

## Lecture 1

Merleau-Ponty's dichotomy-to-be-overcome (antinomy—see page 37): Intellectualist v/s empiricist. How? By not analysing, not explaining, but *describing*.

Merleau-Ponty opposes Kant's conditions of possibility with Heidegger's conditions of existence.

Perception is not propositional or conceptual; nonetheless, we base our beliefs and sciences on it.

Dreyfus sees it too. The main question, which he says Merleau-Ponty himself is unclear about: How perception leads to thinking. Nevertheless, "even if he just got perception right...that would be a huge contribution."

Husserl's phenomenology was as a detached observer; Heidegger's was as an active coping individual, which is what Merleau-Ponty follows.

"Perception hides itself from itself...the absence of something consciousness *could* bring into presence."

Merleau-Ponty's trident (to understand perception): Neural cases (!), descriptions of experiences which make it possible for us to see stable objects (Cezanne: An artist painting objects as they come into perception), and his "genius" for finding cases of slowing down of perception.

The constancy hypothesis posits that there is a direct correlation, a point-by-point correspondence between stimulus and perception, and that it is the job of perception to compensate for our direct sense-data. Merleau-Ponty refutes this by claiming that we directly experience the object (the constancy *phenomena* is what is the correct theory)—the train *already* looks the same size as it approaches us (perceptual constancy)., rather than us reinterpreting its apparent increase in size.

Constancies can break down, though (and when they do, the constancy hypothesis becomes true, because your experience becomes correlated to the stimuli). We break out of perceptual constancy when we finally perceive miniature buildings out of a plane.

The constancy hypothesis holds for a camera.

The lesser the hold of the constancy hypothesis, the better we pick out **invariants**.

Merleau-Ponty disagrees with Husserl's detachedness (the subjective error) and intellectualism (the objective error) and subscribes to Heidegger's engagement.

"Phenomenology of Perception is a book about athletes." Descartes was also stuck between the two; we need a third kind of being!

The brain does a lot of processing, but at the phenomenological level, you open your eyes and directly see stable objects with constant properties. There is no contradiction here.

## Lecture 2

16, 32, 43: Opposing views, not his own. **Check if misinterpreted in my initial notes.**

Merleau-Ponty wants to remove the intermediary across the objective world and the "meaningless" sensations which form our subjective world. "Our experience of objects need not be like the objects of experience."

Chapter 1: There are no such things as sensations.

Chapter 2-4: But even if there were, they would fail to explain what we wanted them to.

(Chapter 2: Critique of the empiricist account, which says that impressions associate with impressions to give rise to experience. Hume's (also Locke) attempt to give a causal account of the same by giving laws of association. Contemporary version: Behaviourists...and neural nets? Note how this naturally ties up with the constancy hypothesis.)

The intellectualist alternative: No laws, but the *mind* has to do something to get from impressions to objects (using 'judgement'). Rules instead of causal accounts (cognitivism; 'mental machinery').

How Merleau-Ponty escapes the antinomy: Denying the impressions/sensations. We see the whole to begin with.

Gestalt: Not just that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but that the whole determines what *counts* as/the meaning of its parts. (The classic example of a musical note sounding different in different melodies.) The abandoned idea: Fields in the brain corresponding to these wholes.

Note: The impressions of the empiricists are different from the absolutely pure impressions (the 'given') which Hegel criticizes. **(I misinterpreted MMP to mean it in the Hegelian sense in my first reading!)**

Under certain special attitudes ("attention"), we can get at the former. But (Chapter 3): this does not mean they were there all along (opposing the 'exposure hypothesis': Why should this "attention" bring out what was there all along?).

Chapter 4: MMP's own view.

### Lecture 3

There is no describing why a given Gestalt is the best Gestalt (lest our description becomes one of the objective world). "The appeal to memory presupposes what it is supposed to explain (the patterning of data, the imposition of meaning on a chaos of sense-data)."

"There are not arbitrary data which set about combining into a thing because *de facto* proximities or likenesses cause them to associate; it is, on the contrary, because we perceive a grouping as a thing that the analytical attitude can then discern likenesses or proximities."

The whole determines what counts as the part. The illustrative example in page 20 which slows down perception.

(Probably) according to Merleau-Ponty, This grasping an unstable environment to create stability happens *all the time*; it's just usually too quick for us to recognize. Puzzling (not in an intellectual way; an uneasiness) and paying attention are abnormal; the former reveals what is happening all the time.

Important mistranslation on page 24: Sensation cannot give rise to meaning (that is his whole argument); sense-experience does (and he does believe the latter exists). Furthermore, meaning is to be taken in the minimal, most primitive sense (far more basic than reference and intentionality); but it should "announce more than what it shows".

An introduction to body intentionality. (A real house vs a façade; the experience of the background.) (Dreyfus has a question: How can this be the same as the (minimal) intentionality in the spot with the background?)

The empiricist claim Merleau-Ponty refutes: The ground is not beneath the figure as a permanent possibility of sensations.

### Lecture 4

Attention's dual function: To break down and to bring out. The intellectualist mistake: To think that the breaking down *is* the bringing out.

"Inattentive perception contains nothing more and indeed nothing other than the attentive kind." Dreyfus interprets this as the intellectualist stance to justify why attention reveals

perception; I myself thought it was MMP saying attention does *not* reveal. I suppose I got the point, anyway.

“The two doctrines, then, have this idea in common that attention creates nothing, since a world of impressions in itself or a universe determining thought are equally independent of the action of the mind.” (To be clear: This is NOT Merleau-Ponty’s view.)

The second function of attention is the positive function.

Dreyfus thinks:

[It has another positive function: “Opening up the conceptual world, so that we see determinate objects with determinate properties.”

So, 3 ways of paying attention: The analytic mode (destruction), the unfolding mode (living), the stabilizing mode (creation). The first and the third modes are the detached ways of paying attention. The third way is the special attitude which exposes perception. (As such, Merleau-Ponty is interested in the second mode—affordances.) The third way is the reason we are fooled into intellectualism or empiricism; the reason they miss the second mode.

Note that it is unclear if this logically preceded by the unfolding mode, but it *sounds* like it.

Pages around 34, 35 talk about this second positive function.]

“Judgement is often introduced [by the two faulty doctrines] as what sensation lacks to make perception possible.” An overview of the various flavours of the immediately given, unstructured sensation (hyletic data, etc.). (Husserl calls this imposition of order—judgement— ‘constitution’. But Merleau-Ponty uses the same word in a very different sense as well; furthermore, in this sense, it is something done by the *body*, and not the mind.)

Merleau-Ponty: There is no neutral sensation waiting to be judged; meaning is always present.

## Lecture 5

Some slight rectifications in last lecture’s reading of ‘attention’.

*Secondary* attention is what enriches an object to the position of figure (and dissolves the rest into horizon).

*Primary* attention: The act of learning leading us from the indeterminate to the determinate. (Creation/first articulation.) (Empty (of determinateness)/Indeterminate but already determinable intention/tendency/directedness/seeking (the storm on the horizon) which is attention itself.) Conditions of improvement, rather than conditions of success.

The use of ‘creation’ by Merleau-Ponty is slightly misleading, for taking it literally would make us an empiricist, “who cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it.”

Fantastic illustration of colours and the child (who eventually *articulates* them—something was there, unresolved) at the bottom of page 34.

The two kinds of attention share a structure insofar as they articulate and resolve a tension. ‘Constitution’ *not* in the Husserlian sense of imposing form on matter.

