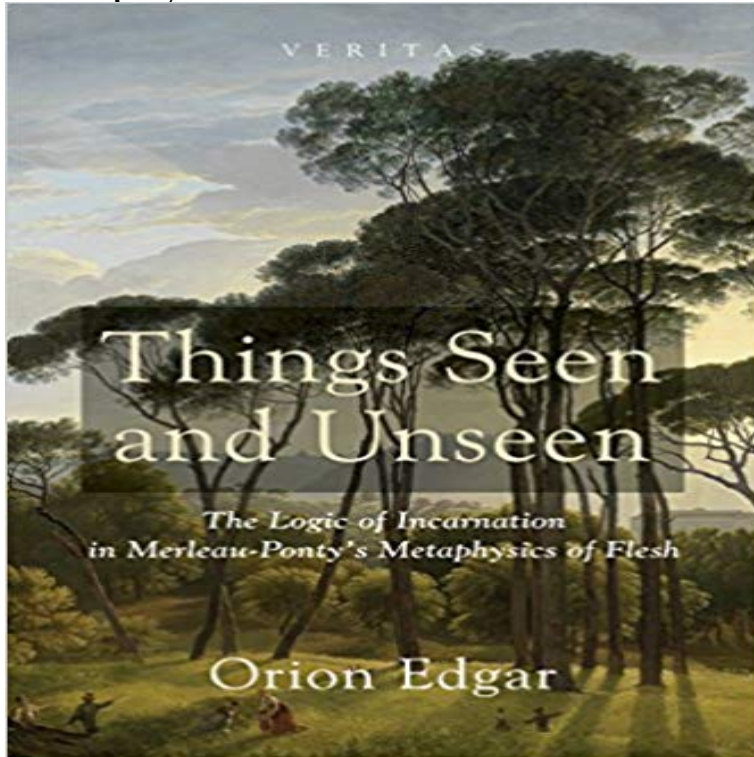


Things Seen and Unseen: The Logic of Incarnation in Merleau-Pontys Metaphysics of Flesh



The philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty was developing into a radical ontology when he died prematurely in 1961. Merleau-Ponty identified this nascent ontology as a philosophy of incarnation that carries us beyond entrenched dualisms in philosophical thinking about perception, the body, animality, nature, and God. What does this ontology have to do with the Catholic language of incarnation, sacrament, and logos on which it draws? In this book, Orion Edgar argues that Merleau-Pontys philosophy is dependent upon a logic of incarnation that finds its roots and fulfillment in theology, and that Merleau-Ponty drew from the Catholic faith of his youth. Merleau-Pontys final abandonment of Christianity was based on an understanding of God that was ultimately Kantian rather than orthodox, and this misunderstanding is shared by many thinkers, both Christian and not. As such, Merleau-Pontys philosophy suggests a new kind of natural theology, one that grounds an account of God as ipsum esse subsistens in the questions produced by a phenomenological account of the world. This philosophical ontology also offers to Christian theology a route away from dualistic compromises and back to its own deepest insight. In this erudite and articulate book, Edgar offers an embodied account of human existence in terms of hunger, dependence, desire, and intersubjectivity. He does so by means of a sincere and subtle development of Merleau-Pontys ontology. As such, he fleshes out the deep philosophical meaning of incarnation that has relevance for both epistemology and Christian theology. He diagnoses and overcomes the dualisms that still haunt the contemporary imagination. We do not realize how Cartesian we are. --Philip Goodchild, Professor of Religion and Philosophy, University of Nottingham

Things Seen and Unseen is a welcome and elegant contribution to the recovery of

Merleau-Pontys incarnational phenomenology for theology. It will be read with value by those interested in theological aesthetics and philosophy of religion as well. --Janet Soskice, Professor of Philosophical Theology, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge

Merleau-Pontys philosophy is at last beginning to receive the attention it so richly deserves. It remains one of the most fertile sources in recent thought for reshaping the way we think about knowledge, time, and embodiment--a reshaping made all the more urgent by the political and ecological disasters of our times. It is also a style of thought with obvious theological resonance, a question that has long been in need of the kind of careful, insightful, and creative attention that Orion Edgar provides in this really admirable study, which brings Merleau-Pontys analyses of bodily existence together with central themes of the Christian imagination--incarnation and sacrament--in a deeply original and fruitful way. --Rowan Williams, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge

In this sophisticated first monograph, Orion Edgar reexamines the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty from the perspective of the Catholic faith that always lapped at the edges of his thought. Once Merleau-Pontys notions of flesh and depth (in particular) are thus freshly illuminated, his striking relevance for a contemporary theology of the incarnation becomes apparent. Edgars analysis is both philosophically insightful and theologically rich, and this study makes a significant contribution to Merleau-Ponty scholarship. --Sarah Coakley, Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge

Orion Edgar (PhD, Nottingham) is Curate at Pershore Abbey, Worcestershire, UK.

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