Merleau-Ponty and McLuhan on the Modalities of Perception

Rawb Leon-Carlyle

A musical note can be described as 'high' or 'low.' Similarly, 'soft' can describe both surfaces and sounds, 'loud' can describe both sounds and colours, and 'warm' or 'cool' can describe both colours and surfaces. Such attributions are as figurative as they are literal, and yet they are almost universally understood. Adjectives used to describe experience travel freely between sensory modalities, applying to vision just as well as they apply to audition. The cross-modality of sensory description is indicative of a common body to which the stratified senses belong – after all, if the five human senses were truly distinct from each other, would they not require five incommensurable forms of discourse to describe them? The philosophies of Marshall McLuhan and Maurice Merleau-Ponty intersect at this critical junction, among others. This point of intersection is the nature of perception—specifically, the *amodality* of such. Additionally, McLuhan and Merleau-Ponty share similar views on the nature of 'mechanization' in thought. The present paper will draw out McLuhan and Merleau-Ponty's conceptions of amodal perception, mechanization, and their implications in Western thought. Merleau-Ponty's writings on amodal perception and mechanism clearly demonstrate the effects on human perception and experience that McLuhan's 'media' and 'messages' have, and both thinkers advocate a return to whole, amodal perception that is, in some respects, inevitable.

The Modalities of Perception

In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan addresses the ways in which technologies—the extensions of man—influence mankind. Media, McLuhan writes, are extensions of man (or humanity) in that they expand humanity's experience and bring new things into its consideration to interact with, pay attention to, or contemplate.[1] The change put into effect by the medium is referred to by McLuhan as the "message," while the new experiences brought forth by this change are referred to as the medium's "content."[2] Thus in McLuhan's account of media, the light-bulb is a medium, and its content comprises all activities or experiences that humanity was unable to have before its invention.[3] In the context of McLuhan's essay, media are suspect precisely because they are unsuspected; with the frequent exception of advertisement, content conceals the very medium or message that conveys it.[4] As such, media influence humanity by being extensions of it, but

[1] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 7.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 8.
[4] Ibid., 25.

remain unnoticed in their extension. A similar process is present in Heidegger's *Question Concerning Technology*: technology affects humanity's interaction with the world and yet remains unnoticed. Without diving headfirst into Heidegger's ontology (if such a thing is possible), suffice it to say the essence of technology lies in "enframing" the world, and aspects of the world, as controllable, exploitable, and capable of being appropriated for the sake of efficiency.[5] Enframed by technology, the Rhine runs the risk of no longer being a river, but merely a source of energy that runs a hydroelectric plant.[6] The danger of technology, then, consists in its ability to go unnoticed while this enframing is applied to human beings.[7] Heidegger resolves the threat of technology and enframing by noting that it is still human being alone (as opposed to technological being) that is addressed by the ontico-ontological difference;[8] in the context of this paper, however, the notion of enframing remains an example of how humanity's relationship with the world is transformed and extended spatially and temporally. Technology, like McLuhan's media, has this capacity to affect humanity while going unnoticed.

McLuhan notes that media affect humanity's apprehension and prioritization of different senses—and subsequently, influence social structures. "Tribal cultures," writes McLuhan, "cannot entertain the possibility of the individual or of the separate citizen."[9] Taking the tribe as an example of a pre-alphabetic culture, McLuhan claims that the phonetic alphabet, as a technology, was an early (if not the first) medium that altered humanity's prioritization of the senses—among other things. McLuhan writes,

> The phonetic alphabet is a unique technology. There have been many kinds of writing, pictographic and syllabic, but there is only one phonetic alphabet in which semantically meaningless letters are used to correspond to semantically meaningless sounds. This stark division and parallelism between a visual and an auditory world was both crude and ruthless, culturally speaking.[10]

In McLuhan's conjectural anthropology, this translation of the spoken word into the private, written word functioned as a "release" of the individual from the "tribe"[11]—thus the message of the phonetic alphabet is essentially the rise of individualism, or at least a precursor of such. The message of the phonetic alphabet is a change wherein the community is fragmented into private, atomistic individuals silently reading to themselves. The written word thus alters human sociology by affecting human perception—just compare university students reading in a library to the same students discussing the same text in the campus pub. Writing as a technology not only marks a divide between sight and other senses, but is indicative of the individualist-collectivist structure of a culture:

