In his foreword to Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*, editor Claude Lefort writes:  

However expected it may sometimes be, the death of a . . . friend opens an abyss before us. How much more so when it comes absolutely unannounced . . . when, moreover, he who dies is so alive that habitually we had come . . . to count him among the truest witnesses of our undertakings. Such was the sudden death of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. (VI, xi)

Such, too, I must add, was the death of philosopher Martin C. Dillon. In March 2005, while skiing in the Swiss Alps with his wife, Joanne, Dillon felt overcome with nausea and was taken to the emergency room at a nearby hospital. Shortly after being taken to the examination room, he peacefully expired. The light that had burned so brightly and with such energy—Mike Dillon was a vital soul indeed—had suddenly gone out.

Just as Lefort describes the strange, stunned silence that attended the death of his friend, so, too, were we confronted with Dillon’s sudden loss. While Mike’s wife, daughters, and family were grieving in the most personal ways, his friends, colleagues, and students also were facing an abyss. Dillon was gone; he had been with us a few moments ago, and now he was gone. There could be no more conversations, no more classes with this master teacher, no more intimate moments over glasses of fine wine and gourmet steaks. There could be no more opportunities to say the unsaid things (words of appreciation or of rapprochement); no more questions or criticisms to be raised; no more remarkable learning through Dillon’s famous give-and-take. As Lefort says, at this terrible point of loss we are returned to the thinker’s work: “The work has come to an end, and, simply because everything in it is said, we are suddenly confronted with it” (VI, xi).
The good news is that Dillon has left us more “work” than many people knew. Indeed, he left two mostly finished book manuscripts among his papers: *Art, Truth, and Illusion: Nietzsche’s Ontology* and *The Ethics of Particularity*, both of which had been written in the last seven years of his life. While the titles, subject matter, and tables of contents suggest that these manuscripts are discrete, I believe (and will argue below) that—whether Dillon fully realized it or not—they offer two distinct yet inseparable sides of a complex, unified project to reconcile an ontology of becoming (*à la* Nietzsche) with a detailed Merleau-Pontian ethics and social theory. This highly ambitious project—realized in the pages of this book—is an achievement that, I believe, helps us better understand the entirety of Mike Dillon’s philosophical orientation, previously published books, and even style. Indeed, it makes possible a new understanding of Dillon’s philosophy as a whole. How often does *that* happen? How often does a posthumous text provide a kind of “capstone” to a thinker’s entire lifework? Not all that often.

Thus it is with great enthusiasm that I present Dillon’s final manuscripts to you. When I began my editing work on the manuscripts (more details on that below), I had no idea if there was one book here or two distinct books, let alone if they would be sufficiently developed to publish. But it didn’t take long to realize that these manuscripts *had to* be published together—that a reader of only one manuscript or the other simply would not understand the whole of Dillon’s late thinking. And it didn’t take long either to recognize that in these writings Dillon was working at the peak of his powers as a thinker and a writer, that his light was burning very bright indeed. In the pages that follow, I will talk a bit about Dillon’s life and work as they led to these final manuscripts. Then I will offer a general discussion of the philosophical contents of the manuscripts themselves and their complex interrelationship. I will close my introduction by describing the state of the manuscripts as I found them and the nature of my editorial interventions in bringing these works to publication.

**I. LIFE AND WORK**

Born in 1938, Martin Dillon received his bachelor of arts, with a major in philosophy, from the University of Virginia in 1960. Within one month of graduation, he was serving as a commissioned officer in the United States Navy, eventually serving as a staff member of the Sixth Fleet command. He
was discharged from the Navy in July 1963, and began nineteen years of service in the naval reserve—which included two different stints as commanding officer: for the 3-47 Surface Division (1973–1975) and for the Military Sealift Command Office (1979–1981). In short, along with all his achievements as a scholar and a teacher, Mike Dillon was a military man—a fact reflected, I think, in his rather no-nonsense approach to things; his succinct, clear prose; and his assertive style of thinking and being.

While the military was an important part of Dillon’s life for twenty years, still more formative was his devotion to philosophy. After his discharge from the Navy in 1963, Dillon received his master of arts in philosophy in 1964 from the University of California at Berkeley, and then continued his studies at Yale—receiving his master of philosophy in 1968 and his doctorate in 1970 with a dissertation on Merleau-Ponty. At that point, Dillon had already been teaching for two years as an instructor at the State University of New York—Binghamton, now known as Binghamton University. With doctorate in hand, Dillon became an assistant professor of philosophy at Binghamton in 1970, and went on to become an associate professor in 1974 and professor in 1988; indeed, he spent his entire career at that institution.

I am told that right from the start, Mike Dillon was a “star” in the classroom. In the course of my research for this project, I have spoken with countless of his students. What emerges from their myriad tales and memories is a picture of Dillon as a most revered teacher—well reflected by the fact that in 1993 he was given the rare honor of being named Distinguished Teaching Professor at Binghamton. Apparently in most of Dillon’s courses and classes it was “standing room only,” no matter the topic. And what transpired in class was an energetic and interactive performance of inspired thinking. By all accounts, he brought waves of students to philosophy, many of whom went on to academic careers. Dillon was never my teacher in a classroom setting, but as I talked to his students, and studied syllabi and course notes from the entire length of his career, it became evident to me that all of Dillon’s courses were informed by his profound conviction that philosophy really matters and should matter, that philosophy has the promise to change—if not the world, then at least the hearts, minds, and sensibilities of the people who live in it. This is powerful stuff indeed.

