



On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy

Jacques Derrida , Christine Irizarry (Translator)

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Using the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy as an anchoring point, Jacques Derrida in this book conducts a profound review of the philosophy of the sense of touch, from Plato and Aristotle to Jean-Luc Nancy, whose ground-breaking book *Corpus* he discusses in detail. Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl, Didier Franck, Martin Heidegger, Francoise Dastur, and Jean-Louis Chrétien are discussed, as are René Descartes, Diderot, Maine de Biran, Félix Ravaisson, Immanuel Kant, Sigmund Freud, and others. The scope of Derrida's deliberations makes this book a virtual encyclopedia of the philosophy of touch (and the body).

Derrida gives special consideration to the thinking of touch in Christianity and, in discussing Jean-Luc Nancy's essay "Deconstruction of Christianity," devotes a section of the book to the sense of touch in the Gospels. Another section concentrates on "the flesh," as treated by Merleau-Ponty and others in his wake. Derrida's critique of intuitionism, notably in the phenomenological tradition, is one of the guiding threads of the book.

On Touching includes a wealth of notes that provide an extremely useful bibliographical resource. Personal and detached all at once, this book, one of the first published in English translation after Jacques Derrida's death, serves as a useful and poignant retrospective on the work of the philosopher. A tribute by Jean-Luc Nancy, written a day after Jacques Derrida's death, is an added feature.

On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy Details

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Brian says

Here Derrida is returning his focus to some themes that preoccupied his earlier writings from the '50s through the early '70s--especially the limitations and productivity of phenomenology.

What is new here is a reconsideration of the connections between bodily perception, meaning, and the use of language. Above all, he demonstrably problematizes the rigid hierarchy of literal/theoretical language over metaphorical language. Interestingly, this he reveals this through difficulties in trying to express within phenomenology how perception happens (above all, touch, with its supposed immediacy): here, literalism constantly breaks down into or tacitly relies upon the metaphorical. The theoretical immediacy of touch is expressed only in the linguistic mediacy of metaphor. But metaphor (trope and word-play generally, too) turns out to be more immediately lived, or rather captures the reader/listener in the living of touch and perception.

At the same time, Derrida is entering into the concerns of Merleau-Ponty and R. Barbaras: the fact that truth and experience happen for and as living beings. The dynamism of life, being alive--again highlighted through touch--is neither wholly immediate nor mediate, but is nevertheless something that must be expressed in any account of truth and experience.

There is far more here than this (including the discussion of Christianity, feminism, Judaism, etc.). As such this book would be best suited for those familiar with Derrida (and the earlier phenomenological tradition).

The opening and closing of this book are deeply personal and literary. There are the typical jokes and impossibly dense passages, too. But overall, its par for the Derrida course, stylistically.

Dana says

"Let's rush toward the ending and recapitulate. I'm now sincerely asking that this book be forgotten or effaced, and I'm asking this as I wouldn't have done--with as much sincerity--for any of my other books. Wipe it all away, and start or start again to read him--Nancy--in his corpus.

For my part, what to give him? A kiss? On the eyes? It should remain invisible to any third party. "

Mo2this says

psyche is extended