*Motive* is the pull to making things determinate: A very important concept in Merleau-Ponty. The Gestalts are naturalists, looking for physical causes behind the categories of motivation, maximal coherence, etc. Merleau-Ponty disagrees with them. Dreyfus supports the Gestalts, feeling MMP is unfair to them.

Having established as best as he can the possibility of a Gestalt-esque objective explanation to the antinomy-defying explanation of perception, Merleau-Ponty now makes the move to idealism (more properly in chapter 4: A sort of empirical realist, transcendental idealist) “The return to perceptual experience puts out of court all forms of realism”.

Idealism as a weapon *against* solipsism?!

Retroactive justification from the crypto-mechanism of perception, making us believe the world we turn determinate was determinate all along... “the motivated phenomena thus seems to pre-exist the motivating phenomena”. A dialectic whereby perception hides itself from itself.

The objects are not features of things in the (objective according to science) *universe*; they are features of things in the *world*, which is the shared and perceived and *intersubjective* world.

## Lecture 6

“The universe is nothing but the perceived world cut off from its constitutive origins, and made manifest because they are forgotten.” Here, the anti-realism: The universe is just a map to the world, just an *aspect* (residue) of the latter, the latter being what is *real*. He thinks there is no world in itself (which is what science thinks its ‘universe’ to be.)

More anti-realism on science from MMP: “The prescientific life of consciousness alone endows scientific operations with meaning, and these latter always refer back [to it].”

An epistemic/epistemological claim (our science is based on our perception) turned into a metaphysical/ontological claim (our science *is* our perception (?)) by MMP.

Well, Dreyfus strongly disagrees with this, but receives an excellent question: Why is the tree any *more* mind-dependent than the electron? Should not one be realist through-and-through, about the perceptual world itself, or an idealist about both the world and the universe, like Merleau-Ponty? Either science and the mind copy, or science and the mind compose.

*Science* doesn’t compose because it deals in natural-kinds, responds Dreyfus (admitting the response to be the prejudice of the world). But why not as well say that the mind *copies* the tree, instead of *composing* it? They’ve only got *boundary conditions*.

The metaphysics of Merleau-Ponty: A currently unanswered question.

An *intercorporeal* world, better put, than an intersubjective one.

The phenomenal field: Us opening up to organize experience and get this shared world. The return to experience prior to the ‘objective’ world (at least epistemologically—also metaphysically, according to MMP though).

Introspection fails because you aren’t a passive being ever, and because it modifies experience itself in the act.

“I’m not just *set* to see more: I’m *drawn* to see better.” The back of the house is not *just* a necessity (Husserl) or a possibility (C.I. Lewis): It is also an *actuality* soliciting us. The vital communication given by sense experience; the connection between the internal and the external.

What is the metaphysical position of the transcendental field?

## Lecture 7

*In-itself*: The universe. *For-itself*: Consciousness. The two kinds of being modern philosophy after Descartes has to understand everything in terms of.

What Merleau-Ponty seeks is... “a philosophy which explains the upsurge of reason in a world not of its making.”

There’s no *reason* behind the way such-and-such configurations form maximal coherence; somehow, we just make the structure up.

Gurwitsch's question: How are we conscious of the body (itself)? The final frontier/question of phenomenology.

We shouldn't take the phenomenal field to be a transcendental field in the following way: Psychological reflection tries to do this by turning consciousness into an in-itself; since we know objects through the phenomena of consciousness, in our attempt to describe the constitution of the latter, we integrate with it "every possible object". Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

Transcendental = Conditions of possibility of existence. Husserl posits an ego which is transcendental because its experiences have in them the resources that make it possible for there to be the experience of objects.

Merleau-Ponty's difference of opinion (siding towards Heidegger): The shared phenomenal field *itself* is to be taken as the transcendental field. This is because we can never get clear about our consciousness, since we're *in* it; no perspective outside of it. Thus, the question "Why is one Gestalt better than the other?" is unanswerable.

And so Merleau-Ponty contrasts Husserl's transcendental ego with a transcendental field. For the former, sensations are opaque; our consciousness/Husserl's "transcendental ego" is opaque; Heidegger's facticity is opaque (not clarifiable) (what Husserl thinks is to be clarified).

Thus, "phenomenology is a study of the advent of being to consciousness, instead of presuming its possibility": Explaining the upsurge of reason.

Many people (Kant) who reflect disregard the difficulty to *wholly* reflect, forgetting that it is necessary to become the transcendental subject (Husserl sees this) in order to affirm this resistance. (Kant assumes our thinking is unconditioned by experience—active synthesis, not passive.)

Merleau-Ponty's big move: There's no big need to affirm passive synthesis, no big problem of it; you just have to see that it's *there* with our phenomenal field. Husserl's recognition of passive synthesis from Kant (who does not have individuated but rather transcendental intersubjectivity) is a step in the right direction. Merleau-Ponty takes this forward with his *intercorporeality*.

From conditions of possibility to conditions of existence: Existential phenomenology.

## Lecture 8

Can we insert the body into the language of the in-itself? Is there a linear dependence between stimulus and receptor, governed by the body?

No.

We are not passive receivers. The intentional arc: My past experience changes the way I take in future experiences; the way I am *attuned* to things changes according to it. (And not that we intellectually consider future experiences differently based on past experience by just putting the latter together—the world itself changes.)

We also need to have a "brain-story" to back this up—a causal (note that MMP means *linear* by causal/worldly causality, which is why it's incorrect according to him) story of the intentional arc:

We *do* make Pavlovian connections, but these are not so important. Along with these new connections, it also adds new global "minimal energy" states/ "attractors"—brain landscapes—with it, which is what manifests with the stimulus/input. This is the invariant sending the whole system into a recognition. By this we pick up the *meaning*/signification, rather than the qualia/information (a distinction Freeman never feels the need to make). *And*

we're always seeking maximal grip, which determines what information is stored in terms of significance.

"The excitation is seized and reorganized by transversal functions which make it resemble the perception it is about to arouse [before qualia]": The attractor landscape. No third-person account: You have to bring in "at the ground floor" an account of the significances for the person seeking it. We have to understand the rabbit *as a rabbit* (as a rabbit *seeking*).

The account he's *against* is in terms of elements.

In the introduction, the objections were philosophical ones against the coherence of the two sides of the antinomy. Now, with the phantom limb, we get the empirical facts behind the objections.

First, against the physiological/empiricist account: Numbing our nerves doesn't get rid of the phantom limb. Furthermore, it sometimes arises without amputation due to *cerebral* effects. Switching over to the psychological/intellectualist account (which anosognosia seems to demand): But severance of nerves *does* abolish the phantom limb for various people! No psychological explanation can overlook this.

Can we put the two together? Well, but how can we find common ground for the in-itself and the for-itself?

Thus, we get Merleau-Ponty's story of seeking maximal grip and belonging to a world. The oil drop needs to get the least energy; the insect needs to get something to eat. Solicitations by an open situation—teleological (the carrot attracts the insect, making it behave as it does).

This pre-objective view effects the union of the antinomy.

Back to the phantom limb (how does this solve it): Cups continue to look 'reachable' to the patient because he continues to stay in the world in which cups solicit him, despite the fact that he 'knows' he has no arms. It is a *habit*. And so, we finally outgrow it.

## Lecture 9 (The T.A. on the metaphysics of Merleau-Ponty)

Merleau-Ponty and the Gestaltists: What is the world? (Realism v/s idealism.)

Merleau-Ponty's problem with the latter: They believe in the prejudice of the world.

The temptation (I fell for it!): Just move to Koffka! He's got the phenomenology down, and he's also got a sensible metaphysics (realism/naturalism)!

