

WHAT IS PERCEPTION? INTERPRETING “FLESH AND CHIASM (L'ENTRELACS-LE CHIASME)” ACCORDING TO MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

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Abstrak

Kajian tubuh dan kiasme menurut Merleau-Ponty merupakan hal menarik untuk diteliti. Hal ini dikarenakan keduanya menyentuh wilayah “yang kelihatan” (the visible) dan “yang tidak kelihatan” (the invisible), yang kerap dimaknai ambigu ketika berhadapan dengan kebertubuhan. Ambiguitas yang kerap muncul yaitu tidak digunakannya keduanya bersamaan atau dipilih salah satu. Kalaupun bersamaan, biasanya hal itu dilihat sebagai penopangan atau pelengkap. Padahal, keduanya tidak bisa dipisahkan dan saling terkait. Melalui penelitian pustaka, penulis mencoba menunjukkan uraian kunci terkait wilayah tersebut dengan membawahi di bingkai persepsi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa “yang kelihatan” dapat diumpamakan sebagai kulit dan permukaan, sedangkan “yang tak kelihatan” merupakan daging di bawahnya. Merleau-Ponty tidak bermaksud “yang tak kelihatan” menyangga “yang kelihatan”. keterpaduan antara “yang kelihatan” dan “yang tidak kelihatan” bisa dikatakan sebagai kiasme. Kiasme merupakan suatu kerangka silang-menyilang. Gagasan ini tidak diterima mudah bagi filsuf feminis. Merleau-Ponty rupanya memahami daging yang inheren dengan jaringan (the chiasm) subyek dan dunia merupakan perwujudan ontologi baru. Ontologi ini membidik antara kehidupan dan kematian, binatang dan manusia yang terkesan hirarkis sehingga kemudian menarik perhatian kaum feminis setidaknya diwakili oleh Irigaray. Irigaray meyakini bahwa keistimewaan “yang kelihatan” atas sentuhan turut membangun falogosentrisme karena penis dinilai “yang kelihatan”, sementara vagina sebaliknya, “yang tidak kelihatan”.

Kata kunci: Persepsi, Tubuh, Jaringan, Kiasme, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Fenomenologi, Feminis.

Abstract

The study of the body and chiasm according to Merleau-Ponty is an interesting subject that deserves to be explored. This is because it touches the "visible" and "invisible" areas, which are often interpreted ambiguously when dealing with bodily functions. The ambiguity that often arises is that the two are not used together or one is chosen. Even if together, it is usually seen as a support or a complement. In fact, the two are inseparable and interrelated. Through literature research, the author tries to show key descriptions related to the area by overseeing the perception frame. The results show that the "visible" can be likened to the skin and surface, while the "unseen" is the flesh beneath. For Merleau-Ponty, it does not mean "the invisible" supports "the visible". The integration between the "visible" and "invisible" can be said as a chiasm. A chiasm is a criss-cross framework. This idea is not easily accepted by feminist philosophers. Merleau-Ponty seems to understand that the inherent flesh with the chiasm of subjects and the world is the embodiment of a new ontology. This ontology focuses on between life and death, animals and humans, which seem hierarchical, so it attracts the attention of feminists, at least represented by Irigaray. Irigaray believes that the "visible" privilege of touch contributes to phallogocentrism because the penis is judged to be "the visible", while the vagina is the opposite, "the invisible".

Keywords: *Perception, Body, The chiasm, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology, Feminist*

INTRODUCTION

Maurice Merleau-Ponty has many various discussion topics. One of them is the perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b). But in this article, I show the discussion about the visible and the invisible. Merleau-Ponty denies the tendency of Western philosophical ideas to rely on empiricism, which in its extreme develops positivism and intellectualism, or what is commonly known as idealism. Merleau-Ponty opposes dualism, subject and object, self and the world, through the experience of the existential life of the body as emphasized in his book, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (2012).

Merleau-Ponty realized that the body is underestimated in Western philosophy. This is because the body is seen as something to be transcended by the power of the mind, which has been preserved since the early history of philosophy (Adian, 2010: 94). Merleau-Ponty took the opposite position. He is interested in the superiority of perception as a place for self-realization in the world and, at the same time, recognizes that perception is the most basic knowledge (Kristianto, 2022).

Bertens points out that *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) explains Maurice Merleau-Ponty's change of mind about perception. On the one hand, perception refers to the link between the body and the world or to the union between the I-body and its world. On the other hand, perception is used in a psychological sense as an act of awareness in the form of observation (Bertens, 2014: 153). Based on these two thoughts, Merleau-Ponty wants to invite readers to understand new things that the body is indeed part of the world and that the body can see and feel as far as it is included in the world. If so, what is meant by "that which is visible" and "that which is not visible"?

