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*Ümit Ege Atakan*

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# A Merleau-Pontian Critique of Sartrean Philosophy of Negation

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Ümit Ege Atakan

Koç University

The flesh of the world is of the Being-seen, i.e. is a Being that is eminently *percipi*....There is Being, not Being in itself, identical to itself...but the Being that also contains its negation, its *percipi*.<sup>1</sup>

In 2024, we see before ourselves a world in chaos. Wars break out constantly, people are displaced. Suffering is everywhere. These are the times when identities that are built upon the existential meaning-worlds suddenly collapse and the *nothingness* of Being shows its face. In other words, the *self-experience of one's "existing"* comes to a halt. In such moments, the understanding of the structure of subjectivity as *everyday-being-with-others* becomes crucial for one to rebuild an existential meaning-full identity, and accordingly, to continue *existing*. I believe, today, revisiting Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's existential analysis of the structure of subjectivity is incredibly important for *anyone* who *needs* resilience in the sudden loss of existential meanings. They allow us to think of the Self and existence in terms of *negativity* and in its relationship with *situatedness*. Especially, a philosophy of negation, as we find in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, when put into a dialogue, could give us a completely different perspective on the relationship between our *possibilities* and our *intersubjective existence as Oneness*. Hence, it may help us rethink subjectivity itself and guide us towards establishing a new Self-identity with new existential meaning-worlds. Now, what do they say exactly? I think we are ready to delve into the rich and unprecedented mind palaces of our great thinkers.

The fundamental question of how to reconsider our experience of the Being-in-the-world, not as a traditional Cartesian observing subject, but as someone immersed in the structure of *everyday-being-with-others* has dominated the philosophy of both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Accordingly, they asked how to approach consciousness, body, the Other, situation,

existence, and nothingness. That is, the relationship between subjectivity and negative-positive became the focus of debate. They wondered how to *experience our existence*. And in search of a response to this question, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty developed very different ontologies.

In this essay, I will focus on how subjectivity and negativity in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty relate to one another. First, I will elaborate on Sartre's philosophy of negation and demonstrate that the experience of nothingness is, for him, the foundation of subjectivity. Later, I will develop a Merleau-Pontian critique of the Sartrean philosophy of negation. Accordingly, I will show, first, that Sartrean negativity is, actually, the pure and absolute positive of the Cartesian cogito, and second, most importantly, that Merleau-Ponty constructs a new dialectical ontology of Self, based on the cohesive unity of the in-itself and for-itself as a being that is world-as-me; in other words, a being that is seen as flesh.

### The Sartrean Philosophy of Negation: Subjectivity as the Experience of Nothingness

The for-itself...is not what it is...it is what it is not.<sup>2</sup>

"[H]ow does human-reality...emerge...from non-being?"<sup>3</sup> This was the big question Sartre asks in his famous *Being and Nothingness*. It is, indeed, very uncommon to grasp such an idea. How can negativity as non-being may give rise to a being? In what sense, nothingness, negation, and non-being are related to subjectivity? Sartre has a good answer to these questions. In his ontology, Sartre develops two main notions that are constitutive of Being: Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself. The former is the undifferentiated, inanimate, atemporal, full plenitude, it is fully positive and has no negation; it is the "ontic" as opposed to the "ontological;" it simply is what it *is*.<sup>4</sup> The latter, on the other hand, is animate, has self-awareness, it has meaning and projecting capabilities; it is differentiation; it is the ontological; in other words, it is the consciousness—the consciousness "of" nothing; that is, being-for-itself is what it "*is not*."<sup>5</sup> But how can consciousness be nothingness at all? There are two ways in which it is possible: (1) Consciousness, at the very beginning, establishes itself by *internal nihilation*,<sup>6</sup> and (2) both *projection* and *transcendence* are *nothingness* themselves.<sup>7</sup>