The question for traditional realism (supported by the Gestalt psychologists): How does the world-in-itself relate to the world-for-itself? What Merleau-Ponty means by the rejection of the prejudice of the world: There is no world-in-itself. (But ought this not be a conclusion, rather than a starting point? Perhaps it is—to that of the Structure of Behaviour.)

In *that* book, Merleau-Ponty says that he thinks the main contribution of the Gestaltists lay in recognizing the forms and structure that exist for (emphasis on for?) the behaving animal. But the Gestaltists took these to the metaphysical level, and that of natural science (the soap bubble and the oil drop in terms of tendencies).

How do these forms get meaning from the meaningless world-in-itself? Merleau-Ponty's answer: There isn't one. We don't subjectively 'endow' meaning to meaningful forms; the perceived world is *already*/always meaningful. (The T.A. says: MMP thinks it impossible to reduce perception's meaningful indeterminacy to physics' meaningless determinacy.)

For the Gestalt psychologist, only the 'subjective' mailbox calls to us, and not the *real* mailbox. For MMP, the mailbox which solicits *is* the real mailbox—as real as it gets. There is no mailbox in-itself. MMP's paradox: A thing in the world is a thing *in-itself-for-us*. Trying hard to get rid of this dichotomy? (Note: Kant went full idealist, on the other hand. With his thing-

in-itself, he conceives a world beyond the possibilities of our conception! *Not* the world of science.)

[I think the problem of understanding his metaphysics arises *because* we insist on speaking in terms of idealism and realism. Even the T.A. says that Merleau-Ponty goes beyond idealism and realism. Or is MMP stuck?]

The “non-human element” at the bottom of 375: Not the world-for-itself, nor the world-in-itself? Maybe an *indeterminate* world-in-itself?

For J.J. Gibson, these affordances are a real aspect of the object (not ‘for us’). A feature of the object which relates to us, but does not depend on us. “An affordance is not ‘bestowed’ upon an object (because of the need of the observer).” We may not have *access* to all the affordances of an object at a given point of time (*this* depends on us, what we want, etc.).

Gibson’s dichotomy: The environment and the physical world. Different levels of description (physics, chemistry, biology)—wherein the ecological level (Gibson’s level) has the affordances (neither subjective nor objective). Each animal has an environment.

This is a form of direct realism, and the phantom limb is going to be a problem for it.

## Lecture 10

The fact that our legs being walkable is in the background is what makes it hard to get rid of and allows for the sustenance of the phantom limb (in spite of our beliefs and the absence of the leg).

Although we *can* “re-educate” people and make this go away. “It must have ceased to be a thing *manipulatable for me* and become a thing *manipulatable in itself*.” (Alternatively: The solicitations of the Gestaltists v/s the affordances of Gibson.)

What is this thing which continues in the background? “Your overall way of coping with things.” Hm. Not enumerable. Not the same as the ‘horizon’. “Vague power”, “atmosphere”, “current of activity”, and so on...our openness to the world, being-in-the-world: A global presence of the situation/mode determining the parts (of our perception).

To come in the cogito chapter: Repressed knowledge is just something which has merged into the background. From a psychology of depth to a psychology of breadth.

Stimulus is irrelevant: A façade looks *visibly* different from a house. (The *wrong* story: The given stays the same, the interpretation is different.) The cups looks reachable because we reach out for it = We reach out for it because the cup looks reachable. (The perceiving subject (if we remove everything except tendencies) is the perceived world (if we remove everything except solicitations): Last line of Experience and Objective Thought. Neither subject nor object; they are but limiting cases. The body no longer as constituting the world: Correlative, their combination is called the ‘flesh’ in the Visible and the Invisible.)

The impulse of being-in-the-world: To get a grip on things. We may try to (are led to) use this nerve impulse or that limb (even if we don’t have it) to do this. Well, but we may equally well talk about how the world manoeuvres us around. Subject = Object again.

It does appear, misleadingly, that he is prioritizing the body.

Is there anything beyond the maximal grip/maximally gripped story? Depends on how you read the phrase. Maybe we can distinguish between local maximal grips and larger (more background) situations.

## Lecture 11

The previous chapter was a description of experience as in-itself; the empiricist, physiology. Now, for-itself; the intellectualist, psychology.

The Gestaltists made it too naturalized; Husserl made it too mental.

The body is never just an object, for it is by which there are objects. (This is Husserl.)

“The presence and absence of external objects are only variations within a field of primordial presence, a perceptual domain over which my body exercises power”: This is Husserl. He gets at the experience of temporality as self-organising, and as more basic than subject & object.

But he didn’t get it quite right; Merleau-Ponty thinks there is something more.

Classical psychology also *nearly* gets it: “The relation between my decision and my body are, in a movement, magical ones.” Here, “magical” in an ‘insulting’ sense; mental to physical causality is the magic. There must be a deeper unity. (In this sense, Husserl got closer.)

“A first opening upon things without which there would be no objective knowledge”: Being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty (& Heidegger). (Not Husserl’s constituting self: He misses the part wherein our organising self is a *response* to the organisation of the world.)

Next chapter. A big one.

From body image to body schema: The body image is a mental picture. But the body schema is much more than just keeping track of where our body is.

The first function of the body schema (classical psychology): To produce the body image by associations.

The second function of the body schema: To provide an anterior ground upon which associations are possible. (But here, it is described as something *apart* from the world.)

The third function of the body schema: “An attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task.” The situation of the body in the fact of its pasts.

The anchoring of the body: If you’re reading a newspaper which is in a parallel train, when there is motion, you will feel that train moving regardless—for the coping activity was with that one. (Well, why not the other way round? A student asks this question, thankfully.

Maybe this way: Your perception of your window would be the same regardless of its motion, because you weren’t gripping it. Alternative simplification: You assume that whatever’s happening is happening where you’re engaged. Page 291: “My body is wherever there is something to be done.” Whenever something affords of an action.)

Finally, the body schema turns out to be what’s *not* present: The darkness of the theatre, the absence of any experience which opens you up to all experiences. A system of possible actions. “The body schema is finally a way of stating my body is in-the-world.”

Schneider’s problem: His affordances don’t have other possibilities. His body schema is missing the engaged activity with the world.

Goldstein: Schneider doesn’t have the right concrete attitude. Merleau-Ponty: Schneider doesn’t have being-in-the-world.

## Lecture 12

Once again, his departure from the Gestalt story: This isn’t just the way the visual system works, it’s the way the organism exists—the maximal grip story; “existence towards [the tasks”. The body does organise the world, and—the Gestalt story got this down, so they’re half right—the world also organises the body.

Body schema = The body being-in-the-world. Bodily space: The background for ordinary figure-ground existence. Non-being tying into our involvement.

*The* body schema: Not *my* body schema. It does things we never really ‘experience’ (keeping the colours constant, etc.) by virtue of its being embedding in the world. Extends beyond the conscious self. “Impersonal, transparent coping.”

Time for Schneider.



Analysis in terms of the abstract (detached attitude) and the concrete (involved coping). Goldstein thinks Schneider lacks the former; Merleau-Ponty thinks he lacks both—because neither exist, and because he doesn't have what they need to exist (the third mode).

**In fact, Merleau-Ponty *refutes* the dichotomy of the two attitudes: A complete misunderstanding in my first reading.** You just can't, as Goldstein thinks, put the two together to the normal ones.

The third mode: Performing a concrete action while not being in the appropriate situation ("concretizing the abstract"?).

Lots of interesting anecdotes involving Schneider to illustrate Goldstein's point about him having the concrete but not the abstract.