Bertens tried to interpret the idea Merleau-Ponty meant. For him, "that which is visible" can be described as something directly presented to our experience, while "invisible which is unseen" is not delivered instantly but sideways and hidden (Bertens, 2014: 153). In short, "what is visible" can be compared to the skin and surface, while "what is invisible" is the flesh underneath. Merleau-Ponty does not mean the "invisible" overrides the "visible." However, the "invisible" is not only below the "visible" but also above it (Bertens, 2014: 153). Therefore, the integration between "the visible" and "the invisible" can be said to be chiasm. Based on the description above, the author tries to examine further related: "What is "visible" and "invisible"?"; "Why are "that which is visible" and "that which is not visible" said to be forms of chiasm?"; "Then, what is the analysis of feminist philosophers when they see this?" These questions form the formulation of the problem as well as the direction of this paper.

DISCUSSION

1. "Visible" and "Invisible" Embryology

Merleau-Ponty views the "visible" as a space full of possibilities with an "invisible" substructure (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 16). Mark B. N. Hansen sees Merleau-Ponty in his essays "The Visible" and "The Invisible" trying to transform phenomenology into a philosophy of immanence (Hansen, 2005: 234). Immanence philosophy is a philosophy that describes that the body belongs to the world. In outlining this thesis, Hansen describes it in three descriptions, namely life, self-movement, and phenomenology between philosophy and science. Broadly speaking, life outlines Merleau-Ponty thought that focuses on the analysis of embryology, the history of genealogical development (phylogenesis), and neo-Darwinian evolution. Meanwhile, the self-movement focuses on how the philosophical concept of the world returns ontologically, meaning that it separates the two complementary processes from flesh through the flesh; the world became flesh and flesh became the world (Hansen, 2005: 234). Then, phenomenology between philosophy and science tries to find Merleau-Ponty's philosophical relevance by contrasting it with the philosopher, Daniel Dennet, and the biologist, Francisco Varela. Dennet focuses on anti-metaphysical instrumentalism, while Varela is based on cellular or molecular realism. For more details, this can be seen in the following section.

a. Life

Mark Hansen explains that Merleau-Ponty states that the world is not an object, a pair of consciousness that confronts knowledge (Hansen, 2005: 235). On the one hand, the world lies under the division of consciousness and expansion, thought, and incarnation, which means that it provides the basis of the human body, both arising from and before that division. On the other hand, the world names man as a body with elements and expresses them. The Cartesian states that we may be invited to force everything if we gain nothing to be full, without lack, and without hidden possibilities. Hansen sees Cartesian thought as engaging with the

historicity and philosophy of a broader ontology by challenging the nothingness and limiting the effects of actuality (Hansen, 2005: 235). The body is a fairly simple proposition that one can say without further ado that there is or is not anything. Merleau-Ponty invites readers to approach this new ontology from various sides, even if they have to intervene to broaden the perspective of science and try to reveal their goals. Clearly, Merleau-Ponty confirms it through next two things (Hansen, 2005: 236–237). *First*, humans are not merely a combination of animality and reason. In other words, we must understand humanity above all as another way of being a body. *Second*, humans are not built from animality, even though animality and humans are given together in the body. This understanding can be said to postulate humans as the owner of the body. The body is supposed to have arisen from an animal, or rather from entanglement with animality. Animal life connects us to our common sense and worldly life. This is not an idealistic path of worldly life, but a form of physical nature given to us. In addition, this claim also shows that if we want to observe the body, then we are required to participate in self-recovery and intensify the entire development of the world (Hansen, 2005: 237).

The above expression implies the emergence of the perception of the invisible about what is seen. In other words, Merleau-Ponty tried to bring out his distinction with the ideas of Gestalt psychology. At least, the memo's explanation is much richer regarding the totality paradox. This paradox results from the fact that an object cannot be derived in parts because a thing is not a sum of microscopic incidental and momentary events but a phenomenon wrapped up in the allure of the whole (Hansen, 2005: 238). For Merleau-Ponty, the key to explaining the mystery of the emergence of totality lies in behavior. Behavior draws out the potential that is not only in the emerging psycho chemistry but also movement. Behavior is described in "dynamic anatomy", "potential for growth", and "intrinsic elements of elements". Thus, behavior has transformed the intrinsic potential in history as well as storing various sources of growth in the future. Merleau-Ponty further