First of all, the for-itself can establish itself as being only through *internal nihilation*. The internal nihilation allows for-itself to differentiate itself from the in-itself reality of it-being-a-thing, and to become a for-itself, that is, with the internal nihilation of itself as in-itself, it becomes a *pre-reflective consciousness "of" being* a consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Meaning that, it gains the consciousness "of" the self-awareness of being conscious "of" things outside-of-itself. But why internal nihilation was *necessary* for consciousness to arise? It can be said that for the for-itself to *perceive* in-itself, it must become

conscious of itself as itself (i.e., as a consciousness capable of perceiving the in-itself—things outside-of-itself). So, it must differentiate itself from the undifferentiated totality of the in-itself, but since at the same time only the for-itself has the power to differentiate itself from the undifferentiated totality (and for-itself is *not-yet* a for-itself), *it must create itself as its own ground in the very act of nihilating the in-itself.*<sup>9</sup> Sartre emphasizes this point by following: [T]he for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as an in-itself to found itself *as consciousness*. Thus consciousness *owes* its being-consciousness *to itself*, and it can implicate only itself *insofar as it is its own nihilation.*<sup>10</sup> As seen, he explicitly claims that consciousness was the in-itself and became for-itself by nihilating itself and it is this nihilation that gives the consciousness its foundation. Therefore, only through *internal nihilation* that consciousness can create itself as consciousness. In other words, it owes its foundation to *not-being what it “is” but being what it “is not.”*

Secondly, consciousness is what it “is not” because *projection is nothingness*. In the previous part, I have mentioned how through internal nihilation one posits nothingness as consciousness. Now, it is also the case that one can posit nothingness as consciousness through *external nihilation.*<sup>11</sup> For Sartre, we interact with our surrounding through perception and perception is a ground-figure relationship.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, *what differentiates the undifferentiated totality of the in-itself as a ground and a figure is always about one’s projection.*<sup>13</sup> What does this imply? The following: Wherever may I be or whatever may I do, when I project towards something, I, at the same time, *project nothingness* because once I attend to something rather than something else, the totality as an undifferentiated whole *is negated* and became a differentiated ground for the perception of the intended figure to appear.<sup>14</sup> In other words, I negate the lack of differentiation to intuit the figure as a differentiated-figure. Without nihilation, therefore, nothing can be perceived because in-itself is full positivity, and only in virtue of for-itself that the in-itself can be differentiated into grounds and figures. This is why Sartre says “consciousness *cannot produce a negation ...it is the consciousness of negation....* The ‘not’ ...appears *as the consciousness (of being) conscious of the ‘not’.*<sup>15</sup> Meaning that, negation *is not a state* that for-itself *creates* (as if it has the choice to *not nihilate*), but it is “of” the consciousness itself because *for-itself precedes and makes the nothingness perceived*. Now, I said that *nihilation makes the perception of a being possible* by differentiating the totality into grounds and figures. There is another layer, too, though: *Nihilation also makes the perception of non-being possible.*<sup>16</sup> What if, after the first nihilation, the differentiated-figure is absent as well? In this case, *the absence of the differentiated-figure posits itself as the nothingness* against the ground of the already-nihilated totality.<sup>17</sup> Meaning that, first, the totality-as-a-whole is negated for the ground to be established in which the figure can be perceived.<sup>18</sup> However, the figure to be intuited is also posited as an intuition of nothing.<sup>19</sup> *As a result of this double nihilation, the for-itself intuits the non-being of the figure as existent. In other words, double nihilation allows the for-itself to experience nothingness.*<sup>20</sup> What is the conclusion

then?—Both the being and non-being are perceived as the nothingness “of” the for-itself. That is, our *projecting* makes the nothingness “of” the for-itself appear—that is, by projecting, we make the nothing real.