When Mike Dillon wasn’t teaching, he was engaged in two or three other primary activities. In 1974 he bought five acres of land in the northern Pennsylvania woods and invited Joanne Bubela to help him build a house there. The house, the space, and the idea came to be called “Ambremerine,” from
a book of fantasy by E. R. Eddison titled *Mistress of Mistresses*. Mike and Joanne really did “build it all”: Every few summers, they would buy the lumber, strap on the tool belts, and carry out a major project, such as building a second floor, an extension for a bedroom, or a wraparound deck. Over the years, project by project, Ambremerine became something remarkable: a substantial, beautiful, handmade house surrounded by glorious nature and blooming, buzzing natural life. I have gone on about Ambremerine because it was such an important part of Mike Dillon’s sensibilities; this natural setting and home were the deep context of Dillon’s thinking and writings. Students and colleagues were always welcome at Ambremerine, and I am sure that many readers of this book will have vivid memories of their days and nights there. Perhaps, too, they will have memories of chopping wood for the winter, helping to lay a foundation, or waking up to the tip-tapping sound of Dillon writing on his Mac.

This last activity was fairly constant: Dillon was always writing on some project or another. No doubt, his life was already full. He made a remarkable, loving relationship with Joanne; he had lots to do with Ambremerine; he was dedicated to teaching and the business of university life; he helped to raise three daughters (Kathleen, Liz, and Sarah). Even so, Dillon was passionately committed to writing and presenting his philosophical ideas and concepts. In the course of his career, he published more than fifty essays and made more than one hundred presentations at conferences and colleges and universities. Between 1970 and 1988, his presentations and publications moved through two large regions: the phenomenology of love and sex and the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. He presented a paper at the second meeting of the Merleau-Ponty Circle in 1977 (now known as the International Merleau-Ponty Circle), and he became a constant participant in its meetings. So much so, in fact, that in the early 1980s he was made the organization’s general secretary—a position he held until his death. Throughout this time, Dillon was working to transform his dissertation into a fully developed presentation of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. And so, after nearly twenty years of study, writing, and rewriting, in 1988 Dillon published *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* (Indiana University Press).

*Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* is generally acknowledged to be one of the most important English-language books on Merleau-Ponty and a genuine classic in the field. In fact, the book went into a second edition with Northwestern University Press in 1997—something that is quite unusual for an academic monograph. This introduction is not the place to fully sing its praises,
but part of the book’s excellence is that it offers a clear, detailed, and systematic presentation of Merleau-Ponty’s ontology as a whole. It also shows how his philosophy is able to resolve both traditional philosophical problems and problems inherent in the projects of previous Continental thinkers (such as Husserl, Sartre, and Heidegger). Further, at the time of publication, Dillon’s book had that rare quality of more or less setting the terms, problems, and debates for nearly a generation of scholarship about Merleau-Ponty. I can attest to this fact personally. Dillon’s book was published when I was in the second year of work on my own dissertation on Merleau-Ponty. It didn’t take long for me to realize that the scope and organizational power of the book required that I start over in writing my dissertation. If I didn’t, I would be just “reinventing the wheel” or missing the whole new discourse on Merleau-Ponty. Moreover, Dillon made my project much easier because he offered such clear representations and arguments about central themes in Merleau-Ponty’s thought. It is not too much to say that *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* was the air that existential phenomenologists breathed for many years, and it remains mandatory reading for any contemporary student or scholar of Merleau-Ponty.

But Dillon was not letting any moss grow; by the time *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* was published (in 1988), his next book was already well under way: *Semiological Reductionism: A Critique of the Deconstructionist Movement in Postmodern Thought* (SUNY Press, 1995). In fact, when I first heard and met Dillon at the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Merleau-Ponty Circle (in 1987), he was already mounting his impassioned phenomenological criticisms of Derrida and of deconstructionist philosophy in general. Dillon was entirely focused on this critique for five or six years, during which time he was, step-by-step, writing the chapters for *Semiological Reductionism*. This focus also led Dillon to edit a collection of essays on the Merleau-Ponty–Derrida relation: *Écart and Différance: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (Humanities, 1997).

Of all Dillon’s books, I think it is fair to say that *Semiological Reductionism* is the most vexed and vexing. This synoptic introduction is not the place to carry out a detailed analysis of this complex book, and it is not my intention to pass judgment on it, but its chilly reception and disregard constituted a significant episode in Dillon’s professional career and require some commentary. Part of the difficulty, I think, is the book’s fairly aggressive tone: While *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* was essentially affirmational and constructive, *Semiological Reductionism* is flat-out confrontational; it rejects
the value and plausibility of Derrida’s thought. True, Dillon asserts in his introduction that his “critique is intended to be balanced and fair: a critical interpretation, not a polemic,” but the book doesn’t really read that way. However, I think a deeper difficulty for the book is that it is built upon a highly controversial and contested interpretation of Derrida’s thought. In brief, Dillon’s arguments are predicated on a foundational assertion that Derrida’s deconstructive philosophy is committed to what Dillon calls “the semiological reduction,” that is, a reduction of the world and the body to a “linguistic text” or to what Dillon calls “linguistic immanence.” On this interpretation, Derrida’s philosophy is a new form of transcendental idealism in which language constitutes the world rather than, as with Kant, the categories of the transcendental subject—a view that, Dillon argues, results in abject relativism and skepticism.