How is grasping possible, but not pointing? Two different spaces: The spatiality of coping, and the spatiality of observing. The intention to take hold v/s the intention to know.

If the body were just the knowledge of a set of causal relations, you could never separate the concrete and the abstract in Schneider's way.

Is there a parallel between this dichotomy and the empiricist-intellectualist one? Perhaps a bit.

We are also like Schneider sometimes ("like an animal"). What finger do you usually use to type the letter 'e' on the keyboard?

### Lecture 13

Going back: What do Gelb-Goldstein think "normal" is? Some sort of mixture of a concrete, tactile, practical, involved coping attitude and abstract, theoretical, visual, standing-back attitude.

Merleau-Ponty's answer? Dreyfus spoils it by giving us the punchline in advance: His intentional arc has gone limp. His being-in-the-world is "level".

It is *true* that people can be involved or detached...but they are variations in something deeper (*existence*). The concrete-abstract view is just another expression of the physiological-psychological, for-itself—in-itself, and all the other dichotomies.

Schneider's *real* problem: He can't perform an abstract movement *without* taking up a completely theoretical stance (which is just to say that he has to perform it concretely—the situation calls for a theoretical stance concretely). But in the other sense, he can't perform an abstract movement by imagining it to be concrete (which is the normal abstract attitude).

What's missing is the proper "mix" of the two (according to G-G).

Lots of confusion about terminology. Suggestion of a third way, wherein there is neither a real situation nor an imagined one, and the body performs the action with itself as an end.

Schneider is "confined within the actual". The patient's field of actuality is either real contact or deductively processed data, and never possibility. From Lecture 11: "Schneider's problem: His affordances don't have other possibilities."

G-G call motor intentionality a mixture of movement and consciousness (of movement). They got the phenomena right, the explanation wrong.

The concrete background is given; the abstract background is built up; Merleau-Ponty's background takes account of them both.

Sartre thinks consciousness projects meaning onto reality. Merleau-Ponty thinks consciousness itself is a function of the meaning seen—which was in turn put there by the body. The Heideggerian projection, this strange loop, is the intentional arc. In the Visible and the Invisible, the *flesh* is his way of avoiding misleading us (into thinking that the body is the primary constitutor). Secondary meaning upon the primary world.

Do you constitute meaning, or do you just get better attuned to pre-existing meaning?

## Lecture 14

Normal people have “inter-sensorial transposability” which extends our body-space. Similarly, in thought, for e.g., the past and future of a conversation. Schneider can’t understand conversations. Similarly, we know  $5+4-5=5$  at just a glance without working through it, unlike Schneider.

N.B.: Skill ⇌ Habit. (Skills are sort of fluid habits.)

Schneider can’t *enrich* his world by absorbing *new* situations. His perceptual field has lost its plasticity. We can, because we can see the significance of our movements.

“The translation of the percept into movement is effected via the express meanings of language [for Schneider], whereas the normal subject penetrates into the object by perception, assimilating its structure into his substance, and through this body the object directly regulates his movements.”

“Habit does not *consist* in interpreting the pressures of the stick on the hand as indications of certain positions of the stick, and these as signs of an external object, since it *relieves us of the necessity of doing so*.” The signs become aspects.

Next question: How does the body inhabit the world?

“In order to assert a truth, the actual subject must in the first place have a world.”

The intellectualist is wrong in thinking you can spell out all of common sense just because you can spell it out some of the times.

No third level between the brain level and the phenomenological level.

The unifying ‘intentional arc’ (being-in-the-world) has gone “limp” for Schneider because his illness has taken away his power of existence (the energy to be opened up—the power is the tendency towards basic coping/maximal grip). Thus, he can’t absorb new situations.

We cannot explain what lies behind the maximal grip tendency; we can only describe its consequences.

## Lecture 15

We move to part 2.

The idea to be opposed: That in our experience there are separable elements of experience that correspond to various aspects of an object. It is not that the transcendental ego constitutes an object existing in objective space.

The ideal in-itself cube with six sides is not constituted within us; we find it by “delving into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience.” Dreyfus rephrases this by the maximal grip story. “The (geometrized projection of the) cube is already there in front of me and reveals itself through the perspectives.” Your body schema (*you* don’t do it, ‘one’ does it; ‘outside of consciousness’) takes it in and gives it to you as an object from a perspective.

There is no middleman/mental representation. Note: You don’t have to express the cube in order to grasp it.

The way the body has special connections running internally, so does the body and the object of perception. After all, the object is *part* of the body schema. THUS, the theory of the body is already a theory of perception!

N.B. intentional tissue (beginning of chapter 4) becomes flesh?

*You can’t describe the body schema!* It’s the glue. If you say anything about it, you become an intellectualist.

“Represents”: Could be the intellectualist thing. Alternatively, in the sense favourable to Merleau-Ponty, what does the representing and what is represented are inseparable from the whole. Similarly, there are two senses of ‘intentionality’ (the unfavourable sense indicating something propositional). Synthesis also has two meanings. Not sure why I’m noting all this down.

You can’t separate something into qualia.

Intentionality: Having significance beyond itself. The way the aspects ‘refer’ beyond themselves. (And so, it is easy to see that, specifically, beliefs have intentionality.) Thus, the front of the house has intentionality, for it signifies the back as well (which is beyond it). We expect there to be a back, and thus there exist conditions of satisfaction, and thus we call it intentionality. If these conditions fail, we get a fresh set of conditions and the older ones are eliminated. (Note that, however, you can continue to entertain falsified beliefs.)

So, examples of things with intentionality: Beliefs, the house, and finally, the spot on page 4 (with all that talk of arousing a readiness).

“The structure of perception is ambiguous” —Here, ambiguity (the indeterminacy) doesn’t mean to say that what we see looks sort of like a house and sort of like a façade and remains ambiguous between the two. It definitely looks like one or the other to us. The lack of actualization of the conditions of satisfaction (and there will always be such unactualized conditions) are what account for the indeterminacy (we haven’t *seen* if there is a back of the house, and so it remains indeterminate to that extent).

## Lecture 16

Something has intentionality if it implies something beyond itself which could turn out to be false.

There’s a *difference* in the way our belief’s conditions fail to be satisfied and the conditions for house which (should) have a back fails to be satisfied. Here, it seems, the temporality discussion (later) comes in. In the latter case, your whole temporals stream of experiences gets disrupted. Sometimes, experiences can be “exploded” when something really crazy turns up in place of what we anticipate (this cannot happen when we *expect* rather than anticipate, in which case we just say that the expectation was false). “And it’s all temporal, and you never come to the end of it.” (The house revealed to be a façade could further be a façade revealed to be a house, and so on ad infinitum. No ‘objective’ facts here.)

Satisfaction ⇔ Fulfilment. There’s no real word for it, though...

The equilibrium story is an additional structure upon the breakdown story. (Husserl, for example, has just the breakdown story.)

You retroactively decide that the post-breakdown experience is what it was all along, and ‘forget’ what it looked like before.

“The *account* of the body is the *account* of perception.”

“How can there be [any kind of] theory of the body schema when there’s nothing you can say about it?” Hmmm. Some utterly Zen and unorthodox modes of description.

“Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception.”

Why can’t you describe the body (detachedly)? Because there’s nothing you can say about it beyond the experience; and for the experience, you have to have the readiness to ‘come to terms with the world’.

What is the radical reflection by which the body can be described?

There is involvement and the whole package even when you're just standing still and looking at a colour. Some illustrating examples.

Next topic: The *inter-sensorial* unity of the body. The empiricists think they're all different; the intellectualists think they've somehow already been unified. Merleau-Ponty: In a certain way, everyone has synaesthesia.