explained the study of biology-based behavior through G.E. Coghill. Merleau-Ponty saw Coghill demonstrated that behavior cannot be explained by microscopic analysis and that behavior and totality coexist. Based on this analysis, Coghill describes it in three parts (Hansen, 2005: 239). *First*, Coghill rejects the notion of adaptation in favor of a conception of growth as a solution to a problem posed to the organization. In other words, the axolotl can be said as a means of transferring solutions to the issues that live in the air to land to produce new solutions. *Second*, Coghill understands that elemental development was the real realization of power over internal possibilities within the organism that transcended actual physiological function. *Third*, therefore, Coghill demonstrated that the development of organisms and the emergence of behavior are in one part; for example, in the axolotl, head-to-tail existence and swimming are two faces of one process. This can be called as multiple phenomena. On the one hand, expanding the gradual restriction of behavior completely immerses the body. On the other hand, finesse the separate parts of the organism (Hansen, 2005: 240). In other words, these two things show that behavior is an immanent principle of something itself that arises from the beginning to the whole.

Merleau-Ponty also considered that behavior could also be detailed through the morphological principles of Arnold Gesell's dynamics. Similar to Coghill, Gesell identified that body organization and behavior originate from the body which is designated as the place of behavior. This is because behavior articulates several fundamental assumptions about Merleau-Ponty's thinking in defining life. At least, there is asymmetry behavior, even though it is built in a bilateral construction. Organisms face the world not frontally but in a corner. Nevertheless, Gesell did not offer an asymmetrical phenomenon; Merleau-Ponty quickly responded by understanding that the virtues of this asymmetry by Proust are usually called sides (*sides, côtés*). Meanwhile, the object should look different from the symmetrical position as the first position of the embryo. Thus, both "visible" and "invisible" embryology are

incorporated into the characteristic behavioral modalities of organisms, such as movements arising from dynamically empowered things, understanding, and overall phenomenology (Hansen, 2005: 240). This idea is very different from Gesell's two claims that explain the behavior of organisms. Because on the one hand, dynamic morphology determines the fluctuations in the arrangement of organismal life, which is understood as a growing phenomenon related to balance and balance. On the other hand, behavior can be said to be an endogenous character. According to Merleau-Ponty, an analysis of life must avoid misplacing a positive principle behind phenomena (Hansen, 2005: 241). This is usually expressed in ideas and essence.

b. Body Movement

Mark Hansen realized that this part is a vital part of Merleau-Ponty's thinking in his work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Movement means the stage of coming out of him, actuality in desire, and the real embryo (Hansen, 2005: 244). In other words, movement is instituted by organisms. This is because the essence of the action is to open the difference between itself and what is seen. The difference is then filled by the flesh. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty stated there is a connection between me and the world. The physical modality in movement is a transcendence of *esse-percipere*. The world acquires the thing within only because the body is constituted as a thing outside the world. In other words, body perception is a manifestation of the world and vice versa. If biological life solves the problem of the continuity of the body and the world, the ratio must be reckoned with the identity of movement and perception. At least, this can be understood through the following three things (Hansen, 2005: 244). *First*, body movement is a constitution of objects and the world. *Second*, body movements open up "the invisible". *Third*, the movement of the body constitutes the incarnation of life. Through these three understandings, Merleau-Ponty stated that the body is primordial and at the same time deeper than its biological nature. Or, the body can be said to be the basis of the dualism of incarnation

consciousness because the world is an essential modality of life (Hansen, 2005: 244).

Merleau-Ponty describes the body in terms of directed perception phenomenology of a world aligned or constituted for us before we encountered it contextually in the scientific knowledge (Hansen, 2005: 244). Such actions are usually called intentional. Intentionality does involve not only the direction of the mind or awareness towards a particular object but also the direction of our whole life and ourselves (Tjaya, 2014: 43). The content of directionality is not a representation or what is the object of consciousness, but rather a kind of sense or direction towards the world. In this case, consciousness is not understood as a thinking process but as acts. In his works, "The Visible" and "The Invisible", Merleau-Ponty describes the body holding something as a negation of the thought process because movements break Merleau-Ponty's breakdown of thought. On the contrary, contrary to the thought process, the movement that made it possible to open the slit of transcendence of the body came out of him. In short, the movement operates together with bodily phenomena and transcendence in the world. In involving the body, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that there are things that appear to be hidden from sight, but that experience is also not believed to be a combination. Vision is understood as the movement of the body over the object being considered (Hansen, 2005: 246). Husserl showed that the body's constitution is placed on the subject of vision. That is, the body is directed towards the object seen as a result of tactile sensations. Touch that is constituted by the body seems sharp when the body touches itself. Merleau-Ponty placed it as the basis for the conceptualization of meat. For him, the experience of the body feeling itself represented a transcendence of Husserl's dualism. This is because healthy thinking can be said to be more fundamental than the division of subjects and objects, and the impact on the body cannot be placed as a contextual opening for this opposition. However, the body is actually a part of itself. Meanwhile, movement is the correctness of the fundamental

modality of the body and the world accompanied by the relationship between vision and touch (Hansen, 2005: 247).

