath gives wisdom".⁹¹¹ Jesus himself follows the biblical tradition of the Book of Job, in which the "words [of wisdom] are the product of God's breath"⁹¹², as he says in *The Gospel of Mark*: "do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given to you..., for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit." (Mark 13:11). In *The Gospel of Luke*, Jesus says: "the Holy Spirit will teach you...what you should say" (Luke 12:12), and in *The Gospel of Matthew* he similarly states: "it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks within you [*l'Esprit de votre Père qui parlera en vous*]." (Matthew 10:20) Now, again as before, I follow Claudel's advice and render the Spirit as respiration which means that *it is*, according to Jesus, *the Sacred Respiration which teaches us what we should say and it is the Respiration of the Father who speaks within us*. This means that, in general terms, we may say that adoration of God as respiration is a cycle of speaking and listening within respiration. From all of this, we could make the following initial interpretation of the role of the poet as the true adorer of God: *the role of the poet as the poet-as-mystic is to consummate the speech of adoration (poetry) in the ear of Silence the Abyss as the ear of Respiration where the mouth of God as the Sacred Respiration speaks in the silent and hidden voice of God's Wisdom within him which he obediently follows with the gills/ears of his respiratory soul, and thus he learns to speak as a true adorer, as a true poet, according to the conspiring Respiration of God*. This initial interpretation of the role of the Claudelian poet means that I could definitely call Claudel an aerial poet.

In the previous chapter I defined the role of the aerial poet in two similar kinds of ways. Firstly, *the role of the aerial poet consists in writing under the dictation of the aerial and respiratory world (the cosmic respiration) which thinks, dreams, imagines, wonders and breathes itself within him*. And secondly, *the aerial poet listens and repeats. The voice of the aerial poet is a voice of the aerial and respiratory world, that is, of the cosmic respiration*. Now let me consider my understanding of the aerial poet of the previous chapter in connection to this chapter, in which I have interrogated the aerial and respiratory poetry of Claudel. How could I interpret what I have said about Claudel within the context of what I said in general about the aerial poets in the previous chapter? Let us first consider my interpretation of Claudel's idea of the role of the respiratory and aerial poet in connection to these two definitions of the role of the aerial poet that we just rephrased in the beginning of this paragraph. Let me repeat this initial interpretation of the Claudelian role of the poet in order that I can more easily interrogate it in relation to these two other definitions of the aerial poet from the previous chapter: *the role of the poet as the poet-as-mystic is to consummate the speech of adoration (poetry) in the ear of Silence the Abyss as the ear of Respiration where the mouth of God as the Sacred Respiration speaks in the silent and hidden voice of God's Wisdom within him which he obediently follows with the gills/ears of his respiratory soul, and thus he learns to speak as a true adorer, as a true poet, according to the conspiring Respiration of God*. The expression in this Claudelian definition that the *Sacred Respiration*

911 John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), pp. 63-64.

912 Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism*, p. 64.

speaks within the poet is very similar to the expression that the respiratory world, or the cosmic respiration, thinks and dreams itself within the poet. Actually, even if I have not mentioned it earlier, Bachelard says in *Air and Dreams* that “so many poets have said, for anyone who listens,...[e]verything in the universe speaks”.⁹¹³ If it is true that “[e]verything in the universe speaks”, this would also include breathing and the respiratory and aerial world, so I could say that the respiratory and aerial world speaks. I would suggest, then, that one could easily add speaking of the aerial and respiratory world to the list of verbs (to dream, to imagine, to think, etc.) that act themselves *within the poet*. This means that the cosmic or divine speech of respiration, which the poet listens to, that is, obediently follows in order to be able to write under the dictation of this respiratory speech, would become part of the role of the aerial poet.

How could it be that the breath can speak in a hidden and mute manner, as Claudel and Jesus claim, especially when my whole dissertation has been founded upon the principle of Silence of Breath? Do we have here a contradiction between the Christian tradition of the Sacred Respiration and the phenomenological ontology of breathing based on the phenomenologies of Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger? If breath is silence, how can it speak in a paradoxical way as Claudel and Jesus claim through the “mouth of God”? This is actually a question that I have concealed in Section One of my dissertation as I never quoted the whole of Bachelard’s respiratory phrase which inspired me in an essential manner to interpret Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis of inspiration and expiration of Being as an expression of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. I quoted Bachelard’s respiratory phrase as follows: “it is really and truly breath that...is the premier phenomenon of silence of being.” This respiratory phrase initially gave me the chance to interpret the “Silence” of Merleau-Ponty’s and Claudel’s principle of Silence, Abyss as Silence of Breath, as in this phrase breath is “the *premier phenomenon of silence of being*.” But if one looks carefully at Bachelard’s respiratory phrase that I have repeated so many times during my dissertation, one can notice the three dots between the words “that” and “is”. With these three dots one can see that I have omitted something from this quotation. Now is finally time to cite an unabridged version of this Bachelard’s respiratory phrase, without any omitted words. The whole respiratory phrase states the following: “Then *it is really and truly breath that speaks*, and the breath that is the premier phenomenon of the silence of being.”⁹¹⁴ Here one can now see that, according to Bachelard, like Claudel, the breath, or respiration, is at the same time both *silence and speech*. As this is the case, Bachelard can also state in *Air and Dreams*: “Thus poetry is really and truly the premier phenomenon of silence.”⁹¹⁵ This means that poetry “places us at the origin of the speaking being.”⁹¹⁶ This can only be the case if “the poet speaks on

913 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 99.

914 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 313. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 242. The translation has been altered. My emphasis.

915 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 323.

916 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxiii.

the threshold of being"⁹¹⁷, which makes him "always the origin of language."⁹¹⁸ This "threshold of being" that Bachelard refers to is the threshold of silence and speech, and as "the poet speaks on [this] threshold" he is "always the origin of language." And as "the breath...is the premier phenomenon of the silence of being", that is, "silence that breathes" as well as "breath that speaks", "the poet knows well", according to Bachelard, "that 'his breath will carry him farther than his desire.'"⁹¹⁹ The breath is that "threshold of being" upon which the poet speaks and listens at the same time as he adores in respiration God as respiration who is, to borrow Rilke's words, the "invisible poem" to be expressed with the "word of adoration." As there is the circularity, or reversibility, between respiratory speaking and respiratory listening, in a way that Merleau-Ponty would say that "one no longer knows who speaks and who listens", it is not only that God as respiration is Rilke's "invisible poem", but that God as respiration is, in Claudel's words, "a poet skilled in all the resources of discourse"⁹²⁰. Thus He speaks in breathing in a poetic manner within the poet who listens. What does this all have to do with what I have said in these two previous chapters about the aerial poets and Claudel in particular, and with the phenomenological ontology of breathing and how it could perhaps benefit my dissertation? A phenomenologico-ontological project of breathing will soon be interrogated so I will leave these ponderings hanging in the air for a while.

917 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xvi.

918 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xx.

919 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. XXXn1.

920 Claudel, *The Essence of the Bible*, p. 14.

CHAPTER 11

A Phenomenologico-Ontological Interpretation of the Claudelian Respiring God: The Intertwining of Claudel's Aerial Poetry and Phenomenological Ontology of Breathing

In order to think about what one could learn from Claudel in my dissertation concerning a phenomenological philosophy of breathing, one must think further what could be the possible ways to comprehend God and perhaps to give it a more philosophico-ontological meaning. In this effort, let us turn to Merleau-Ponty who originally introduced me to Claudel in Chapter One. How could one think of God in a philosophical manner? I will listen to Merleau-Ponty's answer to this question. Merleau-Ponty says: "In truth, the question for a philosopher is not so much to know *if* God exists or does not exist, if the proposition *God exists* is correct or incorrect, as to know what one understands by God, what one wishes to say in speaking of God."⁹²¹ I will take these words very seriously in my task of interpreting the Claudelian God who breathes. Firstly, I will interrogate how Merleau-Ponty himself follows his own words concerning the meaning of God to the philosopher in the case of Claudel. For Merleau-Ponty, the following phrase of Claudel, which I have also cited earlier, is important: "God is not above but beneath us." In his text "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence", Merleau-Ponty writes about Claudel's phrase as follows: "There is a sort of impotence of God without us, and Christ attests that God would not be fully God without becoming fully man. Claudel goes so far as to say that God is not above but beneath us – meaning that we do not find Him as a suprasensible idea, but as another ourselves who dwells in and authenticates our darkness."⁹²² Another reference to these words of Claudel can be found in one of the working notes from *The Visible and the Invisible*, in which Merleau-Ponty almost copies

921 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 66.