> As an intensification and extension of the visual function, the phonetic alphabet diminishes the role of the other senses of sound and touch and taste in any literate culture. The fact that this does not happen in cultures such as the Chinese, which use non-phonetic scripts, enables them to retain a rich store of inclusive perception in depth of experience that tends to become eroded in civilized

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[5] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 15.
[6] Ibid., 16.
[7] Ibid., 24.
[8] Ibid., 29.
[9] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 84.
[10] Ibid., 83.
[11] Ibid.

> cultures of the phonetic alphabet. For the ideogram is an inclusive *gestalt*, not an analytic dissociation of senses and functions like phonetic writing.[12]

By referring to the retention of 'inclusive perception,' McLuhan gives such an amodal perception both temporal and social priority. With its association with tribal culture, inclusive or amodal perception is what humanity *first possessed*; as a mode of being that does not divide individuals from communities, inclusive perception is what humanity *should seek to possess*. Regardless of whether collectivist culture can be considered superior to individualist culture—and there are many arguments outside of the context of this essay against such a superiority—it is evident here that McLuhan considers "inclusive perception" as the primordial or natural mode of human experience.

The nature of sensation and perception itself is the focus of Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenology. In his view, the philosophy of sensation itself has been overlooked in favour of dualistic study of either the external world or the nature of the internal perceiver.[13] In his own words, "The subject of perception will remain unknown so long as we cannot escape the alternative between created [*nature*] and creating [*naturant*], between sensation as a state of consciousness and as the consciousness of a state, between existence in itself and existence for itself."[14] Different qualities such as colour have distinct effects upon behaviour. Citing a simple experiment in inductive psychology, Merleau-Ponty writes of how "the gesture of raising the arm, which can be taken as an indicator of motor disturbance, is modified differently in its amplitude and its direction by a red, yellow, blue, or green visual field."[15] Merleau-Ponty uses this example to illustrate sensation's role as a factor independent of consciousness or the external world: "For in the examples we gave above, there is no question of an external relation of causality that would leave intact the sensation itself."[16] However, this example of colour translating to different physical movements is but the beginning of Merleau-Ponty's cross-sensory thesis.

Merleau-Ponty explicitly challenges the priority of stratified senses in favour of amodal perception. The modality of perception—the notion that different senses originate from different organs—is a product of thought or reflection. At this same time, however, this reflection necessarily negates sensation:

> The object is only determined as an identifiable being through an open series of possible experiences, and exists only for a subject who produces this identification. Being only exists for someone who is capable of stepping back from it and is thus himself absolutely outside of being. This is how the mind becomes the subject of perception and the notion of "sense" becomes inconceivable. ... Reflection must clarify the unreflected view that it replaces, and it must show the possibility of this succession in order to be able to understand itself as a beginning. To say that it is still me who conceives of myself as situated in a body and as furnished with five senses is clearly only a verbal solution; since I am reflecting, I cannot recognize myself in this embodied I...[17]

It is paradoxical to assert that a man sees with his eyes or hears with his ears, since this man must necessarily annihilate the experience of seeing or hearing in order to cognize what eyes or ears are.

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[12] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 84.
[13] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5.
[14] Ibid., 216.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 217.
[17] Ibid., 220.

Humans do see and hear, and do have eyes and ears, and Merleau-Ponty is not advocating that it is just as logical to assert that a man sees with his ears and hears with his eyes—rather, one may argue that this same man uses his eyes *and* ears to see, and eyes and ears to hear. Reflection is, in a sense, perception turned inward, towards the mind after shutting out the eyes and ears, "and there is no difference between thinking and perceiving, or between seeing and hearing."[18]

Both historically and developmentally, amodal perception precedes modality of perception. In other words, where McLuhan suggests that tribes experienced the world as an all-inclusive gestalt before the phonetic alphabet stratified their senses, a student of Merleau-Ponty would agree while also noting that this stratification occurs in the individual as they develop and reflect upon their senses. Merleau-Ponty writes,