c. Phenomenology between Philosophy and Science

This passage suggests a unique middle way between instrumentalism and biological realism. This step was taken based on Daniel Dennett and Francisco Varela. Dennett stated that Darwin promoted a lot of philosophical perspectives on evolution. At the same time, Varela, through his work, *Embodied Mind* (1993), compared courage and inspiration with insight from cognitive knowledge through a phenomenological approach. Unlike Dennett, Merleau-Ponty pays serious attention to the metaphysical implications of an evolutionary approach to life in which there is no accounting for the singularity of human intentionality. Moreover, unlike Varela, Merleau-Ponty places the prerogatives of the embodiment of human experience on a philosophical account in the totality of biological paradoxes when there is no firm demand for the survival of organisms (Hansen, 2005: 256). Dennett begins by explaining that an evolutionary perspective requires understanding the complex weaves of our thinking through a perspective; can we see the elements of thought? Various kinds of minds try to exert intentionality as a general procedure for understanding the other systems, including the macromolecular machines, they create. For Dennett, intentional can be said to be quite simple as the key to untangling the mystery of the mind from all thoughts (Hansen, 2005: 257). The intentional problem forbids us in the principle of drawing ontological conclusions from the attribution of intentionality to thoughts equivalent to the responsibility of evolutionary processes. In various schools of thought, intentionality is not a proprietary name for the system under investigation, but rather is meaningful for us to understand the system.

Dennett saw a basic contradiction. That is, he takes an evolutionary perspective on intentionality to avoid a source for a transcendent cause for intentionality's uniqueness. This contradiction focuses on how it stands out, in particular regarding

the study of Dennett's notion of intentional anthropomorphism. If the intention is not applied in our perspective, it will emerge through an evolutionary process transformed from primitive macromolecular machines to complex human existence. Dennett is indeed trying to introduce the relationship between behavior and meaning. For Varela, this part is a cognitive form at the level of behavioral unity. Merleau-Ponty sees this pattern as a form of significance in biology by discussing the phenomenology of chiasm and the ontology of the relationship between behavior and morphology.

2. "The Visible" and "The Invisible"

"The visible" and "the invisible" are Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology thoughts (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). This thought tries to find the origin of truth and natural philosophy, while the thought of "chiasm" is a new concept that explores "visible" production and the metaphysical structure of the flesh. In the study of empiricism, what makes sense is not only something that is coherent, but holds together itself and can be recognized when it returns (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 70). Meanwhile, in intellectualism, recognition of things that are immanent means when constituent things are not only contiguous to one another. In short, both are mutually internal, intentional, and meaningful. Through empiricism and intellectualism, we can understand that what makes sense lies between absolute darkness and transparency of essence, and between the particular and the universal. (Lefort, 1968: xii). All deeper searches are grounded in philosophical reflections. Philosophical reflection seeks an intrinsic understanding of "the visible" and "the invisible" in something that displays its constitution. In short, this reflection tries to show the presence of connection in the hidden things and not from rational consciousness. Meanwhile, transcendental reflection shows how an intuitive feeling is formed in an action that transcends meaning. It is understood that meaning becomes essential in terms of what makes sense through its relationship with a sign to signify, while

understanding constitutes the meaning that is represented. The reflective analysis gives us an explanation of how both are comprised incoherently and cohesively. If so, what is the definition of "that which is visible" and "that which is not seen"?