Dillon was not the first scholar, nor the last, to impute this kind of view to Derrida. The problem with this interpretation—a problem already pressed upon Dillon by several scholars before the book was published—is that this interpretation doesn’t seem correct. It is true that Derrida wrote, “There is nothing outside of the text,” but rigorous scholars were not persuaded that Derrida’s sentence and his overall project insisted upon or implied a reduction of the world to language—particularly given Derrida’s own repeated insistence against this reading. Having said that, it is true that when Dillon was writing this book in the late 1980s and early 1990s, what we might call days of “high postmodernism” in American universities, a significant number of presumptively Derridean literary theorists and a few Continental philosophers were talking about Derrida and deconstruction in exactly the way that Dillon was criticizing. Thus, with all the power of hindsight and the benefits of an additional fifteen years of more work by Derrida and of more careful scholarship about Derrida, it is my sense that Semiological Reductionism is marked by a strange problem. That is, while its interpretation and many of its arguments are telling against some “Derrideans” of the day, they miss Derrida’s view and his deconstructive project.

It is clear that Dillon was disturbed by the reception to his critical work on Derrida and to Semiological Reductionism. After the great appreciation and international success of Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology, he found himself embattled. Even good friends (myself included) were challenging his interpretation of Derrida. A glimmer of his experience can be seen in the acknowledgments section of the book: “This book has changed the tenor of my relations with the colleagues and friends whose thoughts and sentiments bear on my own.
My struggles with this alien but enticing style of thinking have opened a
distance between their minds and mine, a space of solitude within the com-
munity.”5 I believe that the language and the tone of this passage are impor-
tant for understanding certain aspects of Dillon’s later professional career:
“distance from colleagues,” “solitude within the community.” To the best of
my knowledge, Dillon never withdrew his interpretation of Derrida—in fact,
some passages in his later writings repeat it—and his experience of being
at odds with his larger intellectual community settled in as an aspect of his
style. (I will have more to say about this in the next section.)

Nonetheless, after finishing *Semiological Reductionism*, Dillon immedi-
ately launched into writing *Beyond Romance* (SUNY Press, 2001). After the
frustrations of the previous book, Dillon intended this book about love to
reach an audience both inside and beyond the academy.6 There is no question
that Dillon saw this book as a culmination of one long line of his thinking;
he had been regularly teaching courses on love and sex at Binghamton since
1976. And for him the topic was of singular and passionate importance.
As he puts it: “I believe that love, more than anything else, determines the
quality of our lives. Fame, fortune, power, and the like do not guarantee hap-
piness (whatever that might be), nor does the failure to attain all or any of
these condemn us to a life unfulfilled. But failure in love does guarantee
misery… That is the credo upon which this book is built. No good love, no
good life.”7

“No good love, no good life”: What follows after this fecund beginning
is Dillon’s attempt to articulate a rigorous theory of love and sex (what
he calls “sexlove”) that overturns the binary categories and structures of
existing theories of love from Plato through Romanticism to some con-
temporary models. More specifically, drawing upon Merleau-Ponty’s late
ontology, Dillon argues that the myriad phenomena of love and sex must
be understood as grounded in our carnal lives that are reversibly inter-
twined with others’. However, going well beyond Merleau-Ponty, Dillon
articulates the specific dynamics of these relationships that explains their
absolute centrality in human life while respecting the obvious plurality of
their forms.

The project I have just described is no small feat. Indeed, *Beyond Ro-
mance* is an ambitious and important book. It may even be Dillon’s best
book—his most personal and passionate one; the one where he makes his
most original contribution to philosophy, where he advances the phenome-
nology of embodied life beyond obvious gaps and limits in Merleau-Ponty’s
thought. If this is not yet widely perceived, I suspect part of the reason is that, after all the struggles with Dillon about Derrida, a number of scholars did not read *Beyond Romance*. Or they might have assumed they understood his theory of love from hearing short versions of some chapters at conferences, or both of those things. For my part, when I did finally read and study the book (much too late, shortly before his death), I quickly discovered that I had gotten virtually no understanding of Dillon’s theory from hearing partial chapters at conferences. Indeed, for all its immediacy and passion, *Beyond Romance* is a complex book and things move fast; close reading and careful study are necessary to understand it. Nonetheless, I have taught the book to undergraduate students on multiple occasions, and they have found Dillon’s theory of love to be affecting and inspirational. For that matter, I do, too. In my view (for what it is worth), there are some significant difficulties along the way, but they are ameliorated by Dillon’s success in offering an original and fully articulated incarnate theory of loving relationships. I think the theory is a “player” in contemporary discussions of the subject and deserves extensive consideration, far more than it has so far received.

Dillon finished writing *Beyond Romance* in 1998. It was the culmination of a lifelong course of teaching and research, and it would have made a fitting capstone to his career. But he was far from done; he immediately began working in tandem on the two manuscripts collected here: a book on Nietzsche (inspired by years of teaching Nietzsche and a renewed interest in him) and a long-promised book that would elucidate a full-fledged ethical theory rooted in the phenomenology of our embodied relations with others. In several respects, Dillon’s work on these two manuscripts was nothing less than astonishing. Between 1998 and March 2005, with scarcely a break, he wrote chapters for one book or the other, back and forth; clearly he intended to finish these books. In fact, in Dillon’s proposal for sabbatical during the spring semester of 2005 (which he was awarded), he promised to finish both manuscripts by the end of the summer, something he almost surely would have done had he not passed away in March.