Our knowledge of colour isn't divided into a discrete, well-defined series/spectrum. The example of the constantly eggshell white wall which yet looks different under different lightings. These colours are not separate; they even interact and influence one another. You get the *qualé* only by breaking up the Gestalt, but they're never what you really experience, because what you experience is always in a field.

## Lecture 17

A sense-organ only reveals an *aspect*. "Sensory experience is unstable and alien to natural perception, which we achieve with our whole body at once, and which opens on a world of interacting senses. [The former] is gained only when one assumes a highly particularized attitude, and this cannot be of any assistance to the analysis of direct consciousness." "It is impossible completely to describe the colour of the carpet without saying that it *is* a carpet, made of wool, and without implying in this colour a certain tactile value, a certain weight and a certain resistance to sound."

Synesthetic perception is the rule!

Binocular vision:

When I focus my attention on my finger in front of me, I pull two images into one—but not instantaneously (indicating the fact that it's neither a calculation nor a mental act). "The focusing of the gaze is a 'prospective activity'." The unbalance of double vision pulls one (gives one the motivation) to focus and get a grip.

(Non-representational) Intentionality is quasi-teleological—we want the tension to go away (this is normative), but we're not sure what's at the end. A blind expectation.

(And, just to make the decisive factor clear, it seems, this isn't really on a task-specific level; this precedes it, although inevitably leads to it. A bit of a debate about whether or not this separating-out is possible. History (cultural, task-specific) and pre-history (the natural; a history that was never present). Well, I'm not wholly convinced about this division either...the keynote: does language change perception all the way down?)

"The ipseity is, of course, never reached: each aspect of the thing which falls to our perception is still only an invitation to perceive beyond it, still only a momentary halt in the perceptual process." You never actually arrive at a final equilibrium. (Of course, that doesn't mean you never arrive at a perception.) Or is that so? It seems you need an optimal grip sometimes (size & depth)—when you're engaged in specific *tasks*. We look for the *best* grip and not just a good one; we need to *achieve* maximal grip in order to experience space. **(This is wrong!)**

Another debate about this separation.

Binocular vision merges two into one the same way we see with our ears. "My body is not a collection of adjacent organs but a synergic system."

Well: "Perception is always in the mode of the impersonal 'One'. Rather than being a genuine history, perception ratifies and renews in us a 'prehistory'." Looks like Merleau-Ponty performs the above separation.

Three criteria for maximal grip: Richness, articulation, expectation.

## Lecture 18

Is there one best grip independent of task?

"Increasing distance...expresses merely that the thing is beginning to slip away from the grip of our gaze and is less closely allied to it."

["The perception of the thing as a whole is the result of the impersonal body schema locking onto (and thereby unlocking) the thing in the natural world."]

Four questions:

1. How is maximal grip related to the task? Is there *always* one basic independent optimal grip? (Dreyfus thinks: The latter.)
2. How is it related to the culture?
3. Can you ever experience a natural thing independent of task and culture? (Dreyfus thinks: Yes.)
4. Do you get a maximum grip or only a *tendency* towards maximum grip? (The latter! Dreyfus was wrong.)

Merleau-Ponty thinks all qualities are relative (*and* not relative) to us in a certain way. (The question of idealism lurking in the horizon.)

Answers:

1, 2, 3: The optimal grip is always there as a pull, but is sometimes overridden by task-specific tendencies. (If I look under the desk to check for gum, my optimal grip on the desk is distorted because of my task.) However, we almost always look at objects because of the existence of these tasks. Related to the impersonality of the body schema. Note that this doesn't mean that the optimal grip has the same perceptual capacities across cultures. The point is that the one in us doesn't have anything in common with our tasks and interests; and similarly, for the one in the eagle. It may also be unaffected by the fact that we're a human and not something else. This optimal grip does the job of maintaining a constancy. To say something looks like a creature of God, one must presuppose a stable basis.

4. Don't you have to know the optimal in order to experience it as deviations from the optimal? Well, empirically not. But how do we know the optimal then? ["The impersonal body schema *knows*, somehow...it's got an understanding of the world, somehow."] A prehistory of understanding built into it.

The real colour isn't what you experience when you see it optimally, it's what's in the background giving you the experience that all the other experiences are *not* optimal! "The real colour persists beneath appearances as the background persists beneath the figure, that is, not seen as a thought-of quality, but through a non-sensory presence."

Two senses of the "real" colour Merleau-Ponty confuses: What was described above, and what you see when you experience no tension.

## Lecture 19

"We propose to approach the phenomenon of reality by studying perceptual constants."

Psychic continuity?

The first thing we do is throw away the constancy hypothesis. Why do we perceive the door to be the same size when we approach it and its image grows?

Russell's empiricism: "Although one may feel the colour of the wall is the same invariant of lightings, that is wrong. The right thing to say is not that I experience constancy but that I *believe* the colour of the wall is constant, for if I examine it well enough, I will see the breakdown of the constancy corresponding to the differences in retinal image." The empiricist thinks that thoughts come out of the more basic experiences.

How do we argue against Russell?

Experience is more *robust* than belief. Beliefs cannot really affect experiences, so how can you account for experiences by saying it is because we believe such-and-such happens?

What Merleau-Ponty considers is another empiricist account:

“What is presented to us in the case of each object, the psychologist will assert, are sizes and shapes which always vary with the perspective, and it is conventional to regard as true the size which the object has when within reach, or the shape which it assumes when it is in a plane parallel to the frontal elevation. These are no truer than any other, but since this distance and this aspect are both typical, and evolved with the help of our body, which is an ever-present guide for this purpose, we can always recognize them, and so they themselves provide us with a standard for fixing and distinguishing between fleeting appearances; for constructing objectivity, in short.”

But while (let’s talk about size, now) it *looks* the same way, we still don’t *experience* it the same way when at a distance! How do we characterize this difference? (The object a hundred yards away has less of a ‘presence’ (our *grip* on it is less) than the object one yard away.)

[“The indeterminacy is the tension between these facts.”] The empiricist account takes for granted the determinateness of perception. They have the phenomena wrong.

The good thing about the intellectualist is that they make the distinction indicated in the first line of the previous paragraph. The subject “takes into account” the contextual variation.

What they say is important to notice is that the ratio between object-distance and image-size remains constant. Perhaps we “take into account” this fact to get a constant size.

Option A: It’s not *me* as the perceiving subject who does this taking-into-account but the brain. But this is a bad account of the phenomena/phenomenology. We do not experience image-size as having a determinate value. This is a *skill* you *can* develop. (We experience size of an object as the things it affords of being done upon by us, perhaps?) Once again, determinateness is presupposed.

Option B: It’s the *subject* to which determinate experience is attributed. But this ends up saying that the subject experiences *both* the kinds of ‘experience’ (again, delineated above), which sounds wrong. To experience the apparent property is, again, a skill.

We need an essential kind of indeterminacy in the phenomenology. Thus, we take into account the distance of the object in terms of our *grip* on it. The ‘true’ size (appropriate distance) is when our grip on it is maximum. Not a statistical fact about what distance from which we make the best judgement.

General grip: Object:: Task-specific grip: Characteristics of the object.

## Lecture 20

A *felt* norm, and not an empirical/statistical norm. The best example of the norm and figure-ground perception: The lighting context.