922 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 71.

this phrase from Claudel's play *L'otage*, changing just one word, "God", to "universal" by writing: "The universal is not above, it is beneath (Claudel)".⁹²³ Through these two quotations, we can perhaps see how Merleau-Ponty, as a philosopher, interprets Claudel's concept of God. Merleau-Ponty wants to interrogate "what [Claudel] understands by God, what [he] wishes to say in speaking of God." From Merleau-Ponty's point of view, the God that Claudel is speaking of is something universal, or general, that is, something which we are all (for example, both theists and atheists) involved in without exception. In connection to this, it is important to mention that the notion Catholic comes from the Latin word *catholicus*, which means "universal, general" and, as a Catholic, Claudel's God is always a "catholic," that is, "universal"⁹²⁴ God. Now, if God stands for "the universal", then instead of "God" one could speak of "universal", which is exactly what Merleau-Ponty does when he mutates Claudel's phrase "God is not above but beneath us" into a form "[t]he universal is not above, it is beneath (Claudel)". Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, it is not of any particular interest to "know if [Claudel's] God exists or does not exist, if [his] proposition *God exists* is correct or incorrect". The main thing that Merleau-Ponty is interested to know is "what [Claudel] wishes to say in speaking of God" and, according to Merleau-Ponty, by speaking of "God", Claudel is speaking of that which is "the universal", of that which is "addressed to all men", that is, to all human beings. If the "universal" or "general" (that is, "catholic" in the etymological sense of the word) in Claudel's terminology refers to "God", then in my quest to understand how Merleau-Ponty interprets this Claudelian God it is important to find out how Merleau-Ponty himself understands the meaning of the "universal". In Merleau-Ponty's terminology of phenomenological ontology, the "universal" instead of "God" refers to "Being", as Being is the "universal Being" or "a *universal dimensionality*".⁹²⁵ If the principle of "Silence the Abyss" refers to God in Claudel's poetic thinking then, in a similar fashion, for Merleau-Ponty, this "Silence the Abyss" refers to Being⁹²⁶ as Being, according to Merleau-Ponty, is "silence"⁹²⁷ and "abyss"⁹²⁸, as I have already said earlier in my dissertation. If Merleau-Ponty interprets Claudel's God as the universal, then what do Claudel's words "God is not above but beneath us" mean? It has already been said that, for Merleau-Ponty, it is the universal that is "beneath us". This "beneath us" refers to "another ourself who dwells" within us. This would mean that the universal Being is another ourself who dwells within us.

923 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 218.

924 Claudel writes about the word "Catholic" as follows: "I understand the word Catholic in the universal sense" that is, as "all-embracing". Claudel, *I Believe in God*, pp. 182 and 184.

925 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 170 and 265.

926 Leonard Lawlor, "The End of Ontology: Interrogation in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze", *Chiasmi International* 1 (1999): p. 237.

927 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 125, 170 and 201. See also, for example, Gary Brent Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 259.

928 Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, pp. 52-53. It is also important to notice that also Merleau-Ponty calls the being of God "abyss" in *Eye and Spirit* as he writes: "God's being is for us an abyss." Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 366.

Now, what does all of this have to do with my dissertation on the phenomenological ontology of *breathing*? By now we know very well that Claudel speaks of “respiring God”, of “God who breathes”, and of “Spirit of God who breathes”, that is, of *Respiration of God who breathes* as, according to him, “the spirit is respiration”. If Claudel’s respiratory notions would be mutated in a Merleau-Pontian fashion, as the Claudelian “God” means the “universal” or “Being”, then one could transform them into the following notions of *the respiring universal*, *the universal that breathes* and *respiration of universal that breathes*, or into the notions of *respiring Being*, *Being that breathes* and *respiration of Being*. Claudel himself also sometimes explicitly intertwines the “universal” and breathing. A good example of this is his following wording: “the love of our Maker and the love of all these indispensable brothers around us with whom we are One breath and with whom—universal, Catholic—we will commune every time we fill our lungs.”⁹²⁹ So in this quotation Claudel says that “we are One breath”, that is, we are one universal breath, a Catholic breath “with whom we will commune every time we fill our lungs.” If one reads a few of the phrases from Claudel on “respiring God” that I have quoted in the previous chapter in a Merleau-Pontian context, one can find out that Claudel’s sacred respiratory poetics can open up as an ontological source of universal breath. For example, when Claudel writes that “I breathe God and God also breathes me”, it can be interpreted within the Merleau-Pontian interpretative atmosphere that *I breathe the universal and the universal also breathes me*, that is, “every time we fill our lungs” “we commune” with the universal breath. At the same time, it is not only us who “fill our lungs” as we breathe the universal, it is the universal breath that also breathes us which means, to use Claudel’s words, “I [or we] breathe and I am [or we are] breathed”.⁹³⁰ With these Merleau-Pontian-inspired rephrasings of Claudel’s “respiring God”, one could perhaps find the meaning of Merleau-Ponty’s “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being”. Claudel’s wording “Spirit of God”, if it is understood in a respiratory manner as “Respiration of God”, comes very close to Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis as, when I mutate “God” to “Being”, I will have the wording: *respiration of Being*. What is interesting is that both Rudi Visker⁹³¹ and Emmanuel de Saint Aubert⁹³² have used this wording “respiration of Being” in their brief dealings with Merleau-Ponty’s ontologico-respiratory thesis “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being”. This means that what I have previously said about the aerial poet Claudel and his notion of adoration of “respiring God” could be transformed into the vocabulary of phenomenological ontology of breathing and, through this process

929 Claudel, *I Believe in God*, p. 310.

930 This is very similar thought as Merleau-Ponty’s “some immense exterior lung” and Bachelard’s “cosmic breathing” also breathe us. Earlier I have spoken about these. Merleau-Ponty said of this immense lung that it “calls my breath forth and forces it back.” Bachelard said of this “cosmic breathing” as the “breathing of the world” that “literally ‘It breathes me.’”

931 Rudi Visker, *Truth and Singularity: Taking Foucault into Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), p. 229.

932 Saint Aubert, *Du lien de êtres aux éléments de l’être*, p. 246.

of mutation, one might perhaps be able to actualize what Merleau-Ponty meant when he wrote that “in a much closer relationship with [poetry, philosophy] will be reborn.” With regards to my dissertation, this would mean that, in a closer relationship with Claudel’s respiratory and aerial poetry, philosophy will perhaps be reborn as ontologico-respiratory philosophy as I follow this French aerial poet who himself adores in respiration respiring God. As a supplement to Merleau-Ponty’s words, it is also important to remember my Bachelardian inspiration in which, following Bachelard’s advice, I take my “philosophical teaching from the poets”. With this advice, Claudel as the aerial poet would teach me a philosophy as I am trying to become a respiratory philosopher who is willing to learn to think, not in painting as Cézanne suggested, but *to think in breathing*.

I will now try to articulate this new respiratory philosophy, which is still to be made. It is a philosophy as true thinking which animates the aerial poet – in that instant when his breath becomes gesture, when he thinks in breathing. (Just as a reminder: this formulation was my mutation of Merleau-Ponty’s words concerning the painters, which I changed to speak about the aerial poets.) What animates the aerial poet? Before I try to answer this question, it is important to notice that the verb “to animate” is yet again one of the words of breath, as it comes from Latin *animare*, which originally means “to give breath”. This question that I just posed is actually, if it is asked in its root meaning, the following question: what animates, that is, what gives breath to and inspires the aerial poet? I could say that the aerial poet is animated, inspired by the aerial and respiratory world (as respiration of Being or as cosmic respiration) that thinks, dreams, imagines, speaks, wonders and breathes within him. What does it mean that breath becomes gesture? What does it mean that this cosmic respiration, which thinks and breathes itself within the poet, becomes gesture, that is, transforms into a gesture? In the painter’s case the original quotation from Merleau-Ponty’s *Eye and Spirit* said: “when his vision becomes gesture”. This meant that the visible world becomes painting, that is, is transformed into painting. This “becoming” in the case of the aerial poet can be understood as a perpetual standing on the threshold of breath and speech, the threshold of silence that breathes and language that breathes. This gesture could be interpreted as “speech”, following *Phenomenology of Perception* in which Merleau-Ponty writes of “transforming silence into speech”, that is into speech as “a gesture”. Regarding this process of transformation, Merleau-Ponty writes: “We become unaware of what is contingent in expression and in communication, either for the child who learns to speak, or for the writer who says and thinks of something for the first time, in short, for those who transform a certain silence into speech.”⁹³³ This creative accomplishment of transforming “a certain silence into speech” as “the decisive step of expression”⁹³⁴ Merleau-Ponty calls the “originary speech”.⁹³⁵ In this next quotation, Merleau-Ponty adds more people to his list of

933 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 189.

934 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 189.