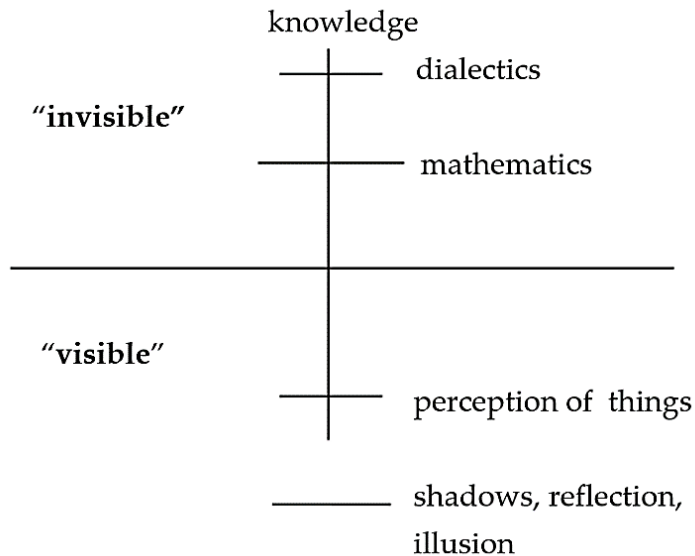


Fig. 1. Invisible and Visible

Source: (Hass, 2008: 194).

According to Merleau-Ponty, cognitive expression is rooted in life experiences. All life processes offer a revolutionary paradigm for understanding the life of the mind. Referring to Plato, knowledge and ignorance are usually separated by a line so that it seems hierarchical. One of the striking things from Plato's thought is the formation of "visible". Perception is formed by images and material perceptions. Plato also tries to find beyond illusion for truth connected with transcendental reality. Of course, this ontology was taken up by Descartes when he weakened the senses and suspended all knowledge by means of a divine guarantee. However, Plato divides the line into more subtle references to Aristotle's metaphysical substance. This is because Aristotle's description of reality is a collection of objects with various properties. In this case,

Aristotle tried to improve Plato's understanding through the general construction of substance without changing the ontology. Plato's frame of mind regarding "the visible" and "the invisible" can be seen in the following diagram (Hass, 2008: 194). That diagram tells us the example of the invisible is knowledge (like dialectics and mathematics) and the example of the visible are the perception of things, shadows, reflection, and illusion.

Lawrence Hass tried to demonstrate how the origin and abstraction of the idea of a real object. It is an artifact of the intellectual cutting into the "visible" network and dividing it into discrete parts. Far from being a collection of discrete objects, Merleau-Ponty offers a slightly different understanding of "visible" as follows (Hass, 2008: 195).

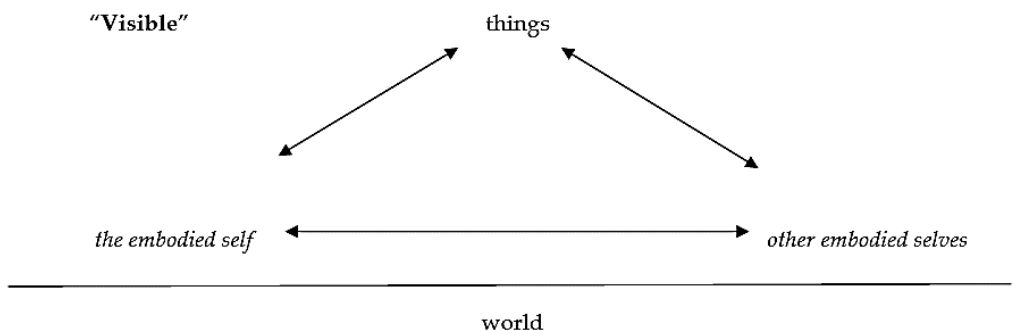


Fig. 2. Visible

Source: (Hass, 2008: 195)

Through the chart table above, we can see that the existence of self, objects, and other self symbolizes and synergizes with each other. Everything is intertwined in the frame of perceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty shows that in the experience of life, we also meet with other movements. The movement is expressed in the form of creative language that overcomes several precipitating situations. In detail, the movement is described as follows (Hass, 2008: 195).

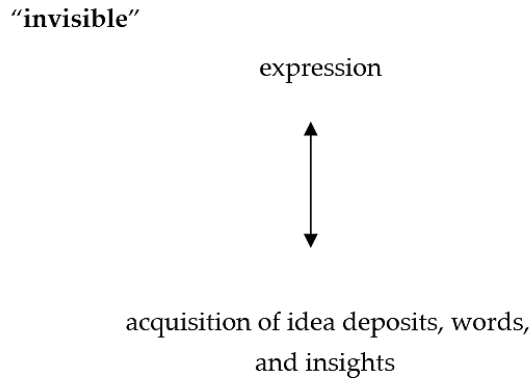


Fig. 3. Invisible

Source: (Hass, 2008: 195)

Regarding the movement of thought and language, Merleau-Ponty explains the relationship between the body and the world, also with others, because being in the same dimension carries the infrastructure of vision. Therefore, Lawrence Hass describes the "visible" and "invisible" Merleau-Ponty ontologies through the following figure (Hass, 2008: 196).