> If seeing or hearing means becoming detached from the impression in order to install it in thought, or ceasing to exist in order to know, then it would be absurd to say that I see with my eyes or that I hear with my ears, for my eyes and ears are still beings of the world and surely incapable as such of organizing that zone of subjectivity prior to the world.[19]

Again, the notion of having five separate senses is a product of reflection's "installing" experience in thought—that is, radically extracting and reconstituting it. Merleau-Ponty's claims are, in part, shifting the focus of reflection from consciousness to the "unreflected view" of the body as the "subject of perception."[20] "Like the experience of the sensible quality," Merleau-Ponty later continues, "the experience of isolated "senses" takes place only within an abnormal attitude and cannot be useful for the analysis of direct consciousness."[21]

Sensations, to Merleau-Ponty, are apprehended by the human being and then particularized by modality; however, these individual aspects of sensations still speak to the primary, undifferentiated nature of experience. Experiences of different objects, such as an ashtray or a violin, simultaneously speak to all of the senses at once; from the perspective of the perceiving human, sensations received from one modality overflow to all the other senses.[22] With this ambiguity, any truth of modality of senses can hardly be ascertained: "At this level, the ambiguity of experience is such that an audible rhythm fuses cinematic images together and gives rise to a perception of movement whereas, without an auditory contribution, the same succession of images would be too slow to provoke the stroboscopic movement."[23] Citing his contemporaries in the psychophysical community, Merleau-Ponty argues that sounds alter perception of colours, with louder sounds intensifying them and lower tones dimming them.[24] Experiences within different modalities affect and correlate with one another for all human beings.

Demonstrating Merleau-Ponty and McLuhan's posited union between the senses are people with synesthesia (from *syn-* = "union" and *aesthesis* = "sensation"). These 'synesthetes' are so named because they report cross-sensory experiences such as associating colours with letters printed in black, or seeing coloured patterns in response to hearing sound or music.[25] Merleau-

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[18] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 220.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 234.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 236.
[23] Ibid., 237.
[24] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 238.
[25] Robert Cytowic, *Synesthesia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 4.

Ponty, citing synesthestic studies with mescaline, asserts that amodal perception is the norm for all human beings, synesthete or no:

> [Synesthetic experience] thus becomes a new opportunity to put the concept of sensation and objective thought into question. *For the subject does not tell us merely that he has a sound and a color at the same time: it is the sound itself that he sees, at the place where colors form.* This formulation is literally rendered meaningless if vision is defined by the visual *quale*, or sound by the sonorous *quale*. But it falls to us to construct our definitions in such a way as to find a sense for this experience, since the vision of sounds or the hearing of colours exist as phenomena. And they are hardly exceptional phenomena. Synesthetic perception is the rule and, if we do not notice it, this is because scientific knowledge displaces experience and we have unlearned seeing, hearing, and sensing in general in order to deduce what we ought to see, hear, or sense from our bodily organization and from the world as it is conceived by the physicist.[26]

Present here is precisely McLuhan's thesis: the extensions of man have narrowed his perceptions. Rather than an all-inclusive experience of the world that does not rely upon different modalities to dissect and discuss sensation, humanity originally *literally* saw *high* and *low* notes, felt *soft* sounds, tasted *sharp* cheese. It is only with invention of technologies such as the phonetic alphabet that senses began to be stratified and separated into distinct modes. McLuhan's concern over the community and the individual aside, the "message" that was the chasm between sight and sound coevolved with reflection and understanding of the world as object and the perceiver as subject.