When the light is helping you see other things, it’s taken for granted; it’s the background, and not experienced as an object. Example in which we take account of lighting as a background: Painting reflections in the eye enhances its liveliness in an unnoticed manner. To do their job, they have to be not that which is focused on but what I’m taking account of *to* focus on something. The lighting *leads* our gaze (the way the picture motivates me to move closer/further to see the painting better) instead of arresting me. “The lighting directs my gaze and causes me to see the object, so that in a sense it *knows* and *sees* the object.” (And what of the body schema?) It’s an intentional fact, but *I* don’t do it.

To know the best place to see the colour of the wall is to *already* know the colour of the wall!

If you look at a blue wall and dim it greatly, it will continue looking blue: Constancy. But if you take a photograph of it at that dimness, it may no longer: You have to look at it in context. In the Visible and the Invisible: Does the intentionality belong in *us* (the thing, the figure) or the *world* (the look, the background). Neither; it resides in the *flesh*.

Visual form agnosia: The patient can see neither shapes nor the orientation of a line. But the patient can act differentially with respect to it; she can be *drawn*/led by the environment (pure—or rather, deformed—motor intentionality) to perform differential activities without any determinate knowledge of what these features of the environment are. For her, all these things are a sort of background (at the ‘margin of awareness’), then. (Sounds like a milder version of Schneider.) A possible explanation for blindsight, then: The ‘absent’ visual experience is in a similar ‘margin of awareness’.

As for the figure:

“Blackness is less the sensible quality of blackness than a sombre power which radiates from the object, even when it is overlaid with reflected light, and it is visible only in the sense in which moral blackness is visible. The real colour persists beneath appearances as the background persists beneath the figure, that is, not as a seen or thought-of quality, but through a non-sensory presence.”

[“The *real* properties of the thing are not themselves something which we can focus on, but something in terms of which we experience any particular presentation of the thing.”]

## Lecture 21

Back to Space.

The objection to the objectivist account of movement: Zeno’s paradox.

The Gestalts: You can perceive pure motion even when there’s no moving object (the phi phenomenon).

The intellectualist says you have to at least *think* there’s an object; the Gestaltist says you just perform a synthesis.

“The moving object or rather, as we have called it, the mobile entity, is not identical *beneath* the phases of movement, it is identical *in* them. The mobile entity has only a style.” The moving object is as indeterminate as it gets (it is entirely the back of the house).

But how can we tell what is background and what is foreground?

Where you’re involved in and make background is what’s stationary; what you’re anchored to. What you’re paying attention to is what’s moving.

What makes part of the field count as in motion, and part as background?

“The stone flies through the air. What do these words mean, other than that our gaze, lodged and anchored in the garden, is attracted by the stone and, so to speak, drags at its anchors?”

It looks like it’s moving because we’re losing our grip on it and don’t want to. *Pulling* at the anchor indicates the maximal grip story(?).

But what about our experiences of ourselves in motion, when we aren’t trying to get a grip on everything outside? The idea of a stable background which is moving. But you only experience the car (and yourself in it) as moving when you anchor yourself on the road outside. And so perhaps you won’t when you’re speeding!

After a certain point, you can differentiate between perception and illusion: In the former case, you can find out more and more about it; in the latter case, you cannot. You can differentiate between them once you can get a grip on whatever it is. We get fooled only if we fail to try and get a better grip on it. The experience of reality can turn out to be an illusion. You always cross out the illusion in terms of some other backdrop you take to be

real. "There is the absolute certainty of the world in general, but not of any one thing in particular."

## Lecture 22

Other Selves and the Human World.

Two questions: The basis for intersubjectivity and the reconciliation of the fact of the priority of the world to my world (Sartre believes the opposite).

"Every object will be, in the first place and in some respect, a natural object, made up of colours, tactile and auditory qualities, in so far as it is destined to entice my life." The task-independent grip does not exist in a constructive sense, but there is still a natural object prior to our tasks. "The natural world is the horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, [pre-personal] unity underlying all the disruptions of my personal and historical life."

According to Sartre, you can either be an in-itself (a masochist; an object for others) or a for-itself (a sadist; a conscious being). But this leaves no place for plurality of consciousness. But Merleau-Ponty thinks there is a *third* unifying "genus" of being: Body intentionality.

"How significance and intentionality could come to dwell in molecular edifices or masses of cells is a thing which can never be made comprehensible, and here Cartesianism is right."

Nagel's idea that the first-person perspective can never be reduced to a third-person perspective.

Intersubjectivity is felt not by analogy: "Through phenomenological reflection I discover vision, not as a 'thinking about seeing', to use Descartes' expression, but as a gaze at grips with a visible world, and that is why for me there can be another's gaze." Deeper than empathy? When we understand the kind of bodies we have, we can *see* the 'one' in them.

Perceiving one's intentions in one's own body, another's body in your own, and thus another's intentions in your own. A great example: Yawning! Ultimately: "My body perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions." The body schema ensures this.

Sartre: I've got my world before all else, and I'll work with you to see what world you've got, and bring it out to a hypothetical our world. For the child, there is only one self-evident shared world.

But *your* anger is still your anger, and not mine. The uniqueness of the *cogito* remains to be explained.

The objectivist says that everybody says the same universal understanding (the analogy explanation). The dialectic is between the Sartrean and the objectivist. Merleau-Ponty says we somehow have to keep both.

Something exists/has significance for me only to the extent that I take it up.

The Aristotelean attitude: We must get the phenomena right and fix our ontology accordingly.

## Lecture 23

The Body in its Sexual Being:

The operative intentionality is that by which the unity of time and the flow of time is motivated. We can only act on operative intentionality because we are embodied in the world.

"The natural world presents itself as existing in itself over and above its existence for me."



["You can't conceive of sexuality as being related only to anatomy."] Nor is the intellectualist story of representations correct. Sexuality has to be recognized as an original dimension of life.

The sexual capacities are the source of meaning. Original v/s non-original modes of being; the number of dimensions the intentional arc has. 'Mood' is the latter, because it's not directly related to the body. The former corresponds to the different types of meaning you can experience. Being depressed is a sort of *withdrawal* from the world. *Some* things become sexual, but when you're depressed, *everything* changes. Local v/s global.

"The visible body is subtended by a sexual schema": The natural thing laden over with the task-specific feature.

The inseparability of sexuality from personal behaviour doesn't imply the reducibility of personal behaviour to sexuality.

Three sectors of personal life (which is one existential structure/attitude—the movement towards maximal grip?) by which it expresses itself: Knowing, acting, sexual. The singularity of the structure is not because the three sectors are experienced in it (reductionism), but because the experiencing subject is an embodied subject.

## Lecture 24

The body is a general function of transposition. Two meanings of general: You always carry the existential structure with you; and the existential structure is present at the biological level as well as the personal level. There is an internal connection between these levels. The body is the only thing to which you can relate all the behaviours (all the dimensions of existence) of a human being.

A man's symptoms in his sexual being symbolizes a whole attitude/a general form of life.

"Biological existence is synchronized with human existence and is never indifferent to its distinctive rhythm."

The girl who lost her speech over love: An illustration of the interconnections between the various dimensions of existence.

"We discover that sensory messages or memories are expressly grasped and recognized by us only insofar as they adhere generally to that area of our body and our life to which they are relevant."

"If we therefore say that the body expresses existence at every moment, this is in the sense in which a word expresses thought. Anterior to conventional means of expression, which reveal my thoughts to others only because already, for both myself and them, meanings are provided for each sign, and which in this sense do not give rise to genuine communication at all, we must, as we shall see, recognize a primary process of signification in which the thing expressed does not exist apart from the expression, and in which the signs themselves induce their significance externally. In this way the body expresses total existence, not because it is an external accompaniment to that existence, but because existence realizes itself in the body." Embodying existence.