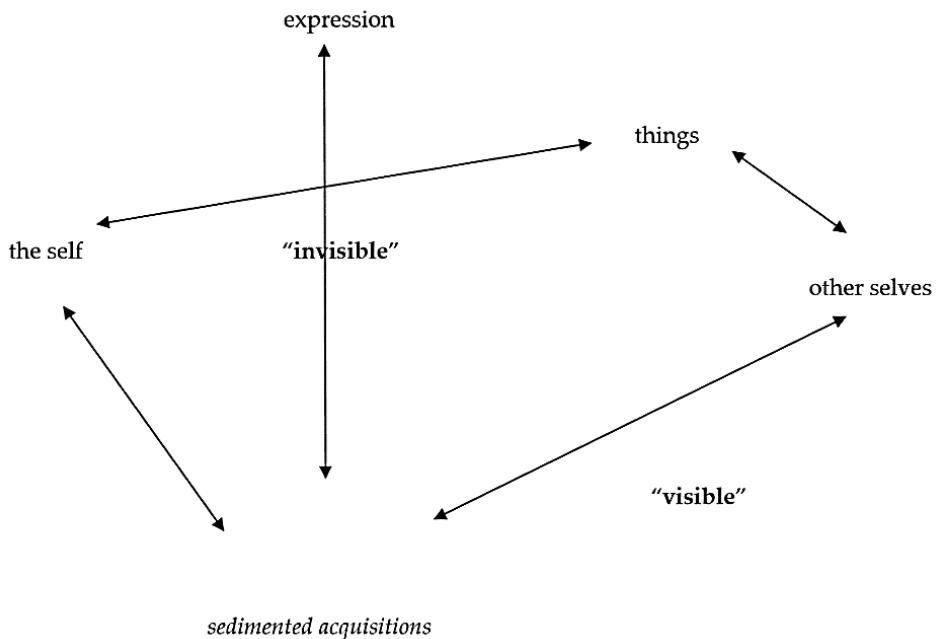


Fig. 4. The works of invisible and visible

Source: (Hass, 2008: 196)

Through this picture, we can perceive that the "invisible" movement is not more prominent than the "visible" movement. This is because there is no hierarchical Platonic thought between thought and the body's relationship with the world. New creative ideas, words, meanings, paradigms, theories, and views acquire in the middle of the world as an ideal way of organizing the world (Hass, 2008: 196). However, writing, artwork, images, text, and speech become the "visible" part and may inspire further transcendent articulations. The intertwining of the "invisible" and the "visible" reminds us that there is no Platonic dualism. It can be said that there is a fundamental difference, but not an ontology of expressive movement of thought and action of vision. For Merleau-Ponty, everything is understood as vision and touch, body and world, self and other, which builds an entanglement or overlap in extreme divergence (Hass, 2008: 197). The author suspects that this entanglement might be called a network or chiasm. Merleau-Ponty's frame of mind goes beyond representation, analysis, and grounding to illuminate the world expressively.

If we pay attention to the term "flesh", Alphonson Ling states that this is a new term in the phenomenology of perception that brings light to a series of non-objective phenomena that the subject himself understands as embodiment (Lefort, 1968: iv). The flesh is the visible, audible, and tangible body part. In other words, we can find equality of sensitivity and things that make sense because the flesh for itself can be said to make sense. The body can move because there is awareness of the world's situation.

3. "The Visible" and "The Invisible"

The philosophical question posed by feminist philosophers to Merleau-Ponty's thought is, "Are women buried in global humanity or neutral, naked psychic universal subjects, and Merleau-Ponty's neurophysiological interactions that are explored in all of her writings, but leave behind the sexual specificity that is lived by femininity and representation? Conceptual and linguistic characteristics of phallogocentrism?" This question raises its

contemplation in understanding the chiasm in Merleau-Ponty's frame of mind. Merleau-Ponty initiated an explanation out of the structure of the paradigm of empiricism and rationalism. This thinking presupposes that perception is a middle way between mind and body, as well as subject and object. This binary opposition is of particular interest to feminist groups, especially those who focus on logocentrism as a fundamental implication and engage in phallogocentrism. Unlike Derrida, Merleau-Ponty tries to fight opposition through controlled definitions and a clear theoretical frame of mind. Even so, this performance is not guaranteed to be free from the shots of feminists who try to change the notion of phallogocentrism.