In this section, I have traced one path through Dillon’s professional career, through his writing and his thinking, which brings us to his work on these two final manuscripts. In the next section, I will discuss in a general way the character and content of the two manuscripts, and then argue for something about them that is not necessarily apparent: that they offer two complex, distinct sides of a relatively unified philosophical worldview.
2. THE MANUSCRIPTS

As indicated above, Dillon was equally committed to both of these book projects. However, one of them must be presented first in this book, and for minor thematic reasons I have chosen to start with the Nietzsche manuscript, *Art, Truth, and Illusion: Nietzsche’s Ontology*. As can be learned from my table of contents, the Nietzsche manuscript, as it exists, consists of six completed chapters and an appendix that contains Dillon’s fairly detailed template for the seventh chapter. While Dillon wrote each chapter as an individual essay, he noted on each of the final drafts “ATI: chapter one,” “ATI: chapter two,” and so on. In other words, there is no question whatsoever about his intended order for these existing chapters. What is not clear from any of his notes, papers, or conversations is whether there would have been one, two, or three additional chapters beyond chapter 7; indeed, Dillon left no outlines for the book of any sort.

Joanne recalls Mike saying in early 2005 that he had two more chapters to finish, although in keeping with his practice on *Semiological Reductionism* and *Beyond Romance*, one of those two might have been an overarching preface or introduction. I suspect that there would have been a chapter on *Ecce Homo* because, in fall semester 2004, when Dillon was teaching his Nietzsche course, he went to considerable trouble to type new lecture notes on that book—the clear beginnings of a template for that chapter. More, we can tell from his Nietzsche course notes that Dillon had a special fondness for *Ecce Homo*; he used the book to pull the themes of the course together. However, Dillon also spent many classes toward the end of his last Nietzsche course on *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Will to Power*. So it is possible that he envisioned a chapter on each of these books as well. Possible, but unlikely I think, because Dillon’s new *Ecce Homo* notes incorporated some of the material from his previous sketchy notes about *The Will to Power*. In the end, then, my best guess is that Dillon was intending to include a chapter 8 on *Twilight*, a concluding chapter 9 on *Ecce Homo*, and probably then to write a short overarching preface. But again, he left no documentary evidence to confirm this.

The Nietzsche manuscript is thus incomplete. Nonetheless, I believe that by the end of chapter 6 Dillon had largely made his primary case: that by 1878, Nietzsche had abandoned a latent quasi-Schopenhauerian ontology of Being and had articulated a radical, new ontology of becoming. Indeed, Dillon argues that Nietzsche underwent a dramatic self-transformation as a
thinker—a transformation that allowed him to fully articulate and embrace a one-world ontology of contingent, partial, and painful truths. For Dillon, careful attention to Nietzsche's self-transformation and his new ontology allows for a rigorous and fairly systematic interpretation of the big themes in Nietzsche's later texts. These themes include, for example, Nietzsche's perspectivism and his new theory of truth, his critique of religion, his articulation of Zarathustra as an exemplar of nobility, and his famous views of Übermensch, eternal return, and the like. As Dillon's study of Nietzsche moves forward, step-by-step, from *The Birth of Tragedy* to the late works, he gives detailed and typically fresh interpretations of those big themes by studying them through the organizing lens of Nietzsche's radicalized ontology. What occurs then in the existing manuscript is a sophisticated double movement. On one hand, Dillon grounds Nietzsche's big themes in an interpretation of his mature ontology of becoming. At the same time, Dillon more fully elucidates the ontology as he is articulating Nietzsche's themes. While it is clear that Dillon’s final one or two chapters would have discussed further themes, nonetheless I believe that by the end of his chapter 6 the reader will feel the organizing force of Dillon’s ontological approach and appreciate his rigorous interpretations of Nietzsche’s most famous concepts. Even though the reader will wish the rest of the book were there, the manuscript is extensive, expansive, and satisfying.

The second manuscript collected in this book is titled *The Ethics of Particularity*—a title that Dillon announced in his very last curriculum vitae. (That document also authoritatively establishes the intended order of the essays.) While, as stated above, the exact length of the final Nietzsche book is unclear, I am cautiously confident that with *The Ethics of Particularity* we have the entire book that Dillon intended and that we have it in near-publication condition. For example, the last existing chapter, chapter 8, has as its title the title of the book itself—a significant choice that signals the end of the book. And that chapter reads as a conclusion; that is, it pulls the overarching argument of the book together, but then works to address the important subject of freedom. About this manuscript, Joanne reports that Dillon said there was one more chapter to write, but I believe he probably intended that to be a fairly substantial organizing introduction. Indeed, this manuscript, much more than the one on Nietzsche, reads like a collection of separate papers on ethical topics and would have required such an introduction. However that may be, *The Ethics of Particularity* is virtually complete and its core project is weighty and provocative: It sets out to develop a ranging normative theory.
that both starts from and integrates the ethical content-structures that imbue our deeply particular, embodied relationships with others. In other words, in this manuscript Dillon articulates an ethical, political, and social-practice theory that builds upon Merleau-Ponty’s account of chiasmatic intersubjectivity. In a phrase, he offers a full-blown Merleau-Pontian ethics.