935 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 409 and 530n7.

originary speakers as he writes “of the child who utters his first word, of the lover who discovers his emotion, of the ‘first man who spoke’, or of the writer and the philosopher who reawaken a primordial experience beneath [all philosophical, scientific and prescientific] traditions.”⁹³⁶ All of these people, in one way or the other, are moving in the dimension of poetry as they are saying and thinking of something for the first time through the decisive step of transforming “certain silence into speech” because poetry, according to Merleau-Ponty, “consists in saying what has never been said”.⁹³⁷ In this sense, according to Merleau-Ponty, “all language is poetry, on the condition that this language seeks to express something new.”⁹³⁸ This something “new” has its abyssal ground in silence, that is, in the world of silence (the principle of Silence the Abyss) as, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, “language lives only from silence”.⁹³⁹ If “language lives only from silence”, then we could say, borrowing Heidegger’s words, that “the most profound essence of language...has its origin in silence.”⁹⁴⁰ Regarding this relation of silence and language, it was earlier said with the mouth of Bachelard that the poet is “always the origin of language” as he stands constantly on the threshold of silence and speech, saying something for the first time, that is, saying something what has never been said. As this silence that imagines itself within the poet is the source and principle of “originary speech”, that is, of new expressions and “original dynamic images”⁹⁴¹ it is, according to Bachelard, “the principle of eternal youth”.⁹⁴² This means that silence is also the source, or principle, of new philosophy as “every philosophy is language”⁹⁴³, and as “language lives only from silence” (Merleau-Ponty) this then means that every new philosophy lives only from silence as “the principle of eternal youth” (Bachelard).

This means that there is always, according to Merleau-Ponty, the “same problem” for philosophy if it is true philosophizing as perpetual recommencement that begins continuously from the beginning: “how philosophy is language and nonetheless consists in rediscovering silence.”⁹⁴⁴ For this reason, both Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard suggest return to the world of silence, to the principle of “Silence the Abyss”. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes of this return as follows:

936 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 530n7.

937 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 216.

938 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 216.

939 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 126.

940 Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume One and Two*, p. 208.

941 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 47.

942 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 47.

943 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 213.

944 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 213. In relation to these words Merleau-Ponty scholars Henri Maldiney and Patrick Burke have the following to say. Maldiney says: “To a person who wants to be a philosopher, Merleau-Ponty makes the same recommendation as Cézanne makes to someone who wants to be a painter: ‘all his will must be made of silence’ ...of a silence right in a speech that makes this silence be heard.” Maldiney, “Flesh and Verb in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty”, p. 74. Burke writes of this matter as follows: “Philosophy must speak, but this speaking serves only to intensify the wonder and the silence”, that is, to intensify the wonder of silence. Burke, “Listening at the Abyss”, p. 97.

Our view of man will remain superficial so long as we do not return to this origin [of language and of philosophy], so long as we do not rediscover the primordial silence beneath the noise of words, and so long as we do not describe the gesture that breaks this silence. Speech is a gesture, and its significance is a world.⁹⁴⁵

Around fifteen years later in *The Visible and the Invisible* he writes about this same issue as follows:

The philosopher speaks, but this is a weakness in him, and an inexplicable weakness: he should keep silent, coincide in silence, and rejoin in Being a philosophy that is there already made. But yet everything comes to pass although he wished to put into words a certain silence he hearkens to within himself. His entire 'work' is this absurd effort. He wrote in order to state/say his contact with Being; he did not say/state it, and he could not state it, since it is silence. Then he recommences....⁹⁴⁶

Why does Merleau-Ponty say that speaking is a "weakness in" a philosopher? I would say that it is a weakness because the speech of the philosopher often veils Being as Silence the Abyss and makes us deaf to it and a philosophy or ontology that is there already as true thinking. On this philosophy of Being as philosophy of Silence the Abyss, Merleau-Ponty writes: "Philosophy, precisely as 'Being speaking within us [*Être parlant en nous*],' expression of the mute experience by itself, is creation."⁹⁴⁷ On this speech of Being within us, Merleau-Ponty also writes that there is "Being which speaks within us [*l'Être qui parle en nous*] rather than us speak of Being."⁹⁴⁸ His wording that "Being...speaks within us rather than us speak of Being" is very similar to what he expressed about "this [new] philosophy. which is still to be made" when he wrote in *Eye and Spirit* that this philosophy is "no longer...a matter of speaking about [Being], but of making [Being] that [is] there speak". So, according Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher "should keep silent, coincide in silence, and rejoin" a "philosophy that is there already made" as "Being speaking within us". Merleau-Ponty calls the "entire 'work'" or task of the philosopher an "absurd effort". This "absurd effort" is this task of putting into words the silence of "Being speaking within us". When Merleau-Ponty calls this philosophical effort or task "absurd", I suggest that we need to understand it not only in the normal sense of the word "absurd" as this effort is absurd in a sense that silence can never really and truly be put into words as silence, but also in the word's etymological sense. Etymologically, the word "absurd" can mean either "to move away from silence" or "to grow from silence". The word "absurd" could be said to derive etymologically from the Latin word *absurdus* (*ab-* "away from", or "from" and *surdus* "mute"), which would mean either "away from muteness, away from silence" or "from muteness, from silence". So, in the etymological sense, the "absurd effort" of the philosopher is either movement *away from the silence* of Being which "he hearkens

945 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 189-190.

946 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125.

947 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 197. My emphasis. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 247.

948 Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours: Collège de France, 1952-1960*, p. 155. See the English translation, Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 179. The translation has been altered.

to within himself" as the silent speech of Being by trying to put this certain silence that speaks within himself "into words", or to grow *from silence or muteness* to language as philosophy as "language lives only from silence" and as "birth of [philosophical] speech...[bubbles] up [from] the bottom of [the philosopher's] mute experience".⁹⁴⁹ It can be noticed that this "absurd effort" of the philosopher in *The Visible and the Invisible* is very similar to that what Merleau-Ponty says in *Eye and Spirit* when he quotes Ernst concerning "the role of the poet" or how Bachelard sees the role of the poet. I would suggest that we could perhaps go even so far as to say that Merleau-Ponty's words from *The Visible and the Invisible* concerning putting a certain silence into words are, in a deep manner, inspired by Bachelard's respiratory phrase in its larger context from *Air and Dreams*, which has already played such a crucial role in my dissertation. Let us see what I mean by this.

I have already quoted Merleau-Ponty concerning the hearkening as the method of the philosopher as follows:

The philosopher speaks, but this is a weakness in him, and an inexplicable weakness: he should keep silent, coincide in silence, and rejoin in Being a philosophy that is there already made. But yet everything comes to pass as though he wished to put into words a certain silence he hearkens to within himself. His entire 'work' is this absurd effort. He wrote in order to say his contact with Being; he did not say it, and could not say it, since it is silence. Then he recommences....⁹⁵⁰

Let us compare Merleau-Ponty's words with Bachelard's piece of text from *Air and Dreams* that begins with his respiratory phrase. Bachelard writes as follows:

It is then really and truly breath that speaks, and the breath that is then the premier phenomenon of silence of being. Listening to this silent breath, barely speaking, we can understand how different this is from the taciturn silence characterized by pinched lips. As soon as the aerial imagination awakens itself, the reign of *closed silence* is ended. Then commences the silence that breathes. Then commences the infinite/endless/boundless reign of "open silence...."⁹⁵¹

Let us quote both of these texts in the original French to see the similar grammatical structure of these citations and how Bachelard's text could perhaps be said to be a source of inspiration to Merleau-Ponty's text in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Bachelard writes:

C'est alors vraiment le souffle qui *parle*, c'est le souffle qui est alors le premier phénomène du *silence de l'être*. À écouter ce souffle silencieux, à peine parlant, on comprend combien il est différent du silence taciturne aux lèvres pincées. Dès que l'imagination aérienne s'éveille, le règne du *silence fermé* [Bachelard's emphasis] est fini. *Alors commence* le silence qui respire. *Alors commence* le règne infini du « silence ouvert... ».⁹⁵²

Merleau-Ponty writes:

949 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 126.

950 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 125. The translation is altered.

951 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 242.

952 Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, p. 313. My emphasis.

Le philosophe *parle*, mais c'est une faiblesse en lui, et une faiblesse inexplicable : il devrait se taire, coïncider en silence, et rejoindre dans l'Être une philosophie qui y est déjà faite. Tout se passe au contraire comme s'il voulait mettre en mots un certain *silence* en lui qu'il *écoute*. Son « œuvre » entière est cet effort absurde. Il écrivait pour dire son contact avec l'Être ; il ne l'a pas dit, et ne saurait le dire, puisque c'est du *silence*. Alors, il *recommence*...⁹⁵³

So what are, in my understanding, the deep similarities between these two pieces of text from Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty? First of all, both of these quotations commence with something that “speaks” (*parle*). For Bachelard, it is the breath that speaks and for Merleau-Ponty, it is the philosopher who speaks. In addition to this, both of these pieces of text end in points of ellipsis. I want to emphasize this so that there is no misunderstanding: both of these points of ellipsis are there in the original texts written by Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty. They have not been added by myself, as I did in Section One of my dissertation when I quoted Bachelard’s respiratory phrase, leaving out the word “speaks”. In both cases, the sentences that end in points of ellipses begin with the word “*Alors*” (“Then”), and in both instances, in addition to this, the verb of the sentence is either ‘*commence*’ (Bachelard) or ‘*recommence*’ (Merleau-Ponty). In both of these quotations, the themes of discussion are 1) listening as listening either to the silence of being (Bachelard) or to the silence of Being (Merleau-Ponty), 2) the relation between speaking and silence, and 3) the question of *who* or *what* speaks. These same themes also occur in Claudel’s quotation concerning the “speech of adoration in the ear of Silence the Abyss”, if one were to understand the silence of God in a Merleau-Pontian manner as the silence of universal, or catholic, Being in which, paradoxically, “the ear of God” that is connected to the theme of listening is also at the same time “the mouth of God” that is connected to the theme of speaking. In addition to this, it was also Heidegger who, in his search for a “completely new method of thinking”, wrote: “the thinking that is to come must learn to experience [the truth of Being: there is principally Being] and to say it.” According to Heidegger, “the thinking *that is to come*”, which is by the way a very similar expression as Merleau-Ponty’s new philosophy “*which is still to be made*”, as thinking of Being is, in an essential manner, listening, as Heidegger states in “Letter on Humanism”: “thinking is of Being insofar as thinking, belonging to Being, *listens to Being*.”⁹⁵⁴ The thinking of Being as listening to Being needs to be understood as hearkening, which obediently follows inaudible, or “quiet”⁹⁵⁵, Being. To learn to experience the fundamental experience of Being means to learn to listen to Being, that is, to learn to let “it approach us and tell us what it wants, what is going on with it.”⁹⁵⁶ This means that also, according to Heidegger, “Being speaks to us”.⁹⁵⁷ In order for thinking,

953 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 164. My emphasis.