Elizabeth Grosz stated that Merleau-Ponty and feminists (*e.g.* Irigaray) actually have the same enemy to move beyond the binary structure. However, Grosz realized that this was not enough. At least, Irigaray thought Derrida and Deleuze's thoughts were scathing. For Irigaray, she is disturbed by the metaphor of women that permeates their writings, which functions as a common symbol of political and theoretical radicality (Grosz, 1993: 39). Building on life experience, Merleau-Ponty sees the experience of the body as possible to resonate crucially and uniquely with the contributions of feminist theory. Despite the problem, many feminists (in the 1960s and 1970s) tended to have a somewhat naive experience in seeing and accessing pure femininity or several undeniable truths, even though they were based on analysis. Experience cannot be understood as a problematic criterion for assessing knowledge because of its implications in the dominant culture and established theoretical framework. Merleau-Ponty understands that life experience cannot be claimed as a source of truth, a judge in decisions, or a neutral point of view in judging. Because experience is not outside the pressure of social, political, historical, and cultural (Grosz, 1993: 40). To reject the body as being understood as raw physicalism and materialism, Merleau-Ponty invites feminists to rethink the knowledge base by reaffirming the specificity of women's subjectivity which is not far from the determination of

ideological models (Grosz, 1993: 41). This embodiment requires perspective and limited access from the subject to objects of knowledge, perception, or behavior. However, this is done in response to feminists who ask crucial questions about ability.

In his unfinished work on the "visible" and "the invisible," Merleau-Ponty experienced a shift in the understanding of perception, manifestation, and experience. Everything is done by involving different ontology frames. Even at the end of the thought, he presents ideas about the flesh. The flesh is a form of distinction between mind and body, subject and object, inside and outside, self and other (Grosz, 1993: 43) Merleau-Ponty understood flesh as the main idea, but not the union or compound of two substances. The flesh can be said to be more elementary or primary through seeing and being seen, being touched, the required assimilation and interaction, and the participation of subjects and objects. Such interactions can dismantle the boundaries of each of their sensations, and attachments, denial of the urgency of identity separation. What is described by the glittering flesh of difference, the subject of the world, and the world as the condition of the subject? Unlike Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty wants to return to the disconnected experience of one another, the experience without concluding reflection, the organizational imposition of a large experience (Grosz, 1993: 43). This can be said to codify reason, language, and knowledge. Merleau-Ponty illustrates that by making the connection between "the visible" and "the invisible," we can understand that "the seen" is a vibration of being and not merely self-identity, dissolution, series of fluctuations, and differences (Grosz, 1993: 44). Meanwhile, flesh refers to being, not as fullness, self-identity, or substance, but as a differentiator. For him, meat is not connected with the special category of being but rather exists as the basic element itself. The flesh is enabled to become reversible, the capacity to reach out to itself, the inward and outward dual-orientation, and openness exist through its reflection. Subject and object are inherently open to each other.

Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly formulate the question of sex differences in "visible" and "invisible." Therefore, Irigaray stated that the Merleau-Ponty performance could be obtained from many implicit ontologies of sexuality. This possibility is thought to be contained in the meat study, which says there is a relation between subject and object. For Irigaray, meat is in harmony with female attributes (Grosz, 1993: 47). Irigaray remained suspicious of sexual neutrality in Merleau-Ponty's work. At least this can be noticed in three ways (Grosz, 1993: 47). *First*, the privileged position of Merleau-Ponty's writings strongly empowers perceptual relations by being included in a phallus in which femininity is the figuratively deficient and blind spot. *Second*, flesh is often referred to based on the implicit codification of its feminine attributes. *Third*, Merleau-Ponty put the flesh on motherhood. However, Merleau-Ponty was unable to explain the specifics of the maternal body. The "invisible" existence is tactile. For Irigaray, tactile is not congruent visually. This is because visual and tactile functions are based on differences in logic and rhythm, even though the two seem intertwined (Grosz, 1993: 50). Irigaray also rejects that "what is visible" can be seen in real terms so that real things are clearly stated visually. For him, this relationship is not reciprocal. This is because "what is seen" does seem real, but real things are very capable of demonstrating their existence from "the invisible". For Irigaray, awareness of being shows how Merleau-Ponty maps out his thinking which describes the seer and the "seen" in terms of two things. This is understood by Merleau-Ponty not as the scope of women's lives, but as a number of identities on the other side of "the visible". Irigaray maps these two things about the singularity of the body and the flesh of femininity as follows (Grosz, 1993: 51). *First*, we can see that the lips consist of two parts, namely, the upper and lower like figure 1 above. *Second*, we need to pay attention to where the touch of femininity comes from.