How can the dimensions be both interconnected and afford of situations in which one is more prominent than the other? There's something global that's always present. "How can we identify a content of consciousness as sexual? Indeed we cannot." So perhaps real sexuality is like the real colour. An ambiguity between the dimensions. The chapter is about explaining how they're related but still differentiated.

What is the body?

The body is “in front” of consciousness. The body is that thanks to which we move across situations; thanks to which something can happen to us prior to our consciousness of it, because the body helps you appraise the different dimensions of existence.

Freedom for Merleau-Ponty: You can choose between different meanings available to you thanks to the fact that a situation has different meanings.

Dreyfus’ confusion: Why is sexuality so important? Is it the only dimension which impinges upon all others? Someone suggests there is a mode of our relating to the world which is sexual (in some very abstract sense). The discussion seems to be going off the rails after this.

## Lecture 25

Cogito:

There are three features of the human being when understood as the Cartesian cogito (which Merleau-Ponty wants to deny): Indubitability (of seeming to see) (v/s incorrigible), transparency (I *must* be exhaustively aware of my thought), reflection (it is supposed to be able to accompany every experience without changing it).

Sense-data are incorrigible but not transparent (they can’t be wrong because they don’t imply anything). Your thoughts are also incorrigible, but this time, because you’re clear about all they imply.

Perception & feeling: Test cases of the cogito. Vision outruns its promises: There’s more to the house than just the front. Just because we get a perspective on the thing doesn’t mean it’s a perspective in my mind.

Transcendence: Not to be confused with transcendental. For Kant, transcendental = condition of possibility of experiencing objects & transcendence = Something outside the mind. For Heidegger/MMP, transcendence = our openness to entities (for one)/how perception outruns itself (for objects—MMP—related to temporality). (For the latter, there is no inner-outer.) For Husserl, transcendence = outside of consciousness.

Rebuttal to indubitability: “The ostensible table is not ostensibly ostensible.” We’re (perceptually/phenomenologically) certain about the stone on the path (incorrigible), but we can still doubt it (it is always possible that our expectations fail—we can never be epistemologically certain). Our experience ‘explodes’ when it turns out to be an illusion, and we retroactively change the way it looked—we can’t even remember how it looked like the stone.

Before MMP: The *mind* perceives. In MMP: The *body* perceives.

Perception outruns itself, and thus must be incomplete, and cannot present a ‘reality’ “otherwise than by running the risk of error”. The illusion story again: There is an absolute certainty of the world but not of any one thing in particular.

You can think you’re in love and be wrong [“your therapist knows you better than you do”].

## Lecture 26

The zero point of your normativity tension is still not you looking at the *real* real colour. (Alternatively—Sean’s story: Such a zero point can never be achieved.) The true colour is *not* the sum total of all possible perspectives (this is an empiricist story).

Heidegger’s transcendence (of the *Dasein*) is the opposite of Husserl’s transcendence (of the object) (the object always has more to it than what we experience, *not* the mind going out toward the world). For MMP: Both! [“Because I’m absorbed in the object when I’m coping, the fact that the object has more aspects than I can ever cope with is essentially correlated with the way in which I’m always outside myself.”]

What is Merleau-Ponty substituting for the cogito? The normative sense one has of things going all right. The 'tacit' cogito. "There is a world for me because I am not unaware of myself; and I am not concealed from myself because I have a world. This pre-conscious possession of the world remains to be analysed in the pre-reflective cogito." This is the only thing which is intrinsically, essentially private. "One single experience inseparable from itself one single 'living cohesion', one temporality engaged from birth and confirming that cohesion in each successive present." Active coping.

The rebuttal to reflection: The reflective act changes the structure of the perception reflected on. (The intersubjective example on 471.) Sartre thinks you have to ask yourself how it was a minute before it 'broke down'. This is pure memory (as opposed to impure).

## Lecture 27

"What constitutes the tacit cogito? I am a field, an experience."

Dreyfus begins drawing a dichotomy (dangerous?). Being-in-the-world/existence comes in two varieties. The tacit cogito & the Cartesian cogito. Perception (also language) & thought. Pre-reflective & reflection. Motor intentionality & representational intentionality.

Impersonal/I think. Engaged/Detached. Reason/Fact. The latter is founded on the former.

Does Merleau-Ponty think the latter further creates some possibilities in the former?

Break-down: Something which happens in the left which throws you into the right.

The tension is neither a conscious feeling (Descartes) nor something totally unconscious (Schneider).

Onto the indubitability of feelings.

Sartre: You can never have any certainty (indubitability) about your vocation/the meaning of your life. MMP: At the same time... "there must be discoverable in [my experience] some characteristic which distinguishes vocation from incident: in the first case the mystical attitude insinuates itself into my basic relationship to the world and other people." You know you're in love by doing it, not thinking it. And the punchline is that you can *still* be mistaken.

The transparency of thought: The Cartesian may say that I *have* to be sure about what I'm thinking. The rebuttal: ["Intuition is more basic than thought."] If you can't experience the physiognomy of the Gestalt of the triangle, you won't be able to understand its formal definition or discover anything interesting. "Formal thought feeds on intuitive thought."

(Schneider lacks this intuitive thought.) Kant-esque. The bomb: "The subject of geometry is a motor subject." Geometry is done in the background of a given culture (a sediment it presupposes: relevant to the *genesis* of and determines the *significance* of thought). MMP's example (458): Euclidean geometry. A self-evident truth turned contingent.

## Lecture 28

A difficult set of categories is posited.

A: The tacit cogito.

B: The regular cogito.

C: The Cartesian cogito.

A founds (gives meaning to—makes possible? is an enabling condition to (the existence of))

B, and most of the above dichotomies follow them. But C also claims to be independent and self-sufficient. The manifesting relation B holds to A is not the 'interesting' one.

Temporality:

Two totally different phenomena going on (one for Husserl, one for Heidegger), and Merleau-Ponty tries to hold on to both.

There has to be a *now* for there to be temporality. There is no *now* an objective time. We bring temporality into the non-temporal reality (just like how in space there wouldn't be an up and down if it wasn't for us bringing in the *here*). The other wrong move is *inner time*, because there can't just be a *here-now*—we aren't imprisoned in the *now*. Here, too, some other notion of time has to be brought in. Some inner states have to be a past and a future. Out goes psychology, out goes physiology.

Temporality is based on our motor intentionality (our way of coping).

"It is in my 'field of presence' in the widest sense—this moment that I spend working, with, behind it, the horizon of the day that has elapsed, and, in front of it, the evening and the night—that I make contact with time, and learn to know its course.

"Everything, therefore, causes me to revert to the field of presence as the primary experience in which time and its dimensions make their appearance unalloyed, with no intervening distance and with absolute self-distance." We don't 'represent' the distant past. We go *directly* to the bridge yesterday.

Both Heidegger and MMP think there is no problem about how *my* world is related to *the* world; we open on the shared world from a perspective. (Why is Merleau-Ponty boxing himself into the Husserlian *my* (task-free) time? Is it not always some *shared* time passing? But they both seem right! Again, the former is perhaps, somehow, founded on the latter.) So, says Dreyfus, inner time is a distortion, and not a discovery.

The present is the (your?) perspective on the past and the future which is always shifting; it may stretch into both. There is a 'specious' present, a lived present, but not a knife-edge present; Dreyfus thinks it's incoherent. What the present is is task-relative, Dreyfus seems to think. Husserl defines it in terms of some kind of reflective inner.

So, MMP didn't really succeed in taking over Husserl to Heidegger.