Mechanization

McLuhan's notion of the message extends not only to sensory modality, but to the structure of thought itself. He implicates the medium of the Gutenberg press (and mechanical print technology in general) in the rise of a general "mechanization" of thinking. Referring to the Gutenberg press—both its mechanical make-up and its historically unprecedented ability to disseminate print information—McLuhan writes:

> ...the paradox of mechanization is that although it is itself the cause of maximal growth and change, the principle of mechanization excludes the very possibility of growth or the understanding of change. For mechanization is achieved by fragmentation of any process and by putting the fragmented parts in a series. Yet, as David Hume showed in the eighteenth century, there is no principle of causality in a mere sequence. That one thing follows another accounts for nothing. Nothing follows from following except change.[27]

Mechanization historically manifests in scientific models where all aspects of a given phenomenon are separated out into distinct, indivisible parts, and scientific explanations are reducible to one component of nature colliding with another. As McLuhan notes, this does not account for causality or change—change in nature is reduced to atomistic components that never change themselves. Hume's skepticism of causality, as mentioned by McLuhan, is appropriate: even if we perceive one billiard ball colliding with another, and subsequently perceive the second ball being sent on its way, we have no real 'reason' to say that the first ball caused the second to move.[28] The mechanized

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[26] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 238; italics present in original text.
[27] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 11-12.
[28] David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," in *Great Philosophical Arguments: an*

world separates the first billiard ball from the second in such a way that any justifiable, empirical relation between them becomes impossible to articulate. Even our perceptions of the billiard table are mechanized – what relation can we say our perception of the first ball's movement has with our perception of the second ball's movement, other than that one follows the other?

Even if the mechanization of nature constitutes a proximate explanation of *how*, it could never provide an *ultimate* explanation of *why*—without, of course, allusion to some kind of divine providence, such as in Newton's scientific doctrine and its corresponding theology. In analyzing the history of both natural science and philosophy, it becomes apparent that mechanization—as the fragmentation of all things, both phenomenal and noumenal, into sequential components – has imprinted itself upon human thought. It manifests itself in our very thoughts and arguments by separating them into a sequence where one wholly distinct argument must necessarily and logically follow from the wholly distinct argument before it; again, 'logic' becomes little more than one thought following the next without too much protest on the thinker's part.

Merleau-Ponty, in his writings on science and the phenomenal field, demonstrates the eventual failings of the mechanistic presuppositions that McLuhan highlights and discusses. Essential to Merleau-Ponty's argument is a failure of physiological models, both geometric and mechanistic, to explain *lived* experience.[29] As he notes in *Cézanne's Doubt*, the lived perspective, even confined to vision alone, is fairly different from the perspective provided by a camera, by geometric optics: "In perception, the objects that are near appear smaller, those far away larger, than they do in a photograph, as we see in the cinema when an approaching train gets bigger much faster than a real train would under the same circumstances."[30] Here, Merleau-Ponty contests the substitution of geometry for our actual perceptions—a substitution shown to be perceivably different in both still and moving photography. "To say that a circle seen obliquely is seen as an ellipse is to substitute for our actual perception the schema of what we would have to see if we were cameras."[31] In this, we see how presupposed geometry has come to replace our actual perception, just as mechanical sequence has replaced change and growth as we encounter them in nature and in thought.

Merleau-Ponty addresses mechanization explicitly in his account of the failure of classical physiology to explain—or *express*—lived experience. In this account, classical understandings of perception, be it sight, hearing, or temperature, grew out of a physics of inert, stable bodies that existed in indifferent, absolute space.[32] In this classical model, 'things' or 'bodies' were isolated from their environments and from *perception* of the thing.[33] Forces acting upon these bodies were likewise isolated from experience and then reapplied in sterile models of objects and forces so as to conceivably recreate motion, change, and ultimately, *physics* as it is encountered in experience.[34] This process of definition and reconstitution is mechanization; it is the fragmentation of the *natural* into inert, indivisible parts that do not change or grow, but work together in sequence to suggest change and growth in what is now the *physical*. This is apparent in Merleau-Ponty's account of the living body at the hands of the experimental observer:

Introduction to Philosophy, ed. Lewis Vaughn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 235-236.

[29] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 70.

[30] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 73-74.

[31] Ibid., 74.

[32] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 54-55.

[33] Ibid., 54.

[34] Ibid., 55.