954 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, p. 196.

955 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, p. 196.

956 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 82.

957 Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 105. The translation has been slightly altered.

as the thinking of Being, to learn to “say Being”⁹⁵⁸, it must first learn to experience Being, which means that it must learn to listen, that is, to obediently follow “Being [which] speaks to us”. To “say Being”, which is the task of the thinker, according to Heidegger, means “to speak in the way in which the *Logos* [Being] speaks, in correspondence with the *Logos* [Being]”⁹⁵⁹, which is possible only by obediently following what it quietly “tells us”.

I now suggest that one can perhaps see that actually Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Bachelard and Claudel, who have all been from the very beginning of my dissertation the main influences of this phenomenological ontology of breathing, all understand in quite a similar manner the role of the philosopher, or the thinker, and the role of the poet as, for all of them, this role, or task, is 1) to listen to the silence of B/being, or the silence of God (the principle of Silence the Abyss), which speaks, and 2) to learn to transform this quiet speech of silence into words, that is, to say it in as obedient a manner as possible in reference to this original silence. These two dimensions are the essentials of “the thinking of Being”, as Heidegger writes: “The genitive [‘of’] says something twofold.”⁹⁶⁰ This means that the genitive of “the thinking of Being” means, at the same time 1) to think Being and 2) Being’s thinking. In the first sense, the task of the thinker is to think and say Being, and in the second sense it is Being that thinks and speaks itself within us and the task of the thinker is to hearken the thinking of Being. The second sense of the genitive “of” always takes priority between the two. The thinker can only think and say Being because Being has always already before-hand thought and spoken itself within him.

In addition to this, it is very interesting to notice that there is, at least in a structural sense, a similarities between the wordings of Merleau-Ponty and Jesus. What do I mean by this? And why would this be of any importance to the phenomenological ontology of breathing and to its method of ontologico-respiratory reduction, which wishes to return to the experience of inspiration and expiration of Being? It was said earlier that, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is “Being which speaks within us [*l’Être qui parle en nous*] rather than us speak of Being.” In a similar manner, Jesus said that “it is not you who speak, but the Respiration/Spirit of your Father who speaks within you [*L’Esprit de votre Père qui parlera en vous*].” Now, if Being is understood as inspiration and expiration of Being, as it has been so often during this dissertation, and if “the respiration of your Father” is understood in a Merleau-Pontian fashion as *respiration of the universal*, that is, as *respiration of Being*, then both of these wordings say almost the same thing. In both cases it is not us who speak of inspiration and expiration of Being, of respiration of Being, but inspiration and expiration of Being which speaks within us [*en nous*]. If one would follow this kind of interpretation even further, one could say that, as inspiration and expiration of Being speak within us, it can teach us if we are able to hearken to its silent ontologico-

958 Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, trans. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 237.

959 Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p. 47.

960 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, p. 196.

respiratory speech. This is what Jesus perhaps means when he states: “the Holy Respiration will teach you...what you should say.” In his *Nature*-lectures, Merleau-Ponty also refers to at least somewhat similar kind of non-human or “pre-human”⁹⁶¹ teaching when he speaks of perception as a teacher of ontology, as follows: “perception teaches us an ontology that it alone can reveal to us.”⁹⁶² Perception, if it is understood ontologically, is perceptual openness to Being, that is, the perceptual faith: there is Being. As I have tried, in this dissertation, to radicalize phenomenological ontology from perceptual openness to Being to respiratory openness to Being, I could interpret Merleau-Ponty’s thesis within the context of this intention in a respiratory fashion. This would mean that, in this context of the phenomenological ontology of breathing, I could in a transformative manner change Merleau-Ponty’s word “perception” to “respiration”, and thus air the following idea concerning the relation between ontology and respiration: *respiration teaches us an ontology that it alone can reveal to us*. I could also use Merleau-Ponty’s expression “respiration within Being”, which I have often used during my dissertation, and thus air this same idea as follows: *respiration within Being teaches us an ontology that it alone can reveal to us*. With these new insights concerning the possibilities of interpreting Merleau-Ponty, I could combine the wordings of Jesus and Merleau-Ponty by stating: respiration could teach us what to say of inspiration and expiration of Being as a respiratory ontology, that is, as a phenomenological ontology of breathing.

There are deep similarities between the works of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Bachelard and Claudel. These can give me a chance to understand that the thinking of Being and the adoration of God, or the adoration of Silence the Abyss, are not so very different ways of existing as both of them appear as circular movements between listening and speaking, and in both cases, from the thinker’s and the poet’s perspective, listening comes always before speaking. For heuristic purposes, I will now read them as one and the same manner of existing as openness to something. This kind of reading becomes possible especially with the help of Merleau-Ponty as “God” has been interpreted in his way in my dissertation as the “universal”, “common” or “Being”. Within this heuristic reading or interpretation, this means that the thinking of Being, and the adoration of God as the adoration of Being, are both understood as a constant circularity of listening of and speaking of Being. In my phenomenological ontology of breathing, this means that the thinking of Being and the adoration of Being are understood as the thinking of inspiration and expiration of Being, of dehiscence of Being, and as the adoration of inspiration and expiration of Being, of dehiscence of Being. What Claudel taught to me about poetic thinking as adoration in the previous chapter is that it is adoration in respiration (perpetual cycle of listening in respiration and speaking in respiration). I would say that this adoration in respiration is the Claudelian version of what the aerial poet’s thinking in breathing could mean. In the vocabulary of ontologico-respiratory reduction as the thinking of Being, this would mean adoration in respiration of

961 Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, p. 359.

962 Merleau-Ponty, *Nature*, p. 40.

inspiration and expiration of Being, of dehiscence of Being. One of the best formulations of what this phenomenologico-ontological method, as the ontologico-respiratory reduction (which means always a return from the theoretical, practical, social and perceptual worlds to their root or source as inspiration and expiration of Being and dehiscence of Being, that is, to their principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air) could mean can be found from *Air and Dreams*, in which Bachelard speaks of the path of philosophico-respiratory method he has learned from the aerial poets. He writes:

let us try to put our entire being into silence—let us hearken to nothing but our own breathing—let us become as aerial as our breath—let us make no noise but breathing, that is, no noise but light [*léger*] breathing—let us imagine only the words that form themselves on our breath.⁹⁶³

963 Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, pp. 311-312. See the English translation, Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 241. The translation has been altered.

CHAPTER 12

The Methodological Act of Placing in Abeyance within the Ontologico-Respiratory Reduction: A Chasmologico-Aerial *Epoché* as an Essential Dimension of the Ontologico-Respiratory Reduction

At the very end of the previous chapter, Bachelard suggested the aerial-poetic methodological step of putting “our entire being in silence” as part of, what I call, the method of phenomenological ontology of breathing. This methodological step, as the first step on this philosophical path of the ontologico-respiratory reduction that would lead the philosopher from the theoretical, practical, social and perceptual worlds to their root as the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air, is a very difficult task to perform. This first methodological step offered by Bachelard is one of the dimensions of the ontologico-respiratory reduction that I have tried to develop in my dissertation, initially with the help of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Bachelard, Husserl, Irigaray, Kleinberg-Levin, Claudel and the other aerial poets. This methodological step means, in its most primordial sense, putting our entire being in “silence that breathes” (Bachelard), that is, *returning* our entire being to the ontologically interpreted silent world thesis of there is inspiration and expiration of Being. What are the difficulties in this dimension of the method of ontologico-respiratory reduction? This is to ask: what does this “keeping silent” (Merleau-Ponty), or “putting our entire being into silence” (Bachelard), include? The methodological step of putting our entire being into silence is deeply connected with the dimension of the phenomenological reduction which is often called by the name *-of epoché*.⁹⁶⁴ The Greek