Very confused chapter: "Two temporalities are not mutually exclusive as are two consciousnesses, because each one knows itself only by projecting itself into the present where they can interweave. As my living present opens upon a past which I nevertheless am no longer living through, and on a future which I do not yet live, and perhaps never shall, it can also open on to temporalities outside my living experience and acquire a social horizon, with the result that my world is expanded to the dimensions of that collective history which my private existence takes up and carries forward." *My? Private?* Shock from Dreyfus! How can it begin in an individual dimension?

Husserl misses the appearance of time when you're engaged. There are no Husserlian slices of time during that; no immediate future which is not the present. (Husserl's example, when time appears as he says: Listening to a melody you're already familiar with.) Merleau-Ponty's 'unboxing' of time should lead not to a specious present but to a constantly changing perspective on everything.

["The house is given all at once, from the front, and time is given all at once, from the present."] "In the same way, I do not think of the evening to come and its consequences, and yet it 'is there', like the back of a house of which I can see only the façade, or like the background beneath a figure."

*Remembrance* and *expectation* are representational, says Dreyfus. "Anticipation" is his non-representational version. Husserl tried to get at their analogues by *retentions* and *protentions*. We have the dimensions of time 'in our grip'.

"Ahead of what I see and perceive, there is, it is true, nothing more actually visible, but my world is carried forward by lines of intentionality which trace out in advance at least the style of what is to come (although we are always on the watch, perhaps to the day of our death,

for the appearance of something else).” We’re always certain, and yet, we know it could always be an illusion. The last parenthesis referring to the explosion of our expectations. There’s a different kind of back of the house for Husserl (what Merleau-Ponty calls the already-present, indeterminate given by *style*, a notion Husserl doesn’t have). Operative intentionality makes anticipation possible.

The present ‘outruns’ itself into the past and the future in the typical sense of ‘outrun’ MMP has.

One big present (“in which eternity takes root”): The field of presence in the widest sense.

“We consider everything that bears a significant relationship to our concerns at the moment as part of our present, thus recognizing implicitly that time and significance are but one thing.”

[“The thickness of time gets us in a shared social being.” (???)]

## Lecture 29

The question of how my inner time matches up with outer time (so that there is continuity in the world) is the wrong question to ask.

“The present mediates between individuality and generality. I am an intersubjective field, not despite my body and historical situation, but, on the contrary, by being this body and this situation.”

“There is no natural time, if we understand thereby a time of things without subjectivity.

There is, however, a generalized time, and this is what the common notion of time envisages.” We bring in the ‘now’ in a universe in which, without us, there would just be a temporal-less succession of states.

But it isn’t that we *constitute* temporality. [“We have to link up with our subjectivity and unlock this natural time.”] We don’t make it up; we must get in sync in the right way with something in nature (an ‘in-itself’). This nature-time is constantly shifting; this is the field of presence we all open on.

“The natural world is the horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, unity underlying all the disruptions of my personal and historical life. Its counterpart within me is the given, general and pre-personal existence of my sensory functions in which we have discovered the definition of the body.”

Is natural temporality also something normative?

We don’t make up the shared thing by interweaving its perspectives. It’s bad language from MMP to say it about time, then, isn’t it?

You can’t have time without subjectivity—but subjectivity here ought to mean the pre-personal, shared subjectivity; or perhaps my perspective. But time would go on without any of us.

When there’s a breakdown, we experience inner time, which may be in or out of sync with the shared one, and it appears fundamental in these times.

Freedom:

Sartrean freedom is right in that we can choose our meaning and have the power to interrupt, but this is not absolute, and can happen only when we be given an open situation, given a constituting background.

There’s a four-fold limit on our freedom:

1. The shape, size, power of my body
2. The way my perceptual system works
3. My own past as a sedimented background

#### 4. My own past as the history of my class/culture

We can't break out of the first two—the body-determined ones. The last two aren't "up for grabs" either (a *style*), in the way Sartre things.

Sartre goes full throttle on the conditions of possibility and misses the conditions of existence/reality. We must account for both of them; the centrifugal and the centripetal.

A Sartrean freedom decision may yet be *motivated*. The more something becomes the background, the less freedom we have to decide against it. (If our life is built on the historical, sedimented background of an inferiority complex, everything becomes a competition in which you're losing. The therapist can get you to see that this isn't the only way to relate to everything, and brings more and more of your freedom back by breaking down the background. Breadth psychology as opposed to depth psychology: The background as opposed to the unconscious.)

Four kinds of causality:

1. Linear, physical, third-person causality (necessary succession according to a rule; a causality of the in-itself)
2. Mental causality (Husserl; first-person causality)
3. Lived body causality (The third kind of being that we are; responding to the solicitations of affordances)
4. Circular causality (The intentional arc; the way the background governs; "dialectical causality"; the more you act, the more of a background you create, which in turn makes you act)

The way the background limits your freedom is by you not seeing it. Sartre says you can change any particular thing that you *can think* about; you can do something else. (Sartre's story: You just don't want to exercise your freedom because it gives you anguish. But this gets the phenomena wrong!)

### Lecture 30

Some neuroscience stuffs.

### Lecture 31

The metaphysics of Merleau-Ponty.

"The problem was to link the idealist perspective, according to which nothing exists except as an object for consciousness, and the realist perspective, according to which consciousnesses are introduced into the stuff of the objective world and of events in themselves."

Dreyfus's story:

There are four different levels of descriptions.

1. The world as we perceive it: Indeterminate, perceptual, always given to me from some perspective, always has horizons, the richest there is (and what is ultimately real?).
2. The perceptual world: The shared world, with inexhaustible details. "Unless the perceived thing has for good and ever implanted within us the ideal notion of a being which is what it is, there would be no phenomenon of being, and mathematical thought would appear to us as simply a creation." The crypto-mechanism makes us extrapolate a determinate world (the perceptual world) from our indeterminate perception of the world. This is the *in-itself for us*.
3. The natural world (the world of non-sensory normative pulls (not the same as ecological affordances!)?): "[Mode of existence] not to be confused with that of the

scientific object.” “The natural world is the horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, unity underlying all the disruptions of my personal and historical life. Its counterpart within me is the given, general and pre-personal existence of my sensory functions in which we have discovered the definition of the body.” But of course, he’s not an idealist: “...open himself to an absolute Other which he is making ready in the depths of his being.” How much of the structure of this natural world (what non-sensory normative pulls it possesses) is independent of human beings (& determinate) and how much is correlative of our body capacities to organize it? He seems to say both! How do we make these [two quotes] coherent? Maybe it’s not incompatible. Maybe a given set of pulls is just one of the ways in which it can be organized and not something inherent. Maybe what’s inherent in it just gives us some “boundary conditions” (which is what you get in sync with). You starting taking away all the sociocultural aspects and so on...you are left with an ‘indefinite substance’. Similar to a Kantian thing-in-itself? NO! “The natural world, we said, is the schema of intersensory relations. We do not, following Kant, understand thereby a system of invariable relations to which every existent thing is subject in so far as it can be known.” Big debate about whether there’s a meaningful difference between it and the perceptual world.

4. The objective universe: What science is trying to describe and get the structure of. MMP thinks you can’t explain consciousness and perception in its terms (no third-person account possible of this first-person experience). MMP’s argument (which Dreyfus thinks is wrong): Science is an abstraction from the natural world which isn’t getting at what there really is; so, the assertion follows. Furthermore: “Prosaic, and particularly scientific, utterance is a cultural entity which at the same time lays claim to translate a truth relating to nature in itself.” A scientific anti-realist/idealist, then.