> The value predicates conferred upon the living body by reflecting judgment had to be brought into being through a foundation of physico-chemical properties. Common experience finds an affinity and meaningful relation among a speaker's gesture, smile, and tone of voice. But this reciprocal relation of expression, which reveals the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being in the world, must, for a mechanistic physiology, be reduced to a series of causal relations. The centrifugal phenomenon of expression had to be tied to centripetal conditions, that particular manner of treating the world we call "behaviour" had to be reduced to third person processes, experience had to be brought down to the level of physical nature, and the living body had to be converted into a thing without an interior.[35]

The human body is thus appropriated by classical models of physics and chemistry in an attempt to understand its behaviour and whatever its own experience is. In this appropriation, what is physical (that is, physical and chemical) is extracted from the body's 'gesture, smile, and tone of voice' and whatever the scientific observer concerns himself with is segmented out into one muscle, vessel, nerve, or bone that is tugging, pushing, or signalling another. Not only science but also philosophy has resorted to this mechanization of the world, "since the only thinkable being [manner of existence] remained defined through the scientific method."[36] Merleau-Ponty continues to write:

> The living subject's affective and practical stance opposite the world was thus absorbed into psycho-physiological mechanisms ... [the body] was nothing more than a machine, and the perception of another person could not truly be *of another person*, since it resulted from an inference and thus only placed a consciousness in general behind the automaton, a transcendent cause and not someone actually inhabiting its movements.[37]

The mechanized body indeed becomes no more than a mechanical automaton, more fit for deconstruction than for dissection—since, as an object and not a body, it is never 'living' enough for an actual vivisection. Returning to Heidegger's writing on technology, it has been noted that the threat of technology is countered by the fact that human being, and not technological being, is always "that which the two-fold of being as such calls upon."[38] However, human being—as a manner of being—is eliminated when human behaviour is reduced to 'psycho-physiological mechanisms.' Thus classical science, in its mechanizing treatment of the human subject as an object, encourages a certain forgetfulness that is present in the threat of technology—the threat that human beings will one day be handled and processed as a resource, or "standing reserve," or otherwise *in*human beings.[39]

Merleau-Ponty posits that this mechanization, as it is encountered in classical scientific models, collapses in light of both advances in physics (such as the special theory of relativity) and the problematic nature of behavioural study.[40] The natural world is not something mechanical or geometric, and can no longer be accommodated by such models. "Then the organism, in turn," writes Merleau-Ponty, "confronts the physico-chemical analysis not with the actual difficulties of a

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[35] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 55.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 55-56; italics in original text.
[38] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 11.
[39] Heidegger, *Technology*, 24.
[40] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 57.

complex object, but with the *in principle* difficulties of a meaningful being."[41] Behaviour, whether in human beings or in some other organism, defies mechanism.

McLuhan also notes that today (or at least as early as 1964), mechanization – in both science and thought – is collapsing, if not threatened. Once again, the lines between modalities of perception are blurred as McLuhan gives his account of "the greatest of all reversals:"

> Just before an airplane breaks the sound barrier, sound waves become visible on the wings of the plane. The sudden visibility of sound just as sound ends is an apt instance of that great pattern of being that reveals new and opposite forms just as the earlier forms reach their peak.[42]

It should be of no surprise to the reader that McLuhan uses an example—visible sound—that is synesthetic, in some sense. The 'sudden visibility of sound' is a symbol not only for 'inclusive perception' defying modalities, but of the sudden change in mankind's perceptions put into effect by mankind's extensions. To McLuhan, the advent of mechanization may very well be undone—or reversed—by technologies of tremendous speed. The greatest threat to mechanization, argues McLuhan, is *electricity*, and the sense of simultaneity that accompanies it. "With instant speed," writes McLuhan, "the causes of things began to emerge to awareness again, as they had not done with things in sequence and in concatenation accordingly."[43] Here, we must understand the 'causes of things' as being other than the simple logic of 'cause and effect'—for 'cause and effect' is, at least to some degree, an expression of mechanized sequence wherein the 'cause' is wholly distinct from its following 'effect;' this is precisely the notion of causation that Hume disavows (or disavows as being purely empirical). Rather, McLuhan regards simultaneity as encouraging our apprehension that the cause is *in* the effect. He thus sums up his thoughts on simultaneity by returning to inclusive perception and an allusion to Chinese calligraphy: "We return to the inclusive form of the icon."[44]