Finally, it should be said that Sartre sees *transcendence and freedom in terms of this nothing*.<sup>21</sup> That is, consciousness is what it “is not” also because *transcendence is nothingness* manifesting itself as freedom’s not-yet-actualized possibilities.<sup>22</sup> He says: “Transcendence, as ‘a project of itself, beyond...,’ cannot found nothingness at all; on the contrary, it is nothingness that is at the very heart of transcendence.”<sup>23</sup> What does this mean? It means that every action and *projection-towards* is a negation of “the is” of the “now” for the freedom to emerge as the not-yet-actualized possibility within oneself and precisely it is this *negation “as and for” freedom* that is the transcendence itself. For instance, if I intend to pursue an academic career, I negate my now *being-nothing-else-than-a-student* and also my *other-future-not-yet-actualized possibilities of being-otherwise* (such as becoming a white-collar worker) to be able to “be” my *projected-future-not-yet-actualized possibility* (i.e., to be an academic, for instance). Thus, I transcend my “now” as well as my *future-being-otherwise* for to become my *own projected-possibility*, that is, for to become *what-I-am-not-right-now*. In other words, I *negate myself for my non-being’s appearance*. Hence, as seen, for-itself, insofar as it “is,” always trapped in what it “is not” as its own transcendence.<sup>24</sup> So, every consciousness “of” transcendence is a consciousness “of” nothing.

### **Sartrean Absolute Negativity Becomes the Absolute Positivity of the Cartesian Cogito**

In the previous section, I demonstrated how for Sartre subjectivity unfolds itself through the nothingness “of” for-itself. I made it clear that for Sartre, negation can exist only as the consciousness “of” negation because, without the for-itself, the in-itself by itself is full positivity and cannot have negation. Now, Merleau-Ponty in his late work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, strictly opposes this Sartrean dichotomy between the in-itself as “is” and the for-itself as “is not.” He argues, first, that taking the in-itself and the for-itself as two separate entities opposing each other rather than seeing them as a merged-totality, reduces both of them to “pure absolutes” and makes their interaction impossible. He says:

From the moment that I conceive of myself as negativity and the world as positivity, there is no longer any interaction...since it is Being and I am nothing. We are and remain strictly opposed and strictly commingled precisely because we are not of the same order. Through the center of myself I remain absolutely foreign to the being of the things.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, since this opposition is *based on the dominance* of the for-itself, and since they are reduced into *non-interacting pure absolutes*, Sartre's ontology *recreates* the Cartesian duality where the for-itself is an independently-existing *substance* observing the in-itself, knowing the in-itself; giving meaning to it, and thus, rendering perceptual faith—the everyday-way-of-being-in-the-world that is conceived as the unity of the in-itself and the for-itself established by intersubjectivity—impossible.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Merleau-Ponty finds a contradiction in Sartre's thinking. He states that the for-itself once taken as absolute negativity in isolation without contact, degenerates itself into pure positivity because if we separate consciousness from the in-itself and give it names such as being "the not," the non-being, and nothingness, while at the same time making "the not" the object of thought and imposing it the characteristics of "the not" such as negation, rejection, etc., then, the for-itself loses itself as the nothingness but, suddenly, becomes a "some-thing."<sup>27</sup>

[I]f we maintain strictly that *it is not*, we...elevate it to a sort of positivity, we confer upon it a sort of being, since *through and through and absolutely* it is nothing. The negative *becomes* a sort of *quality* precisely because one fixes it *in* its power of refusal and evasion.<sup>28</sup>

Now, if absolute negativity is absolute positivity, then, we do not have negativity at all. This is also problematic because if there is no negativity *within* in-itself, how one can talk about transcendence and freedom? The reduction of negativity into absolute positivity *eliminates* the disclosure of the in-itself as a dynamic-animate-being. Without the dialectical concurrency of the negative and the positive, the in-itself degenerates into the "absolute-pure" as well. Hence, as famously put by Merleau-Ponty: "[B]eing and nothingness...the one without the other would be only an abstraction."<sup>29</sup>

### Negativity-Situated: The Dialectical Self as an In-itself-For-itself<sup>30</sup>

[W]hat we exclude from the dialectic is the idea of the pure negative, what we seek is a dialectical definition of a being that can be neither the being for itself nor the being in itself.<sup>31</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, the main problem of Sartrean ontology is to take the in-itself and the for-itself as separate. Hence, a new ontology of the Self must *reverse* the Sartrean conception of the Self. For Merleau-Ponty, we cannot take "what is" solely as the nothingness of the for-itself, And this is precisely because the "situated-given" is not the kind of in-itself Sartre describes it to be. The "is" of the given is not an inanimate, object-like entity. It is not undifferentiated full plenitude; but rather a lively, meaningful totalized existential space where the for-itself appears. In Sartre, since the in-itself is an undifferentiated inanimate whole, only the for-itself can make sense of the "given" through its projected nothingness. For he explicitly claims that the