964 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 58-59 and Husserl, *Crisis*, pp. 135-157. What is the relationship between *epoché* and reduction is not at all clear in Husserl’s writings and the writings of his followers in the phenomenological movement. Of this Morley writes in his article “It’s Always About the *Epoché*” as follows: “There is an ongoing ambiguity in Husserl as well as in the commentary literature on the concept of the *epoché*. Firstly, the terms *epoché* and phenomenological ‘reduction’ are often used interchangeably or with subtle differences. When used in a manner

word *epoché* means “cessation”⁹⁶⁵ or “check”⁹⁶⁶. Other words that name this essential step of the phenomenological reduction are, for example, “abstention,”⁹⁶⁷ “suspension,”⁹⁶⁸ to put “out of play,”⁹⁶⁹ to “place in abeyance,”⁹⁷⁰ “withholding”⁹⁷¹ and “bracketing”⁹⁷². Earlier in Section Two, as the methodological section of my dissertation (Chapter Eight), I have said that, in order to reawaken the fundamental experience of openness of Being we must liberate ourselves from all philosophical, scientific and prescientific traditions which never begin from the ground up, that is, from the beginning. This liberation from all philosophical, scientific and prescientific traditions is what *epoché* truly means as, in the method of phenomenological reduction, we have to suspend, or check, these traditions as our presuppositional ways of relating with the world. We have to put these traditional presuppositions “out of play” in our lives. We must “place them in abeyance”. This does not mean that we think that these scientific and prescientific traditions are in any way good or bad, or right or wrong. The essential thing that we can say about them is that they are not original ways of relating with the world or Being. This means, according to Merleau-Ponty, that in order “to see the world itself [in its original manner], we must first withdraw from it”⁹⁷³. This withdrawal happens through the *epoché* or,

distinct from one another the *epoché* more commonly refers to *the initial process* that uncovers the role of the natural attitude while the reduction more often refers to the advanced and more specific types of *epochés* undertaken after having first achieved the initial *epoché*. In other words, a reduction is what I do after having first already suspended the natural attitude.” Morley, “It’s Always About the *Epoché*”, p. 225. My emphasis. In reference to this quotation from Morley I do not understand in the ontologico-respiratory reduction the *epoché* as synonymous with the act of reduction, but as the *initial* step of the method of reduction. This means that there is no reduction without the *epoché*, but at the same time it is not the whole of reduction as the method of bringing us back to the ultimate origin. But even if it is not the whole of reduction it is important to understand that as it is the initial step of the phenomenological method it is always the condition of possibility of all the other steps of this method and as long as we are doing phenomenological interrogation we are always doing it within the sphere of *epoché*. If we step out of this sphere, we are cast out of the phenomenological research. This means also that the reduction is *not* “what I do after having first already suspended the natural attitude” as the act of suspending, that is, the *epoché* is already the initial dimension and as such always an ongoing atmosphere of the method of reduction. In this sense the title of Morley’s article “It’s Always About the *Epoché*” is accurate as the phenomenological investigation, which means accomplishing phenomenological reduction, is *always* about the *epoché* as it yawns always as an ontological atmosphere in every other procedural step leading to what Merleau-Ponty called “the disclosing of the *Weltthesis*”, that is, to the mystery that the world is always already there before and that everything else always presupposes it.

965 Moran and Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 106.

966 Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), p. 7.

967 Husserl, *Crisis*, pp. 150-151.

968 Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 51.

969 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 152 and Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. xiii.

970 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992), p. vii and also, for example, Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, pp. 71, 115 and 123, Bryan A. Smyth, *Merleau-Ponty’s Existential Phenomenology and the Realization of Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. xxviii and Natanson, *Edmund Husserl*, p. 57.

971 Husserl, *Crisis*, pp. 135 and 148.

972 Husserl, *Ideas*, pp. 58-59.

973 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 157.

to say it little bit differently by once again borrowing the words of Merleau-Ponty, "it is a question of distancing the world, but only in order to see it and understand it."⁹⁷⁴

The "scientific and prescientific traditions" from which we must withdraw through the *epoché* include all scientific theories, concepts, methods, results, etc. These scientific traditions include all the natural sciences and all human sciences without exception. This means, for example, that neurology, physiology and psychology, with all their theories, concepts and results, are bracketed in order that one can see and think more originally than these disciplines do and, as they are not seen as anything wrong or inappropriate, it can be said that their ways of relating with the world in the act of phenomenological *epoché* is left up *in the air* or put *in abeyance*, that is, their state of existence is *left open* to be decided upon later. The same kind of treatment of cessation or distancing is also applied to all of the prescientific traditions like cultural, religious, moral and behavioural traditions as different ways of being-in-the-world. We have to withhold ourselves from all of them without exception in order to return to, what Merleau-Ponty calls, "the wild region wherein [all scientific and prescientific traditions] have originated." This "wild region" is, in my respiratory-chasmologico-aerial interpretation, this Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian principle the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss/Yawn of Air. We have to try to put all traditions *in silence* and place them at a distance. What does this process of putting in silence mean? What happens to these traditional ways of relating with the world during the time that they are left in abeyance? In order to try to solve these questions, at least initially in some manner, I suggest that we will find help from Fink's words concerning the late philosophy of Husserl. I quoted Fink's these words already in Chapter Five in the way that Merleau-Ponty translates them. I will again use the Merleau-Pontian formulation, in which Fink writes: "Even Husserl's last philosophy is in no way a gathered harvest, an acquired domain of cultivated spirit, a house in which one can conveniently set up housekeeping. *Everything is open, all the paths lead out into the free air.*" First of all, it must be said that late Husserl's thinking moves always "within the sphere of the *epoché*."⁹⁷⁵ It means that his thinking moves always within a sphere where all scientific and prescientific traditions have been placed in abeyance. This kind of thinking, as phenomenological thinking, always thinks and interrogates everything in the atmosphere where the philosopher, as a perpetual beginner, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "accepts nothing as established from what men or scientists believe they know." So phenomenological thinking, which always moves "within the sphere of the *epoché*", is thinking within the dimensionality where everything, (for example, all scientific and prescientific traditions) is left open, up in the air, that is, in the state of abeyance. Could this also mean, when *epoché* leaves everything open, that "all the paths lead out into the free air", as Merleau-Ponty interprets Fink's words? To understand this better, let us more closely examine the ex-

974 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 5.

975 Husserl quoted by Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 148.

pression “to put in abeyance,” or “to place in abeyance”. Before we do this, it is important to know that, according to Maurice Natanson, one of the best ways of translating *epoché* is the expression “placing in abeyance”.⁹⁷⁶ So what could be the meaning of “abeyance”? Let us interrogate the etymological roots of this word in order to understand it better. The word “abeyance” comes from the Anglo-French word *abeiance* which means “suspension.” This word “*abeiance*” comes from the Old French *abeance* (“gaping at or toward”), which is a noun of condition of the word *abeer* (“gape”) coming from *à* (“at”) + *ba(y)er* (“to be open, to gape”). This word *abeer* comes from the Latin *batere* (“to yawn,” “to gape”). This Latin word *batere* is also the etymological root of the English verb “abash”, which in the early 15th century meant “perplex, embarrass.” In the 14th century this verb meant “to lose one’s composure, to be upset”. It comes from the Old French *esbaiss-*, present stem of *esbaer* (“gape with astonishment”) (*es* “out” + *ba(y)er* “to be open, gape”), which comes as was already said, from the Latin *batere* (“to yawn,” “gape”).

How could it be that the Old French word *abeance* as “gaping toward” started to mean “suspension” in English, as “abeyance”? My suggestion is that, in the first place, “to gape,” or “to yawn,” is always an event of “suspension” as, during the process of gaping, all our normal and habitual ways of relating with the world enter a state of cessation. The event of yawning puts, for a short moment, our everyday attitude in abeyance, that is, in a state of suspension as it leaves all our scientific and prescientific traditions up in the air. This means that I could call yawning, to borrow Husserl’s notion, a “natural *epoché*”,⁹⁷⁷ that is, “a natural loss of the world”, or a naturally occurring “radical pause” of all traditional ways of relating with the world⁹⁷⁸, which relates us immediately with the dehiscence of Being, that is, with the yawning space opening between everything.

Here I can find that the word “abeyance” is a chasmological word like “dehiscence”. In Chapter One of Section One of my dissertation I quoted *The Visible and the Invisible* as I suggested that Merleau-Ponty sees a connection between philosophy and yawning. Now it can be seen in a more explicit manner that there is an intimate connection between the philosophical method of placing in abeyance (*abeance*) and Merleau-Ponty’s chasmological *à béance* (to/at/in gap, to/at/in yawning, to/at/in gape, to/at/in wide opening).⁹⁷⁹ Regarding this connection, *The Visible and the Invisible* reveals the following: “it is a past of experience and of knowledge that one day ends up/leads to/in/at this gap/yawning/gaping/wide opening [*à cette béance*].” Here one can understand “a

976 Natanson, *Edmund Husserl*, p. 57. In my examination of the methodological step of *epoché* I am following Natanson’s suggestion to translate this notion of *epoché* as “placing in abeyance”.

977 Edmund Husserl quoted by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, “The Hermeneutic Slumber: Aristotle’s Reflections on Sleep”, trans. David Payne, in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Claudia Baracchi (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 140.