There is nothing superficial or quick in Dillon’s handling of this project. At its core, it is a fulsome extension of the account of carnal intersubjectivity he argued for in Beyond Romance. Thus, Dillon begins the manuscript of The Ethics of Particularity where Beyond Romance left off, by arguing that the recognition, vulnerability, pain, empathy, desire, and respect that imbue our prethematic carnal relations with others also constitute the “ground phenomena” of ethics. Further, he argues that these facts of embodied relations are deeply particular and essential to life as we know it; they both underlie and motivate our universal discourses about what is good, right, wrong, and the like. As a result of this complex conjunction—deep particularity at the core of universalizing discourse—Dillon shows that the Kantian and post-Kantian tendency to treat the particular as pathos and the universal as ethics is itself a flawed binary. He argues then that what is required is a normative theory that acknowledges the “ethics of particularity”—one that articulates the values that flow from embodied beings in social relations and the discursive practices that are required for such beings to adjudicate the good. As the chapters of the manuscript unfold, Dillon elucidates these values and discursive practices by showing their application to a range of ethical themes, such as shame, conscience, violence, politics, ecology, human finitude, authenticity, and freedom.

It is neither possible nor desirable in this introduction to summarize Dillon’s two manuscripts. Indeed, no summary could suffice, and now with their publication none is needed. My intention here has only been to say enough about the two manuscripts at a general level to establish that both of these manuscripts are doing substantial philosophical work and are richly deserving of our attention. In fact, I hope to have shown that if the reader is at all interested in Nietzsche, naturalism, Merleau-Ponty, normative theory, and the phenomenology of embodied life (to name a few things), these two manuscripts are mandatory reading. However, in the remainder of this section I want to argue for a feature of the manuscripts that may not be obvious to a first-time or casual reader. That is, that there are hidden, but essential relations between these manuscripts—relations that reveal them as two aspects of one coherent philosophical outlook rather than two independent
projects. I think this argument is important to make, not only because these relations are hidden and subtle, but also because it is by no means evident how a Nietzschean ontology and epistemology could fit together with a Merleau-Pontian ethics and social theory. Prima facie, those things would seem incommensurable. This worry about incoherence is also exacerbated, I think, by Dillon’s voice in the Nietzsche manuscript. Indeed, as you will discover, Dillon doesn’t write that manuscript with the quasi-objective style of measuring strengths and weaknesses. Rather, he embraces Nietzsche’s outlook and elaborates his views with enthusiastic vigor. It is not that Dillon is agreeing with everything Nietzsche says, but rather that Dillon’s disposition is to passionately defend what he sees as the best of Nietzsche and to more or less ignore problem areas. Once again, it seems hard to grasp how Dillon’s embrace of Nietzsche’s firebrand approach could be consistent with an ethics of embodied intersubjectivity and mediating discourse.

However, to launch my argument about hidden interconnections, I want to focus on a singular place in the Nietzsche manuscript where Dillon’s enthusiasm breaks down—where the voice shifts from Dillon-Nietzsche to Dillon on Nietzsche. This unusual shift happens in chapter 6 of the Nietzsche manuscript, that is to say, very late in it, the place where Dillon turns his focused attention to the question of “morality in a god-forsaken world.” He begins the section by saying he wants “to put his cards on the table,” and to “divulge his own position,” “right from the start.” Dillon then says: “I think that Nietzsche’s revaluation of all values is many things: a breath of fresh air; an attempt to think through a radical position honestly and to follow the thought wherever it leads even if it leads to unpalatable conclusions; a much-needed critique of contemporary ethics and morality; and maybe even partly right (which is to say probably partly wrong)” (p. 00).

There is a lot of enthusiasm here, and yet the final clause (“probably partly wrong”) foreshadows a moment of explicit disagreement that is uncharacteristic of the Nietzsche manuscript so far. Dillon then proceeds to situate Nietzsche’s ethical viewpoint as one side of a long-standing binary for depicting our relations with others. On one side of the binary is what Dillon calls “an ecological model” in which “the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of the whole, not only other humans, but every element of the ecosystem. . . . If some identifiable element threatens the whole, we have to band together to remove the threat, be it a virus, a hurricane, or a sociopath” (p. 00). The other side of the binary is an oppositional model for those relations in which, Dillon says, “the interest of the self is intrinsically
in opposition to the interest of the collective. With regard to power . . . each of us wants [more], hence is reluctant to relegate any of it to other persons” (p. 00). Dillon concludes this passage by arguing that Nietzsche clearly adopts the oppositional model and rejects the ecological model because he insists that the tension between self and others-collective-herd is irremediable.

At this junction—with the binary identified and Nietzsche on one side of it—at this important junction, Dillon says:

In my view, the truth lies between these two models. There are ways in which self and others will always be in tension, just because variations in perspective are inevitable. Universal accord will never be reached, and there is some question in my mind as to whether such accord should be assumed to be the supreme goal or regulative ideal that drives political and moral theorizing. On the other side, some degree of harmony, based on acknowledgment of our interdependency, is necessary for the survival of each of us just because many of our interests are common. (p. 00)

This is a portentous passage with the promise of riches because an “in-between” theory of ethics and social theory is exactly what Dillon is concurrently developing in The Ethics of Particularity. Furthermore, such a theory would effectively counter some of the most troubling elements of Nietzsche’s thought, for instance, his late notion of a strict “order of rank” among people and his autocratic, antidemocratic political philosophy. However, Dillon has nothing more to say about his own normative theory in chapter 6 of the Nietzsche manuscript and nowhere in that text mentions the ethics manuscript. Further, in chapter 3 of the ethics manuscript, Dillon makes substantial criticisms against Nietzsche’s oppositional account of authenticity, but he does not carry out the natural extension of that critique to Nietzsche’s larger social and political theory. My point here is not to criticize Dillon for these omissions—for all we know, he would have added those things as he finished the books—but rather to establish one specific, yet unarticulated way the ethics manuscript completes a major argument that is merely started in the Nietzsche manuscript. In a phrase, we are beginning to see that the relation of the two manuscripts is greater than the sum of its parts.

