

Abstract

Questions about the eucharist and the body are perennial and pressing. These questions were electric with meaning in the latter stages of the composition of this dissertation, as the Covid-19 crisis radically impacted all aspects of human interaction. In response to these questions, this dissertation crosses boundaries within the disciplines of theology, philosophy, and science in the search for an integrated approach to our embodied reception of the eucharist. It is an exercise in constructive theology, consisting of interdisciplinary engagement with the philosophy of twentieth-century French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It begins by presenting a critical reading of relevant portions of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. The role our bodies play in the learning process, in deriving meaning from the world, and in inhabiting the world is discussed. An extended reflection on how the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty might reframe our approach to several themes associated with our embodied reception of the eucharist is then offered. This is advanced in three theses: that the eucharist is an act of body memory; that it is never a merely cognitive exercise; and that it invites us to understand our bodies as part of a sacramental world. From there, the contemporary applications of this exploration are indicated by recasting some important considerations in its light, explicitly: the Church's approach to liturgical composition; its approach to pastoral scenarios; and its conduct in the academic mode. This dissertation does not set out to demonstrate a definitive position on our embodied eucharistic reception; rather, it offers an invitation to further thought. In closing, several considerations for future study in this field are discussed, namely: the social dimensions of the eucharist; the eucharist as an act of ingestion; and liturgy in digital contexts.