978 Sá Cavalcante Schuback, “Hermeneutic Slumber”, p. 140.

979 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, p. 140. See also *Ibid.*, p. 173. The English translation of *The Visible and the Invisible* one cannot capture idea that all knowledge ends up “à...béance” (to gape/yawn). See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 105.

past of experience and of knowledge" as all scientific and prescientific traditions, in which case this sentence could be interpreted as an expression of the chasmological *epoché* within the ontologico-respiratory reduction. This would mean that, while the philosopher places these scientific and prescientific traditions in abeyance, that is, while he places them into the yawn or into the gape (*à béance*), he liberates them to the abyssal ground from which they have originated, that is, he liberates them to the principle of Abyss/Yawn (*béance*) of Air. This principle of Abyss of Air is "the wild region" yawning between all "constituted culture[s]", that is, between all scientific and prescientific traditions "wherein they all have originated."⁹⁸⁰

As one puts these traditions into silence, following the suggestion of Bachelard, one alters one's own being in a radical manner. This process of silencing, as a chasmological *epoché*, is a process of unlearning these habitual scientific and prescientific traditions through which one is used to exist, that is, to be-in-the-world. The process of "unlearning" (Heidegger) now means to learn to exist at least for a while without them, that is, to learn to leave them, and let them be, in abeyance. It means to learn to place all learned knowledge to and in the yawning. One must relearn to exist in a completely new way, transforming one's attitude towards the world into the philosophical attitude of a perpetual beginner who is open to the new. One needs to learn to yawn between all scientific and prescientific traditions. This new attitude of the philosopher is wonder or astonishment before the world. Earlier in Section Two, the methodological section of my dissertation, I said that this transformation from the normal attitude of everydayness into the wondering attitude of the philosopher is "essentially a catastrophic event" (Fink) in which the world turns "upside down" (Heidegger). I suggest that the etymological exploration of "abeyance" tells this same story from the chasmological perspective. This etymologically-understood chasmological story tells us that the gaping words of abeyance as "natural *epoché*", *abashment* as "astonishment" and as "embarrassment", as well as "being upset", as a form of catastrophic event, belong together. When past knowledge, as all scientific and prescientific traditions, is placed in abeyance (*à béance*), or as Merleau-Ponty says, is led to the "yawning open", this abashes the human being. It perplexes and embarrasses him or her because suddenly nothing is as it used to be. To be in this state of perplexment and embarrassment can be interpreted in two ways, that is, either from the perspective of the cultural traditions or the philosophical attitude. From the perspective of already-created culture (including various "scientific and prescientific traditions"), this kind of state is understood as an embarrassment and a form of stupidity⁹⁸¹ or madness in which a person does not anymore comply with the rules of the ready-made cultural discourses. From the philosophical point of view this upset person, whose familiar world has been overturned as it has fallen into abeyance, can be interpreted to be gaping with astonishment as he suspires within the principle of

980 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 115.

981 See Seuntjens, *On Yawning*, p. 31.

Abyss of Air as the atmosphere of open and free air, which perpetually offers him distance to this world of familiarity.⁹⁸²

Here I have, with this *aerial*, or *chasmological*, *epoché*, also radicalized Merleau-Ponty's account of the wisdom of the painter as the master of vision who "thinks in painting", and as such has come to the aid of the philosopher to re-birth philosophy as a new philosophy of vision. If one moves into the depth dimension of Merleau-Ponty's sentence concerning yawning (*béance*) which I quoted earlier in my account of the *epoché*, one will yet again find a way to return to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Yawn. Merleau-Ponty spoke of the task of the philosopher as follows: "it is a question of distancing the world, but only in order to see it and understand it."⁹⁸³ Elsewhere he says that actually "the philosopher is defined by the distance that he takes from the world, society, and himself as an empirical entity."⁹⁸⁴ So the distance is, according to Merleau-Ponty, what defines the philosopher. Merleau-Ponty also states this in his 1952 inaugural speech when he became the professor of philosophy of *College de France*. In this inaugural speech, titled "In Praise of Philosophy", he says: "philosophy...is the utopia of possession at a distance."⁹⁸⁵ Seeing is possible only with a phenomenon of distance, as Merleau-Ponty defines seeing in *Eye and Spirit* as follows, "to see is to have at a distance".⁹⁸⁶ Thus, seeing is "action at a distance".⁹⁸⁷ This means that philosophy is "possession at a distance", or "action at a distance" as, according to Merleau-Ponty, "true philosophy is to relearn to see the world". The true philosophy, that is, true thinking as wonder, is to relearn to have the world at a distance. This relearning happens with the help of the painters in Merleau-Ponty's work, as has been said earlier in my dissertation. This distance between the seer and the seen, as I pointed out in Section One of my dissertation, is most of the time, in our human existence, air which yawns between us and the world. Now, if "the philosopher is defined by the distance that he takes from the world" in its theoretical, practical, social and perceptual dimensions, would that not mean that, in some essential sense, the philosopher is defined by the air as the open and free air which is the distance itself, or the pure depth, as there is no distance between the philosopher and the

982 Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 194. In this page of her book Rubenstein speaks of "wonder, astonishment, and the more terrified admixtures thereof with abnormally wide eyes as well as dropped jaws and open mouths." Rubenstein also quotes Charles Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Humans and Animals* as follows: "the eyes and mouth being widely open is an expression universally recognized as one of surprise or astonishment." She also writes in this same page still in relation to Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Humans and Animals* as follows: "Most importantly for Darwin, the wider the mouth is open in astonishment, the more air the animal can take into its body. Wonder, in other words, makes a living being breathe better."

983 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 5 and Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 381.

984 Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, p. 124. My emphasis. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 382.

985 Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 58.

986 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 166.

987 Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 170.

thing or between the seer and the seen without it as the chasmologico-aerial principle of yawning Abyss of Air? This principle is the principle of difference, that is, that which makes the difference between the seer and the seen possible. It is this chasmologico-aerial distance, or depth, between the philosopher and the world that in the first place allows the philosopher to have at a distance, maintain a distance and move closer and further away as an act of narrowing and extending this distance to and from the things in the world. Thus, it is the principle of Yawn of Air which makes the Merleau-Pontian philosophy of vision as true philosophy possible. This would mean, in my opinion, that “the very definition of the philosophy and perhaps even of human existence”⁹⁸⁸ in general must be redefined in terms of the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air.

Here is a chance for the philosopher to take a leap of thinking into the distance, or pure depth, between himself as the seer and the visible world as the seen. This is the philosopher’s possible leap from the visible world of the painter into the invisible world of the aerial poet. It could be a leap of thinking from true philosophy, as the philosophy of we see the things to true philosophy as the philosophy of we breathe air.⁹⁸⁹ Bachelard’s second methodological suggestion points toward this leap, as he says: “let us hearken to nothing but our own breathing”. It says, let us obediently follow “nothing but our own breathing”. Our own breathing is *our* respiratory openness to Being that is in a constant state of we breathe air. By obediently following “nothing but our own breathing”, we are taken immediately into the “aerial world,” “respiratory world” and “cosmic respiration” as there is no division between our own breathing and the cosmic respiration, and thus we become beings of distance, that is, we become beings of aerial distance. As aerial and respiratory beings *we breathe air* (our basic barbaric conviction), which is the distance, difference, gap, gape, hiatus, abyss, invisible, silence and yawn between us and the visible world. In this sense, we can say that we are constantly breathing invisible and silent distance, and as such we become beings of distance. This means that we do not only have things at a distance as philosophers who learn again to see, that is, who learns to wonder the mystery of the visible world, because in addition to this possibility we could also become, as “respiratory philosophers” and “aerial philosophers”⁹⁹⁰, beings of distance itself, which means that we could, as Bachelard

988 Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 382.

989 When Heidegger ponders about the leap of thinking in *The Principle of Reason* he very briefly intertwines this leap with the element of air as he writes: “The leap itself hangs in the air. In what air, in what ether? We only learn this through the leap.” Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, p. 53. Would this mean that perhaps the Heideggerian leap of thinking has its condition of possibility within the element of air? What would it mean if the Heideggerian leap would be rethought within the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air as a new way to understand the principle of reason that Heidegger ponders in *The Principle of Reason*? These questions cannot be investigated in my PhD dissertation but hopefully I will be able to explore such questions in my future studies.