There are some other important ways in which the ethics manuscript, along with Beyond Romance, qualifies the Nietzschean perspective that Dillon otherwise seems to embrace. For one thing, both of those texts emphasize
something that Nietzsche could scarcely imagine: the centrality of love relationships in the good life. As I suggested earlier, this idea is so important to Dillon that it serves as the foundational premise or credo of *Beyond Romance*: “No good love, no good life.” Coupled with Dillon’s foundational commitment to “good love” is his distinctive account in both the ethics manuscript and *Beyond Romance* of *to kalon* as the recognition of nobility in my beloved other—a nobility I want to affirm and emulate, and which I hope she comes to recognize in me. Indeed, beyond the Nietzschean virtues that Dillon applauds in the Nietzsche manuscript, for example, lucidity, honesty, joyful affirmation of suffering and finitude, and living without supernatural illusions, it is clear to me that Dillon would have added the vulnerable, self-suspending, intersubjective movement of *to kalon*. I believe that Dillon would say that this movement of *to kalon* demands a kind of strength beyond power or will to power; it involves a kind of letting-go-ness into the contingent, uncertain places where love and desire grow, where I stand revealed, responsible to, and inspired by others.

There are some other important ways that *The Ethics of Particularity* tacitly qualifies the Nietzsche manuscript. For example, in chapter 7 of the ethics manuscript, titled “Life-Death,” Dillon attempts to answer the age-old question of what makes life worth living in the absence of fantasies about an afterlife. While he acknowledges Nietzsche’s suspicion that trying to vindicate life from within life is a form of circular reasoning, Dillon nonetheless proceeds to develop an answer that, while partial and perspectival (in Nietzschean fashion), is sufficiently robust for a living being to embrace. Part of the answer to what makes life worth living, Dillon says, is pleasure: “Anyone as fond of Scotch whiskey as I am knows that the vindication of drinking it does not lie in the consequences it frequently produces the following morning. *Au contraire*, it is a “now” kind of thing: consequences be damned. . . . Speaking as the Irishman I am, I can say that pleasure is surely part of the meaning life has for me” (p. 00).

But immediately Dillon insists that isn’t the whole story, because our reversible relationships with others—with their pain, suffering, and regard—take us well beyond the pleasure of now. In a beautiful passage, he says:

There is reversibility in the intercorporeity of the dying during the advent of death we call life. And it pervades the entirety of life. This pervasiveness is the basis of the peculiar qualitative aspect of life we place under such headings as intersubjectivity, morality, and love. To
the extent we care about others—that is, that we care about the ways in which they care about us, care being a preeminently reversible relation—we care about things that will take place in the world from which we have departed. The quality of life for those alive now is necessarily bound up with anticipations about the hereafter because it matters to us now what will happen to others later when we are dead and gone. (p. 00)

While Dillon has much more to add to his vindication of life and living well, already in this quote we see intersubjective elements that flatly contradict Nietzsche’s late “Dionysian pessimism,” that is, Nietzsche’s wildly affirmative, yet profoundly lonely image of life and death.8

Thus far I have elaborated three significant ways that Dillon’s texts on ethics and love provide an essential, yet unstated horizon for understanding the nature and the limits of the Nietzsche manuscript. But the “horizontal” relationship goes the other way, too. That is, Dillon’s robust engagement with Nietzsche in the last years of his life helps us understand important aspects of the ethics text. One example of this unstated yet constitutive influence can be seen by considering chapter 6 of The Ethics of Particularity, the essentially critical chapter about ecology and environmentalism. At first glance this critique is puzzling and disturbing. I distinctly remember the uproar an oral version of this paper caused at the Merleau-Ponty conference in St. Louis in 2002. (It probably didn’t help that the conference theme of environmentalism inspired attendance by many working ecologists.) However, close reading of this chapter, with the Nietzsche manuscript as a horizon, brings more understanding of his critique. Throughout the chapter, Dillon is concerned to criticize the concept of nature as a home or protective hold and also the concept of environmental balance or equilibrium. The crux of his challenge is that all these concepts involve subtle forms of anthropocentric or onto-theological projection: “There are, indeed, awesome powers at work in the universe, but they did not contrive Being for human dwelling. . . . Anthropomorphic design, intention, and intelligence belong in the sphere of anthropos, which is but one part intertwined with others in the flesh of the world. So, it would be wise and prudent to think and speak differently about the uncanny place mutating around us” (p. 00). A bit later he adds: “I believe . . . that much . . . ecological discourse covertly presupposes some sort of appeal to a natural teleology that is onto-theological at its core. For example, the notion of a cosmic balance upset by self-seeking human
projects... is largely crypto-onto-theology. Balance is stasis, rest, and perfection, none of which is apparent in the turmoil of continental drift... and the chaos of weather” (p. 00).

What Dillon does not tell us here, does not even reference in a footnote, is that this type of argument about nature is Nietzsche’s. As Nietzsche puts it in the rather well-known section 109 in *The Gay Science*:

> Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. ... Let us beware of positing generally and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars... The total character of the world... is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms. (GS, 167–68)

The similarity between Dillon’s and Nietzsche’s passages is remarkable; whether or not Dillon explicitly knew it, there is no doubt in my mind that Nietzsche is informing his critique of ecology in chapter 6 of the ethics manuscript. This means that Dillon’s at first puzzling, disturbing critique becomes more understandable because it has a substantial intellectual antecedent and must be engaged on those terms.