“given is nothing but the in-itself nihilated by the for-itself....The given in itself ... is revealed only in the light of the projecting freedom.”<sup>32</sup> Whereas, in Merleau-Ponty, the “given” makes sense of the for-itself’s projecting itself. He says: “[F]undamental negation, is in advance, open upon a background-world that exceeds all its perspectives.”<sup>33</sup> Now, if we take the “what is” as “is not,” that is, only as the nothingness of the for-itself, disregarding the in-itself’s dynamic-existentiality that also *is* the nothingness of the for-itself existing within the given, then, we reduce the given into a hypothetical possibility. It follows that the in-itself of the givenness is an *objectively-real-dynamic-is* and in virtue of it being *objectively-real-dynamic-is*, what “is” is not only the nothing of the for-itself (i.e., “is not”) but also the “situated-given” that which the nothing of the for-itself is sucked into its “is.” That is, “what is” is both “is not” and the “is itself” at the same time. Meaning that, actually, one cannot talk about a nothingness belonging to the for-itself as if the for-itself is separated from the dynamic-is of the in-itself; but rather nothingness is established in the *generalized-space-of-existentiality* as a situated *in-itself-for-itself entity*:

I have a nothingness filled with being, a being emptied by nothingness....[T]he In Itself itself pass to the status of a *world seen*, and makes the For Itself pass to the status of a For Itself sunken into being, *situated*.<sup>34</sup>

Hence, as seen, the “is” and “is not” dichotomy of Sartrean ontology disappears. What is more, is that it is also *reversed*. That is, it is no longer the for-itself that *gazes upon* the in-itself as in Sartrean ontology, but they are merged into *One*, so that the in-itself *sees* the for-itself within itself as well. In other words, the alleged nothing of the for-itself *is* actually the “dynamic-is” of the situated-givenness of the in-itself. Negativity of the for-itself becomes real *in* the positivity of the dynamic-existential space of the in-itself. The non-being is revealed *in* the being as the non-being-bearing-possibility of the *real-dynamic-is* of the being.

And the ontological Self of the subject is revealed to be the *dialectical reciprocal synthesis of negativity and positivity* actualized as the Being-in-the-world in the embodied-subjectivity of the situated “Being-Seen.”<sup>35</sup> Merleau-Ponty claims as follows:

Is not the dialectic...the intelligible movement which is not a sum of positions or of statements such as *being is, nothingness is not* but which... integrates them into a being in depth? ....[T]he dialectic is the thought of the Being-seen, of a Being that is not simple positivity...and not the Being-posed by thought, but *Self-manifestation, disclosure, in the process of forming itself*.<sup>36</sup>

Now, we should ask, what is this dialectically-established Being?—*Being is absolute negativity negated for negativity to reconstitute itself in Being’s*

*situatedness*: Being is no longer the absolute negativity of the for-itself, it is *negativity-situated* as a *Being-that-is-Seen*.<sup>37</sup> A *Being that is the world-as-me*.

### The Unfolding of Subjectivity: How Perceptual Faith, Embodiment, and Generalized-Existence are Related with the Dialectical Ontology of Self as “Being-that-is-Seen?”

[M]y absolute individuality ... [is] a halo of generality, or an atmosphere of ‘sociality.’<sup>38</sup>