990 Berndtson, “The Inspiration and the Expiration of Being”, pp. 288–291; Berndtson, “The Possibility of a New Respiratory Ontology”, pp. 38–39 and 41; Škof and Berndtson, “Introduction”, in *Atmospheres of Breathing*, eds. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson

suggested, “become as aerial as our breath”. This becoming as aerial as our breath could be understood, to paraphrase Husserl, as a total transformation of attitude and a thoroughly new way of thinking and living as it shifts our orientation from having at a distance to becoming a being of distance. In connection to this respiratory possibility of being a philosopher as a perpetual beginner, Mary-Jane Rubenstein has suggested in her important book *Strange Wonder* that “perhaps dwelling in wonder is merely a matter of learning to breathe.”⁹⁹¹ If this would be the case, would it not mean that the fundamental task of the philosopher, in his or her wish to become a respiratory philosopher who dwells in wonder would, instead of relearning to see the visible world (Merleau-Ponty), be the accomplishment of “learning again to breathe” (Irigaray)⁹⁹² and yawn the invisible aerial world in all of its chasmological and respiratory dimensions and potentialities? Would not this kind of new philosophy, or new ontology, give us a totally new set of infinite tasks, that is, of respiratory and aerial tasks, which would, then, mean that everything needs to be done and redone in philosophy as project of perpetual recommencement? To quote Merleau-Ponty, would it not, thus, mean that “philosophy has never had more to do than today” and tomorrow?

(Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. ix, xi and xiii and Škof, “Breath as a Way of Self-Affection”, p. 59.

991 Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 196.

992 Irigaray, *Between East and West*, p. 6.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study has been to provide an explication of our basic barbaric conviction we breathe air. This explication was given in the first place with the help of Merleau-Ponty, and also Bachelard, Claudel, Heidegger, Irigaray, Kleinberg-Levin and Husserl have helped me in this effort of trying to understand what could it mean that we breathe air. The method of this explication has been philosophical and especially phenomenologico-ontological. To give a phenomenologico-ontological interpretation to *we breathe air*, I chose Merleau-Ponty's thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" as a clue and a platform to begin to investigate the ontological dimensions and possibilities of this common basic barbaric respiratory conviction that we all share together, even if we are most of the time unaware of it. Before it was possible to stand on this ontologico-respiratory platform, however, I had to build it as it did not exist before my dissertation in any of the previous scholarly studies on Merleau-Ponty. In order to build this platform, I introduced this Merleau-Ponty's ontologico-respiratory thesis as one of his "there is" theses. The other "there is" theses, according to Merleau-Ponty, are "there is something", "there is the world", "there is the perceived world" and "there is Being". Each of them can be understood as a point of departure of philosophy expressing the principle or beginning of philosophy. I introduced each one of these theses so that I could make the idea of the "there is" more familiar to the readers and make the argument that Merleau-Ponty's "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" could also be interpreted as one of these "there is" theses, and thus as a new possible point of departure and a new principle of philosophy. In a similar manner as Merleau-Ponty's "there is the perceived world", as his thesis of the primacy of perception, is a perceptual interpretation of the world thesis (the *Weltthesis*) "there is the world", my claim in this dissertation has been that Merleau-Ponty's "there is really and truly inspiration of Being, respiration within Being" can be understood as a respiratory interpretation of the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological thesis "there is Being", and thus as a thesis of the primacy of breathing. Heidegger states his ontological statement in "Letter on Humanism", which I

have interpreted as the point of departure of his thinking and as the essence of human existence. This statement says: “we are on a plane where there is principally Being”. As “the plane” and “Being” are the same, I expressed this ontological statement with the help of Merleau-Ponty’s wording “we are within Being” as follows: *we are within Being where there is principally Being*. This reformulation of Heidegger’s ontological statement has been the cornerstone of my dissertation as I was able to build my ontologico-respiratory platform upon it. This building became possible as “respiration within Being” was connected with “we are within Being”, and “there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being” was connected with “there is principally Being”. Through these connections I made a reformulation of the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological statement to say, in a respiratory manner: *we are respiration within Being where there is in the first place [principally] really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. I understand this ontologico-respiratory reformulation as the most important philosophical achievement of my dissertation as my whole phenomenologico-ontological project of investigating breathing and our barbaric conviction we breathe air becomes phenomenologico-ontologically possible through it. I have claimed that this reformulation also states the essence of human existence in a respiratory manner. According to Heidegger, the essence of human existence is “what we ourselves always already are”, and that is “openness to Being”. Merleau-Ponty agrees with Heidegger on this idea of the essence of human existence: we ourselves always already are openness to Being. Merleau-Ponty gives this essence of human existence a perceptual interpretation as, in his view, the primacy of perception means the ontological primacy of the lived body’s perceptual openness to Being. According to Merleau-Ponty, perceptual openness is always the lived body’s, that is, the body-subject’s perceptual openness, as we ourselves always already are bodily openness to the world. As I added these wordings concerning the essence of human existence to this ontologico-respiratory statement, it began to state at the same time the essence of human existence, a new point of departure for philosophy and the primacy of breathing by saying: we ourselves always already are bodily openness as respiratory openness within Being where there is in the first place [principally] really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being.

With the help of Bachelard, Irigaray and Kleinberg-Levin, I was able to interpret “Being” in an aerial manner as “the open and free air”, “the aerial world” or “the clearing of air”. This meant that I was able to state the ontologico-respiratory statement as follows: *we ourselves always already are bodily openness as respiratory openness within the aerial world as the clearing of air where there is in the first place really and truly inspiration and expiration of the aerial world*. This interpretative reformulation made it possible to express the phenomenologico-ontological atmosphere or horizon within which one could begin to understand the ontological meaning of our basic barbaric conviction we breathe air. I have claimed in my dissertation that, with this ontologico-respiratory-aerial reformulation of the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological statement, I have given an initial ontological interpretation of what it means that we breathe air. My

interpretation has shown that the word “we” of we breathe air initially means “bodily openness”, that the word “breathe” of this barbaric conviction means “respiratory openness”, and the word “air” means Being as the aerial world, as the clearing of air or as the open and free air. Thus I have claimed that this barbaric respiratory conviction, in a hidden manner or latently, states the respiratory essence of human existence, the primacy of breathing and a new point of departure for philosophy. In it is hidden a new principle of philosophy. I have called this new principle the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. I have shown that the Silence of Breath in this principle is hidden in “we breathe” and that the Abyss/Yawn of Air is hidden in “air”. Breathing is Silence of Breath as, with the help of Bachelard, it was stated that breath is the deepest level of silence in our existence. Air is Abyss/Yawn of Air, as I interpreted Merleau-Ponty’s dehiscence of Being and Heidegger’s chaos as Being in the aerial manner to speak about air, that is, abyss that yawns between and around all beings. Air is abyss as it is the primordial depth within which everything is engulfed. The principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air is my mutation of the Claudelian-Merleau-Pontian ontological principle of Silence, Abyss, which Merleau-Ponty equates with Being. According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological ontology always returns to Being as the principle of Silence, Abyss. In my interpretation, the phenomenological ontology of breathing always returns to inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being as the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. In my dissertation I have called this methodological return the ontologico-respiratory reduction, which I have shown to deepen the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian ontological reduction as the return to Being. I have stated that we can gradually begin to understand what this ontologico-respiratory reduction, as a return to the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air, might mean by listening to the aerial poets, especially Claudel. I have also claimed that the aerial poets, and Claudel in particular, can teach us a new way of thinking, as thinking in breathing, in which one learns to speak and listen in a respiratory manner, always speaking and listening according to the breath. I have tried to show that the version of thinking in breathing that one could learn from Claudel’s aerial poetry is adoration in respiration, in which one listens and speaks in respiration.

In this dissertation, I have suggested that Merleau-Ponty’s thesis of the primacy of perception can be questioned through the brief remarks concerning the phenomenon of breathing that Merleau-Ponty himself provides, scattered around his philosophical works. Before my work, nobody has attempted to study these remarks on breathing in a systematic manner. My investigation of Merleau-Ponty’s remarks has been inspired by Kleinberg-Levin, who has referred to them as philosophically and ontologically important. I have tried to show that especially Merleau-Ponty’s hints about breathing in connection to the process of falling asleep and the phenomenon of sleep, as well as his very brief remarks about our first breath as newborns, give us ideas that, in my interpretation, point towards a level of being-in-the-world that is deeper than the primacy of perception. It is a level that makes perception possible and it is the back-

ground that even perception always presupposes. I have called this primordial level the primacy of breathing or the priority of breathing. According to Merleau-Ponty, in the process of falling asleep we withdraw ourselves from the theoretical, practical, social and even perceptual fields of the world and return to the respiratory world, in which we communicate as breathing beings with "some immense exterior lung". I have interpreted this immense lung to be the invisible lung of the world that perpetually keeps all the other fields of our being-in-the-world alive and existing. It allows all of these other levels of the world to exist. Merleau-Ponty calls our respiratory relation with this immense lung our very being. Thus, our very being can be understood as the essence of human existence. I also stated that the essence of human existence was expressed in the ontologico-respiratory statement *we are respiration within Being where there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being*. I have followed de Saint Aubert's idea that the immense lung anticipates "inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being". In this sense, these two (immense lung and inspiration and expiration of Being) need to be read together in future explorations of Merleau-Pontian-inspired investigations of the phenomenon of breathing.