Of course that doesn’t mean Dillon’s Nietzschean view of nature in chapter 6 of the ethics manuscript is correct. To be honest, I am not at all persuaded by this type of argument. If Nietzsche or Dillon wants to reject attributing arrangement, form, or balance to nature because it is anthropomorphic projection, so, too, goes Nietzsche’s language of chaos. Indeed, if attributions of form are projection, so, too, are attributions of no form. From my point of view, this means then that Nietzsche’s and Dillon’s anthropomorphic projection argument ends up refusing meaningful reference to nature. And that position is a throwback to Nietzsche’s early skepticism about reality—the very position, Dillon argues, that Nietzsche correctly supersedes. Ironically enough, Dillon himself shows in chapter 3 of the Nietzsche manuscript that Nietzsche’s breakthrough is to see that “appearances” and language do not *screen* reality. Rather, “appearances” and language are our perspectival access to reality itself. Thus, for the mature Nietzsche—the Nietzsche who finally embraces becoming—the fact that such things flow from a human perspective is no objection to them; instead, we need to evaluate those perspectives in terms of their expansiveness, life affirmation, and correctness. To
say it again, consistently applied, Nietzsche’s mature thought, his perspectivism, doesn’t reject views qua “projection,” because that very concept—with its accompanying notions of “screen” and “true reality beyond”—remains mired in the post-Kantian ontology of Being. Instead, as Dillon himself shows, Nietzsche’s new task is to evaluate which of our reality concepts and attributions is most expansive, rich, affirmative, and correct about reality.

So I think Dillon’s particular way of arguing against ecology in chapter 6 of the ethics manuscript is deeply flawed. And, while I cannot develop it here, I also think in this chapter that Dillon fails to recognize how his Merleau-Pontian carnal ethics entails that we have responsibilities toward at least some animal species. This is no small oversight on Dillon’s part, and it leads him to a kind of sanguinity about despecification that I would vigorously challenge. But I do not make these arguments in a triumphal way. On the contrary, I do so with sadness about the fact that Dillon and I cannot discuss them together over dinner and a glass of wine. And who knows how he would have responded? My primary point in this section is not to show that Dillon was mistaken, but rather to establish that we need to understand his final writings as coiling over and back on one another in subtle folds of mutual elaboration and limitation. Again, this means that the final manuscripts are not paradoxically diverse or disconnected, but rather different aspects of a mature, coherent philosophical worldview that would be incorrect to call either Nietzschean or Merleau-Pontian. Instead, I think we must understand it as distinctly “Dillon.”

This subtle synergy between the manuscripts is the primary reason I have compiled them into this single book rather than separately publishing them. I had no idea I would compile them when I started my editing work, but it is now unimaginable to me to have done otherwise; too much would be lost to the reader of only one or the other. How much of this “coiling over and back” did Dillon himself see or intend? It is impossible to say, for he left no working notes and there is not a single reference from one manuscript to the other. Perhaps Dillon’s final, completed manuscripts would have made these interconnections clear, but with his sudden, untimely death, the work has been left to us.

I do have one final thought for this section, an insight that came to me after close study of these two manuscripts. Any previous reader of Dillon will have encountered his occasional polemic on all things postmodern, and on some things called “feminist.” As you probably have discerned by now, I did not follow Dillon in this, and, truth be told, he and I had some feisty
disagreements about it. Nonetheless, I think people who don’t read Dillon because they have heard of this aspect of his thought are missing something important. That is, in my view, while some of Dillon’s interpretations and arguments are flawed, his criticisms and polemics often speak truths and expose error; they sometimes miss the philosopher (such as Derrida in *Semiological Reductionism*), but hit square-on certain trends or fashions in academic or intellectual culture that were the result. Perhaps this last clause already indicates where I am heading, for the originator of this polemical style is none other than Nietzsche himself. Indeed, we celebrate Nietzsche as an “unfashionable thinker,” a masterful critic who blurred the line between rhetoric and argument in his effort to expose deep-lying lenses or constitutive paradigms of cultural accretions. For Nietzsche, the deepest, least acknowledged of these lenses went by the names of “religion” and “morality”—safe enough from our perspective of one hundred years after the fact. But for Dillon, working in the distinctive intellectual culture of the late twentieth century, the deep lenses he perceived went by the names of “postmodernism” and “radical feminism.”

Please do not misunderstand me: in making this connection, I am not saying that therefore either Nietzsche or Dillon is correct in their arguments, nor am I endorsing this kind of approach. (I suspect you can tell that is not my style of philosophy.) What I am arguing is that there is something philosophical going on in this aspect of Dillon’s writings. Given Nietzsche’s precedent, Dillon’s occasional polemics should not be flatly rejected as “irrational” or “reactionary.” Nor, conversely, should they be politely ignored in the name of memory or friendship. Instead, the truth is more complex: this aspect of Dillon’s thought is a more or less intentional manifestation of Nietzsche’s maverick approach and must be evaluated in these terms. Thus we see one more fold in the subtle synergy that Dillon’s late thought performs between Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche, and himself—a synergy that helps us better understand each of his books and his style as parts of a more or less coherent whole.

To underscore this point, and at the risk of immodesty, I want to share a few words that Mike wrote in a reader’s report of an early version of my book *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*. He says: “I think Hass is wise to engage feminist criticisms of Merleau-Ponty, which he does adroitly and without compromising either himself or Merleau-Ponty. . . . The same sort of observation could be made about postmodern critics. I want to challenge and provoke them, Hass invites them aboard. He is probably wiser, but I have more fun.”
Mike Dillon says: “I have more fun.” It is possible that he did, but that is not my point. Rather, it is that Nietzsche would scarcely have said different.