Above, I discussed the need for the generalized-existential space for embodied-subjectivity to actualize itself as negativity-situated. I claimed that subjectivity can possess nothingness only insofar as it is constitutive “of” Being-in-the-world as a “Being-that-is-Seen.” Now, we should ask, how the generalized-existential space of the embodied-subjectivity becomes possible and more importantly how it relates to the world as an in-itself-for-itself totality of “Being-that-is-Seen?” That is, what is the relation between situatedness, body, generalized-existence, and *world-as-me* in giving rise to subjectivity? The answer to these questions, we should start with the notion of *perceptual faith*. Perceptual faith is best to be understood as the lack of rational-reflective contemplation in relating to the world because it implies that we live the world through our bodily-habitual actions first.<sup>39</sup> As seen, Merleau-Ponty is very much Heideggerian in this sense. He argues as follows: “I am ...in ecstasy in the world and in the things...nothing detains me within myself far from them—no ‘representation,’ no ‘thought,’ no ‘image,’ and not even...‘subject,’ ‘mind,’ or ‘Ego.’”<sup>40</sup> In this quote, it is obvious that perceptual faith is *everyday-way-of-being-in-the-world* of our human-reality. I am my motility *with-and-in*. That is, *with* Others and *in* the world—only insofar as I am not an isolated for-itself. *The notion of perceptual faith allows us to see that my for-itself is actually my “with-and-in” corporeality relating the world around it and making it “One as a world-me.”* Here, I argue, there is an implicit, continuous line of thought between Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he puts the body at the center of his ontology and *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he merges the body into the in-itself, creating a Being-that-is-Seen as a world-me. Because although corporeality is no longer at the focus of Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*, it can be argued that it still has its own *world-me-making* (anonymized) *intersubjectivity*. After all, perceptual faith, through which we form acquaintance *with* Others *in* the world is exercised with the body (and not by conscious reflection) and perceptual faith is very important for the unity of the in-itself-for-itself as a totality to be established. This tight relationship between the *perceptual faith, body, and world-as-me* can be seen in Merleau-Ponty’s own words as well. He says: “Perceptual faith...opens...us a world *numerically one, common to all, through perspectives that are our own.*”<sup>41</sup> As seen, he explicitly states that perceptual faith creates a cohesive totality with Others through *our own experience*. So, it is *in virtue of*



*this world-me-making, de-individualized intersubjectivity exercised through collective anonymous corporeality as perceptual faith that the world becomes One as the world-me in which the for-itself becomes also the in-itself and the human existentiality is the negativity-situated, where the dialectical-reciprocal relation between the negative and the positive become synthesized as a "Being-that-is-Seen" and are transformed into equivalents.*<sup>2</sup>

In sum, subjectivity for Merleau-Ponty is the negativity-situated in a collective sense; it is corporeal, yet anonymous: A de-individualized corporeality of intersubjectivity of the collective world-me—that is of the "Being-Seen." In other words, it is negativity-situated *as intersubjectivity*. It also follows that, *generalized-existence as world-me can have nothingness only in virtue of this negativity-situated*. In the final analysis, then, the Sartrean ontology is reversed. I am the negativity-situated as a collective, anonymous, intersubjective "immanent transcendence" of the dialectical unity actualized in the being-in-the-world as a "Being-that-is-Seen", as the flesh of the world as me—neither reducible nor separable.<sup>3</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

In this essay, I have tried to give an account of the philosophy of negativity that we find in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. I have organized my article in such a way as to propose a Merleau-Pontian critique of Sartre's understanding of subjectivity as absolute negativity. I sincerely think that the role of negation has a great influence on the way we live and think. We generally tend to think the nothingness as the non-existent. Therefore, we do not relate it with probably the most real experience we have: *The experience of our consciousness*. However, Sartre makes us realize that negation is a determination and Non-being is an experienced absence and can be intuited as nothingness. Hence, contrary to ordinary belief, we inhabit a consciousness of negation. Most striking is that we do not have a consciousness where negation exists as a matter of fact, but it is what defines our consciousness. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, reminds us that we are not isolated consciousnesses taking the world against us but we are determining ourselves within an animate world full of situations. Most importantly, that is, our experiences are shaped not just by and in virtue of the negating capability of our consciousness but by the collective, intersubjective, perceptual, sensorial, and bodily being-with-others of the being-in-the-world. In other words, *we are the negative in the positive and the positive in the negative*.