Even if my investigations have not convinced all of the readers about the possibility of the primacy of breathing over the primacy of perception, at least I would say that I have provided a new opening to begin a Merleau-Pontian-styled philosophical investigation of breathing. This new beginning for philosophy presents itself if one is willing to accept the ontologico-respiratory thesis "there is really and truly inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration within Being" as one of the "there is" theses. If it is agreed upon that this is one of the "there is" theses and as, according to Merleau-Ponty, "there is Being" is the point of departure of philosophy, then this ontologico-respiratory thesis is a new starting point of philosophy. It is a new beginning, that is, a new principle of philosophy that I call the principle of Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air. If this new possible beginning as a philosophical point of departure would be taken truly seriously in the future, it would mean that all philosophical questions could be rethought and re-examined as questions of inspiration and expiration of Being. This would mean that all questions could be reinterrogated within the experiential atmosphere of we breathe air. How would, for example, questions concerning space, time, freedom, perception, selfhood, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, community, sexuality, religion, peace, language, consciousness, dreaming and thinking appear to us if they would be understood as questions of inspiration and expiration of Being? How would these questions appear to us if they would be examined within the horizon of ontologico-respiratory reduction? The first steps of how to do these kinds of respiratory investigations could be learned from Claudel's adoration in respiration and from other aerial poets' thinking in breathing as thinking, which always, before it says anything about the phenomenon that it studies, would listen to it in respiration, with respiration, within respiration and according to respiration. This kind of new respiratory way to study the world would give us an infinite amount of tasks as all

things in life could be understood anew within the atmosphere of we are respiration within Being. Within this kind of respiratory atmosphere, in the words of one aerial poet, “everything breathes anew”.

One of the fundamental insights of my dissertation is that breathing gives us a direct relation with the atmosphere of air. Through perception, especially through seeing, we are connected with the things. In our practical life we manipulate, create, destroy, deal, manage and handle things. In our theoretical life we think, theoretize, calculate and interpret things. In our social life we share the world of things with others where we speak with one another about these things, as well as jointly manipulate, create, destroy theoretize and exchange them. Our lives are thing-oriented, and our philosophies are thing-oriented too as they follow this basic attitude of life. One example of this kind of orientation is Merleau-Ponty’s new ontology of the vision which is deeply inspired by the painters. The painter’s world is nothing but visible. It is a world of visible things that the eyes interrogate. If, instead of the painters, we would listen to the aerial poets, we could learn an absolutely new orientation. In it we would not be thing-oriented, but atmosphere-oriented. We would learn to understand that all things appear to us only because the atmosphere gives them appearance. This invisible atmosphere of air, as the invisible background of everything, gives the visibility to the visible things.⁹⁹³ Breathing is not a relation, in the first place, with the visible things, but with the invisible atmosphere of open, free and gaping air. If we would learn to *think in*, *think with* and *think within* the fundamental experience of *we breathe air*, this could perhaps be, to borrow the words of Husserl, “a total transformation of attitude” and “a thoroughly new way of life”. I hope that my dissertation will provide openings towards this kind of transformation of attitude, in which we would learn “to think [and experience] the world, others, and [ourselves], and to conceive of their relations”⁹⁹⁴ anew. Finally, the question that my dissertation has been advocating throughout is: will the respiratory and chiasmologico-aerial principle Silence of Breath, Abyss of Air as “the truth of breath”⁹⁹⁵ inspire “tomorrow’s philosophers”⁹⁹⁶ to “create [philosophy] anew”⁹⁹⁷ as a respiratory philosophy and to “dream what culture, literary life, and teaching could be”⁹⁹⁸ as “a culture of respiration”⁹⁹⁹, literary life of respiration, and teaching of respiration, that is, as the creations of “inspiration and expiration of Being” and of “dehiscence of Being”?

993 One of the major tasks for the future would be that the whole of Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmic relation of the visible and the invisible should be rethought within the invisible atmosphere of air as the true primacy of the invisible. In this re-examination of the invisible one of the major questions would be how breathing as the respiratory openness connects us with this invisibility.

994 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxxiv.

995 Bachelard, *L’Air et les Songes*, p. 314.

996 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 158.

997 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 181.

998 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 242.

999 Luce Irigaray, *Why Different?: A Culture of Two Subjects*, trans. Camille Collins (New York: Semiotext(e), 2000), p. 179.

YHTEENVETO (FINNISH SUMMARY)

Filosofinen väitöskirjani käsittelee hengityksen fenomenologista ontologiaa. En tarkastele hengityksen ilmiötä luonnontieteellisenä tutkimusongelmana, vaan filosofisena kysymyksenä. Perinteisesti hengitys on käsitetty fysiologisesti hapen ja hiilidioksidin vaihteluna ja soluhengityksenä. Tällä mekanistis-materialistisella elämää fysiologisesti ylläpitävällä prosessilla ei ole juurikaan nähty olevan mitään olennaista yhteyttä ihmisen henkisiin, psyykkisiin tai filosofisiin kykyihin ja ulottuvuuksiin. Tässä väitöskirjassani ymmärrän asian toisin väittäen, että hengitys voidaan ymmärtää filosofisena kysymyksenä, joka pitää sisällään fenomenologiaa, kokemuksellisia, kehollisia, ontologiaa, henkisiä, hengellisiä, uskonnollisia, kognitiivisia, poettisia, elementaalisia, eettisiä, voluntaristisia ja mystisiä ulottuvuuksia. Tarkasteluni käsitteellistää hengityksen ensisijaisesti fenomenologis-ontologisena kysymyksenä. Maurice Merleau-Pontyn fenomenologis-ontologinen metodi, joka ajattelee radikaalisti eletyn kehon kokemuksellista avoimuutta maailmaan ja olemiseen, tarjoaa väitöskirjani perustavanlaatuisen tutkimuksellisen lähtökohdan. Omissa filosofisissa tutkimuksissaan Merleau-Ponty painottaa eletyn kehon havaitsevaa avoimuutta maailmaan ja olemiseen. Hän ymmärtää havainnon kuuluisasti havainnon ensisijaisuudeksi (*the primacy of perception*). Hänen teesinsä havainnon ensisijaisuudesta tarkoittaa sitä, että havainto havaitsevana avoimuutena maailmaan ja olemiseen on perusta, jonka kaikki muut olemassaolon ja maailma-olemisen tasot aina jo etukäteen olettavat. Väitöskirjassani haastan tämän havainnon ensisijaisuuden idean käyttäen hyväkseni Merleau-Pontyn omia huomioita hengityksestä. Huomioissaan hän ei jäsennä hengitystä fysiologisesti, vaan fenomenologisesti painottaen hengityksen kokemuksellisia, kehollisia ja ontologiaa ulottuvuuksia. Väitän, että näissä hengitystä koskevissa huomioissaan Merleau-Ponty viittaa implisiittisesti tasoon tai ulottuvuuteen, joka on havainnon ensisijaisuutta perustavanlaatuisempaa. Tätä maailmassa-olemisen ulottuvuutta tai tasoa kutsun väitöskirjassani nimellä hengityksen ensisijaisuus (*the primacy of breathing*). Hengitys eletyn kehon hengittävänä avoimuutena maailmaan ja olemiseen ymmärretään uutena perustana, jonka kaikki muut maailmassa-olemisen ulottuvuudet aina jo etukäteen olettavat. Näitä muita maailmassa-olemisen ulottuvuuksia ovat mm. teoreettiset, käytännölliset, sosiaaliset ja havainnolliset maailmasuhteemme.

Jos hengityksen ensisijaisuuden idea otetaan vakavasti, se tarkoittaa, että kaikki filosofian kysymykset voitaisiin ajatella, tutkia ja kokea uudelleen tässä perustavanlaatuisessa hengittävän avoimuuden ilmapiirissä. Väitöskirjassani haasteeni on ajatella uudelleen filosofian käsite "uutena hengittävänä filosofiana". Tämä uusi hengittävä filosofia tai hengityksen filosofia olisi hengityksen fenomenologista ontologiaa. Tämän uuden hengityksen fenomenologisen ontologian perustana toimii Merleau-Pontyn huomioidu hengityksestä. Tehtäväkseni olen asettanut näiden hengitys-huomioiden tulkitsemisen ja jäsentämisen. Tehtäväni on aloittaa filosofia uudelleen alusta hengityksen filosofiana tai hengittävänä filosofiana. Tässä tehtävässäni käytän apunani Merleau-Pontyn lisäksi

myös Martin Heideggerin, Gaston Bachelardin, Paul Claudelin, Luce Irigarayn, Edmund Husserlin ja David Kleinberg-Levinin filosofioita.

Väitöskirjani jakautuu kahteen pääosaan. Ensimmäisessä osassa rakennan ja jäsennän fenomenologisen ontologian käsitejärjestelmän sisällä uuden kokeuksellisen-kehollisen käsityksen hengityksestä hengityksen ensisijaisuutena. Toisessa osassa kehitän fenomenologisen metodin, jota kutsun ontologisesti-hengittäväksi reduktioksi (*the ontologico-respiratory reduction*). Tämä fenomenologinen metodi johdattaa meidät aina takaisin hengityksen ensisijaisuuteen.

Avainsanat: hengitys, fenomenologia, ontologia, Merleau-Ponty, filosofia, Bachelard, Heidegger, Irigaray, elementaalinen, hiljaisuus, kuunteleminen, rounous

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