3. EDITORIAL PROCESS

In the previous section I mentioned how the titles of the manuscripts and the chapter orders were established by Mike’s final curriculum vitae. In other words, no editorial intervention was required there. But along the editorial way I made several decisions that have shaped this book, and it seems important to say some things about the process through which the manuscripts were transferred from Dillon’s desk to this book.

First of all, while Dillon was extremely tight-lipped about their contents, many friends and colleagues knew that he was working intensely on “a Nietzsche book” and “an ethics book.” In the wake of Dillon’s death, friends and colleagues wondered about the state of the manuscripts, excited by Joanne’s revelation that he had finished chapter 6 of the Nietzsche manuscript days before his death, by her inclusion of some passages from it in a handout at one of his memorial services, and by her stated belief that the two manuscripts were mostly complete and sitting there on his computer. In late 2005, I offered my services as editor to Joanne, and she enthusiastically agreed. In February 2006, my wife, Marjorie, and I visited Ambremereine so I could spend time in Mike’s study, reviewing his papers, files, and computer files. Needless to say, our hearts were heavy that weekend as the anniversary of Mike’s death approached and many memories were shared. The bright side, however, was that with only a couple of days of excavation, I found computer copies of all the essays (that is, chapters) and paper files that contained all the hard drafts of each of them. And each of those paper files had the latest version clearly marked, with all the previous ones labeled “superseded”—thank heavens for Dillon’s military habits! I also had other paper files of materials that seemed relevant to the two manuscripts: course notes, curriculum vitae, proposals, and the like. We returned home with two large boxes of material.

Between February 2006 and the end of August 2006, I completed a close reading of the essays, making detailed notes about their contents and their publication and presentation history. Additionally, I carried out a detailed editing of the electronic versions of the essays—now making them chapters in keeping with Mike’s intentions. At this stage, I was mostly making format
and font changes for consistency, even though some substantial editorial decisions needed to be made. For example, with one chapter (Ethics, chapter 3), the only existing electronic version was a shortened version that had been published in Chiasmi International. This short version conflicted with the long version of the essay that was found in the paper file, and so the deleted text had to be reinserted. In the three or four cases in which the electronic version had been shortened, I reinserted the content as it appeared in the paper version. I did this with confidence because it was evident from Dillon’s notations that he understood the latest paper version to be his last word on the content of each essay. In this regard, it is also important to report that Dillon made frequent notes in the margins of the paper versions—word or sentence changes, deletions—that were obviously intended to be incorporated. Since Dillon’s intentions were evident, I made those incorporations without noting them in the text.

In the summer of 2007, I made a third close reading of the manuscripts so I could write a detailed book proposal—one that included both general synopses of the two manuscripts and detailed discussions of each of the chapters. On the basis of the favorable response this proposal received from colleagues, I spent the summer of 2008 carrying out a final, systematic editing of the manuscript, which included regularizing the system of textual abbreviations and footnotes, hunting down references, fixing punctuation and citations, creating the bibliography, and writing this introduction and all the prefatory material. Many of these changes were made merely to format and so were made without comment. However, every interjection I made into or about the content of the manuscripts is marked with an endnote that begins “Editor’s note.” If an endnote does not begin with that phrase, Dillon wrote the note. This will be important for the reader to remember, because some of Dillon’s endnotes read like an editor’s interjection although the notes were written by him.

As I write these words, my work on this project is nearly complete. At every step, I have attempted to edit with a very light touch. Indeed, Dillon was such an orderly, careful writer that nothing more was required. Thus the reader can have confidence that, unless I indicate otherwise, the chapters that follow are pure Dillon, from first to last and start to stop. Not that you will need my assurances: Dillon’s distinctive tone and style will shine through every sentence and paragraph. The most controversial decision I made as editor—the decision I thought about longest—was whether or not to include the template for chapter 7 of the Nietzsche manuscript. As you will see, in
the end I decided to include it as an appendix to that manuscript. Although it is self-evidently unfinished, sometimes even with incomplete sentences, I decided that the course of Dillon’s intended argument was sufficiently clear and interesting for the template to be included. I trust that colleagues will tread lightly when drawing upon or citing material from it. But also, I thought readers might like to see what one of Dillon’s chapters looked like at one stage before he sat down to turn it into copy that was ready for presentation or publication. Indeed, I can report from comparing other templates to their finished versions that while the finished version is fleshed out and polished in fine detail (with additional arguments here or there), for the most part, the core of the argument had been already laid down in the template.

In the end, I remain honored to have been entrusted with this task. At times, I have been deeply saddened by the work. Can anyone who knew Mike read the chapter “Life-Death” (Ethics, chapter 7) without feeling his sudden loss and one’s own mortality? At other times, I felt a pressing need to talk to him: “Did you really intend to say that?” or “How would you respond to this?” And at every step, I have felt the privilege of my position as editor to be reading and studying Mike Dillon’s final words and thoughts, his final developing positions on becoming and ethics—what should probably be called his “ethics of becoming.” I am delighted that these manuscripts are now available to everyone who knew him and also to those who never had the chance. For as I mentioned at the outset of this introduction, Mike Dillon’s light shone very brightly indeed—in his life, in his classrooms, and in his philosophy. And while he left us much too soon, we still have his work. We will always have his work. As Claude Lefort reminds us, when a thinker leaves us, we must go back to the work.

Lawrence Hass