Overall, my reflections offer an *expository existential analytic* of subjectivity in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. It problematizes the commonsense understanding of the structure of subjectivity and offered completely different perspectives on the Self. Maybe this is what we should do in 2024 as well: *Reconceiving our existence in a new light*. Maybe it is this Merleau-Pontian (if not Sartrean) conception of subjectivity that we need: *Re-conception of the*

*Self as a dialectic process of situating possibilities and possibility-making situatedness.*

One may wonder whether this *expository existential analytic* of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty can prevent the collapse of the *self-experience of existence* as meaning-worlds. I cannot say for sure. Nevertheless, I think, it is worth considering the *conceivabilities* of the Self. Mainly because I believe, *conceiving is a guide to possibility*: that is, it makes visible the *different possibilities* of imagining oneself *as existing*, as meaning-givers and “constituters” of the *existential* world. That is why Sartre and Merleau-Ponty will always be important for *anyone who needs* to rethink the Self in relation to one’s *everyday-being-in-the-world-with-others*.

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (1964; reis., Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 250.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Sarah Richmond (1943; reis., New York: Routledge, 2018), 407.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 122, 123; Mark Meyers, “Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world: Reflections on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty,” *Sartre Studies International* 14, no. 1 (2008): 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Meyers, “Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world,” 82.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 132 (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> I use this notion to emphasize the difference between a “non-positional” prereflective consciousness that which constitutes itself as consciousness through *internal-primordial nihilation* and a “positional” reflective consciousness that *acts upon things* and nihilates the world-outside-of-itself. And, by using the term “external nihilation,” I refer to the latter condition. For a detailed investigation on the topic, see esp., Mark Meyers, “Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world,” 82.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 44 (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>21</sup> Zeynep Direk, *Ontologies of Sex: Philosophy in Sexual Politics* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020), 3.

<sup>22</sup> He seems like very much influenced from Kierkegaard in this sense.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 52.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 635.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Zeynep Direk, *Ontologies of Sex*, 11; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 67-68 (emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 64 (emphasis added).

<sup>30</sup> Merleau-Ponty's usage of the notion *in-itself-for-itself* is different from that of Sartre's. Sartre's point of departure in using the notion is to emphasize the priority of the for-itself—since for him, in-itself is an undifferentiated inanimate plentitude, it cannot mean anything without the for-itself. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, uses it to emphasize how *real, dynamic, lively, and full of history* the in-itself is, and thus, how for-itself cannot mean by itself anything in isolation, without being-in-the-world. For a better understanding of how their understanding of *in-itself-for-itself* differs, compare, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 788 and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 85.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 635-36.

<sup>33</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 62.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 76 (emphasis added).

<sup>35</sup> Merleau-Ponty, 91; It is important to note here that, this synthesis is not the traditional synthesis we know from dialectics per se. It is established not by destructive dominance of either the negative or the positive, but by a *dialectical reciprocity*, where the emphasis is on the *concurrency* of the transcendent possibilities of the for-itself within the situatedness of oneself in the world. Hence this synthesis does not give rise to a *totally new entity* beyond the negative or the positive. One experiences his or her subjectivity neither as complete transcendence nor as complete determinedness, but as *One*, as a “situated-transcendence,” that is, as a *continuous movement of the process of formation within the already formed*. For a detailed discussion on this issue, see esp., Merleau-Ponty, 91, 95; and Mark Meyers, “Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world,” 102.

<sup>36</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 91.

<sup>37</sup> “Being-that-is-Seen,” is exactly this “disclosure, in the process of forming,” that is, this *dialectical synthesis* as *world-me*. And this is what, I claim, *negativity-situated is*. So, in the following

sections, when I use the notion *negativity-situated*, I also imply this *dialectical character of the Self* as a “Being-that-is-Seen”—*a Being that is the world and a world that is the Being*.

<sup>38</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (1945; reis., London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 474.

<sup>39</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 50-51.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 62 (emphasis added).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 91.

<sup>43</sup> I use the notions “immanence” and “transcendence” always as it is used in Simone de Beauvoir’s terminology. In short, immanence is being in the situation/given and transcendence is to go beyond the given with the acknowledgment of the given. See, Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Howard Madison Parshley (1949; reis., London: Jonathan Cape Thirty Bedford Square, 1953), 419.