Conclusion: The Unity of Perception

It is noteworthy that synesthetes are often described by psychologists and neuroscientists as having 'X → Y synesthesia.'[45] For example, a synesthete who consistently perceives the colour blue upon hearing the musical tone C is described as having 'tone → colour synesthesia.' In light of both McLuhan and Merleau-Ponty's thinking, this notation can be problematic. In terms of mechanization, the $X \rightarrow Y$ separates the tone and colour spatiotemporally; with regard to modal perception, $X \rightarrow Y$ implies that the tone *caused* the colour as something separate from the tone itself. This is not the case; X and Y, the tone and the colour, C and blue, *are* the same thing, the same phenomenon, simultaneous in time and perceived space. Adopting Merleau-Ponty's account of the structure of perception, it is clear that the synesthete does not perceive a tone that causes the perception of colour; rather, the synethete hears a tone that *has* or *is* colour, and any perception of the colour blue that is not accompanied by the note C is simply a different phenomenon from that of tone and colour together.

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[41] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 57.
[42] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 12.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Cytowic, *Synesthesia*, 5.

It is apparent in both the thought of McLuhan and Merleau-Ponty that "we have unlearned seeing, hearing, and sensing in general"[46]—and all for the sake of better aligning subjective experience with an apparently objective body of knowledge such as science. This is not to outright decry the scientific method or any other *medium* (in the McLuhanian sense, of course), but to simply illustrate a *message* (again in the McLuhanian sense of the word). This message, or change, is precisely the divvying up of human experience into modalities, into mechanical components, into the prioritization of sight and its associated privatization of the individual. Experience, thought, and all objects of natural science have been broken down into inert components. Sensory perception has been altered from what it once was, such that 'inclusive perception' has been erased and all that remains are synesthetes and cross-sensory allegory found in the fine arts. Merleau-Ponty famously cited the painter Cézanne as an example of the latter: "We *see* the depth, the smoothness, the softness, the hardness of objects; Cézanne even claimed that we see their odor. If the painter is to express the world, the arrangement of his colors must carry with it this indivisible whole..."[47]

Of course, the unity of perception—that is, perception that is amodal and not fragmented into mechanized components—brings with it both a host of half-formed connections and unanswered concerns. McLuhan associates inclusive perception with tribal culture and better social connection between individuals. Does this rule of perception ring true for non-human species? Though cats and dogs cannot write, what differences lie between the sensations of a dog—known to ethologists as a social carnivore—and the perceptions of solitary hunter such as a cat? What is clear in the thought of both Merleau-Ponty and McLuhan is not only a (re)turn to amodal perception and spatiotemporal holism (that is, simultaneity in perception), but social and philosophical implications that accompany our embrace of live experience as real and whole. McLuhan, as mentioned above, alludes to a tribal collectivism that was dissolved by the written word; with the rise of the simultaneity that comes with electronic media, he anticipates a "return to the inclusive form of the icon."[48] Merleau-Ponty, for his part, argues with a particular optimism regarding the return of the human body as a subject:

> If, on the contrary, as the primacy of perception requires, we call what we perceive "the world," and what we love "the person," there is a type of doubt concerning the human, and a type of spite, which become impossible. Certainly, the world which we thus find is not absolutely reassuring. We measure the boldness of the love which promises beyond what it will destroy it ... But it is true, at the moment of this promise, that our love extends beyond qualities, beyond the body, beyond time, even though we could not love without qualities, without bodies, and without time.[49]

The return to the world *as* the world and people *as* persons is, in a sense, the only possible route we can take should we wish for our thought to not fragment or oppose other elements of our experience, such as gestures, smiles, voice, and love. Whether the primacy of perception has had

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[46] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 238.
[47] Merleau-Ponty, *Cézanne's Doubt*, 115.
[48] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 12.
[49] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences," *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 103.

its consequences, or whether electricity has delivered its message, remains to be seen; for now, let it suffice to say that we see not only with our eyes, but our ears, too.[50]

[50] "So long as we know no method of approaching this problem by following up our own sensations or by some other means, we do well meantime to believe that in all probability in both cases we hear with our ears." – Friedrich Albert Lange, regarding his studies on synesthesia, "Brain and Soul," *The History of Materialism.* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

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