

Merleau-Ponty

- The importance of perception
- The pre-objective realm (human life-world)

- 'A thing is, therefore, not actually given in perception; rather it is *internally taken by us, reconstituted and experienced by us in so far as it is bound up with a world, the basic structures of which we carry with us, and of which it is merely one of many possible concrete forms* [Phenomenology of Perception, Pt II, 3].

- ◉ Philosophical account of the body
- ◉ 'I am my body'
- ◉ Body-subject → incarnated body

- The objective and phenomenal body
- The body as 'the system of all my holds on the world (*The Primacy of Perception*, 2002, 440).
- 'It is never the objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them' (*Phenomenology of Perception*, Part I, Sec. 3, p.121).

- Breakdown of unity – e.g., phantom-limb syndrome
- Extension of the phenomenal body – e.g., white cane

‘Neither body *nor* existence can be regarded as the original of the human being, since the presuppose each other, and because the body is solidified... existence, and existence is perpetual incarnation’ [*Phenomenology of Perception*, Pt I, 5, p.192].

Freedom

‘What then is freedom? To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted – the first case we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities... we exist in both ways at once, I am never a thing and never a bare consciousness’ (Ibid., Part III, 3, p.527).

- Sartre – ‘condemned to be free’
- M-P – condemned to meaning

Consider...

- ◉ What is M-P aiming to do?
- ◉ Does his *Phenomenology of Perception* offer us anything different in terms of furthering our understanding of ourselves or furthering our knowledge of our existence in the world?
- ◉ How is the body to be understood for MP?
- ◉ How does his understanding relate to – or contrast with – the traditional understanding of the body in Western thought?
- ◉ Can we relate to his picture of bodily engagement with the world?
- ◉ Do you see the body as our characteristic access to the world?

Bibliography

- M-P, *Phenomenology of Perception* , trans. Colin Smith (London and NY: 2002 [1945])
- M-P, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964).