Through the descriptions in the section above, the author concludes that Merleau-Ponty seems to understand that the inherent flesh with the chiasm of the subject and the world is the

embodiment of a new ontology. This ontology aims at the relationship between life and death, animals and humans which seems hierarchical so that it attracts the attention of feminists, at least represented by Irigaray. For author, this can be said to be natural if feminists dissect it because they speak a lot about equality. However, author added that besides using a feminist perspective, Irigaray allegedly grew up in psychoanalytic thinking. Especially when Merleau-Ponty slightly mentioned phallogocentrism, Irigaray immediately put forward his argument. At least, the foundation of Irigaray's thought departs from the criticism of Freud's thought. For Irigaray, Freudian psychoanalysis always sided with men in terms of sexuality. Behind it hides a phallogocentrism that glorifies the penis and marginalizes the vagina. Irigaray accuses Freudian psychoanalysis of making women's sexuality not speak for itself. The basis of the binary opposition of the penis and vagina is "that which is visible". The penis can be said to be visible, present, and whole, while the vagina seems "invisible", absent, and lacking. Women are labeled as always seeking sexual pleasure through activities with men. Women are considered passive by waiting for penile activity. The search for a penis to cover what is lacking in a woman lasts a lifetime. Therefore, as long as it is considered that women have always lived in the shadow of male sexuality. Such phallogocentrism is open to deconstruction according to Irigaray. Female sexual pleasure is not as passive as Freud imagined. A precisely active nature is optimally attached to female sexuality. The structure of the vagina makes it possible to experience constant autoeroticism. Meanwhile, men need something else, at least a vagina, hands, and language to get pleasure. Heterosexual coitus for Irigaray is a hidden mechanism to place women back in the heart of the phallogocentrism system (Grosz, 1993: 53). Finally, the binary opposition of the penis and vagina in the body can no longer be maintained. In addition, the binary opposition of "visible" and "invisible" may place women's sexuality on the right side of the opposition. This kind of metaphysics of presence is rooted in something biological. For the Freudian school, maturity is a shift

from the paradigm of touch to sight. In the touch paradigm, the other is not far from the self. The child touches others as a part of himself, not something else. New in the "visible" paradigm, others begin to distance themselves from themselves. For Freud and Lacan, the desire to return to the paradigm of touch is a forbidden desire (Grosz, 1993: 53).

Irigaray believes that the "visible" privilege of touch contributes to phallogocentrism because the penis is valued as "the visible" while the vagina, on the other hand, is "invisible." On the one hand, the emptiness that haunts the vagina makes the penis forever superior. However, on the other hand, he was also worried because the possibility of anxiety was wide open. That anxiety leads to defining the penis as present while the vagina is absent. None can be interpreted as empty or multiplicity. If we examine the female genitalia, we do not find emptiness or diversity because we find the clitoris, vagina, labia majora, and labia minora, which are not the names of one organ or even two different organs (Grosz, 1993: 53). This means that the female genitalia is itself deconstructive towards phallogocentrism which is in favor of being rather than empty. Deeper than the vagina is the uterus. The uterus has a peculiarity that is no less amazing than the vagina. Irigaray emphasizes that only a woman's body tolerates the foreignness within her (Irigaray, 2000: 578). It is the uterus that can tolerate the growth of another body within itself for nine months without shutting it down. On the contrary, he lovingly cared for the alienation and learned to accept differences sincerely. Meanwhile, at the cultural level, men marginalize women. The female gender is not respected culturally. It is merely interpreted functionally for the sake of procreation. Irigaray wants to say that if only in the physical space, women show their tolerance for differences, especially in culture. On the other hand, men, from within the physical space, place women under their circle of meaning. If culture is a giant womb, patriarchal culture only respects the male sex and throws women out. Irigaray wants a cultural transformation that respects the uniqueness of both sexes and recognizes their contribution. Work culture, for example,

must respect the identity of the female sex by providing women-friendly means of production, menstruation leave, paid maternity leave, and strict punishment for any form of social harassment. The reason is without equal rights to work, men and women will not speak much. Women will always be thrown out of a work culture that is not friendly to women.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing Merleau-Ponty's thinking is arguably difficult. Moreover, this is supported by a slightly circular language. However, through these efforts, we can at least map out that Merleau-Ponty seems to understand that flesh inherent in the chiasm of subject and world is the embodiment of a new ontology. This ontology aims at the relationship between life and death, animals and humans which seems hierarchical so that it attracts the attention of feminists, at least represented by Irigaray. For author, this can be said to be natural if feminists dissect it because they speak a lot about equality. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the Merleau-Ponty discourse and its relation to feminism when looking at the body and bodily experience, especially when looking more closely at the chiasm.

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