

Research
Based
Curricula

Does consciousness have
a body?

Key Stage 5 Philosophy

2019



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For Pupils Welcome



To get into the best universities, you must demonstrate that you are intellectually curious, and will make the most of the wonderful academic opportunities available to you.

One of the best ways of demonstrating this, is by going above and beyond what is taught in school and studying something that is not on the curriculum.

This resource will give you exactly such an opportunity. You will have something interesting to write about in your application to university, something interesting to talk about in a university interview, and open whole new areas of study you might be interested in!

You will develop valuable academic skills as you go, that we have marked out with gold badges (see the next page on university skills). As you work through the resource you can look out for these badges so that you can explain which skills you have developed and what you did to demonstrate them. Developing these skills will help you get university ready!

If you have any questions while you are using the resources in this pack, you can contact your teacher or email us directly at schools@access-ed.ngo.

Good luck with your journey to higher education!



For Pupils University Skills



To complete this resource, you will have to demonstrate impressive academic skills. When universities are looking for new students, they will want young people who can study independently and go above and beyond the curriculum. All of these skills that you will see here will demonstrate your abilities as a university student – while you're still at school!

Every time you have to look something up, or write up a reference you are showing that you can work independently. Every time that you complete a challenging problem or write an answer to a difficult question, you might demonstrate your ability to think logically or build an argument. Every time that you evaluate the sources or data that you are presented with, you are showing that you can “dive deep” into an unfamiliar topic and learn from it.



Here are the skills that you will develop in this course:

independent research	your ability to work on your own and find answers online or in other books
creativity	your ability to create something original and express your ideas
problem solving	your ability to apply what you know to new problems
building an argument	your ability to logically express yourself
providing evidence	your ability to refer to sources that back up your opinions/ ideas
academic referencing	your ability to refer to what others have said in your answer, and credit them for their ideas
deep dive	your ability to go above and beyond the school curriculum to new areas of knowledge
source analysis	your ability to evaluate sources (e.g. for bias, origin, purpose)
data interpretation	your ability to discuss the implications of what the numbers show
active reading	your ability to engage with what you are reading by highlighting and annotating

For Teachers RBC Guide



Programme Aims

The Research-Based Curriculum aims to support student attainment and university progression by providing classroom resources about cutting-edge research at local universities. The resources are designed to:

- ✓ promote intellectual curiosity through exposure to academic research
- ✓ stretch and challenge students to think deeply about content that may be beyond the confines of the curriculum
- ✓ develop core academic skills, including critical thinking, metacognition, and written and verbal communication
- ✓ inform students about how subjects are studied at university, and provide information, advice and guidance on pursuing subjects at undergraduate level

Content

The programme represents a unique collaboration between universities and schools. Trained by AccessEd, PhD Researchers use their subject expertise to create rich resources that help bring new discoveries and debates to students.

The Research-Based Curriculum offers ten modules suitable for either KS4 or KS5 study. The modules span a range of disciplines, including EBacc and A-level subjects, as well as degree subjects like biochemistry. Each module includes six hours of teaching content, supported by student packs, teacher notes and slides. All modules are available online and free of charge for teachers at select schools.

Delivery

Resources are designed to be used flexibly by teachers. The resources can be completed by students individually or in groups, in or out of the classroom.

For Teachers

RBC Guide



Here are five examples of delivery options:

Extra-Curricular Subject Enrichment Clubs

The resources can be completed in small groups (4–8 pupils) across a series of weekly lunch clubs or after-school clubs. Groups can reflect on their learning by presenting a talk or poster on the subject matter at the end of the course.

University Access Workshops

The resources can be used by students to explore subjects that they are interested in studying at university. This can inform their decision making with regards to university degree courses, and allow students to write more effective personal statements by including reflections on the Research-Based Curriculum.

Research Challenge

The resources can be used to ignite curiosity in new topics and encourage independent research. Schools could hold a research challenge across a class or year group to submit a piece of work based on the resources. Pupils could submit individually or in small groups, with a final celebration event.

Summer Project

Resource packs can function as 'transition' projects over the summer, serving as an introduction to the next level of study between KS3 and KS4, or KS4 and KS5. Students could present their reflections on the experience in a journal.

Evidence

The Research-Based Curricula programme builds on the University Learning in Schools programme (ULiS), which was successfully delivered and evaluated through the London Schools Excellence Fund in 2015. The project was designed in a collaboration between Achievement for All and The Brilliant Club, the latter of which is the sister organisation of AccessEd. ULiS resulted in the design and dissemination of 15 schemes of work based on PhD research for teachers and pupils at Key Stage 3. The project was evaluated by LKMCo. Overall, pupils made higher than expected progress and felt more engaged with the subject content. The full evaluation can be found here: [ULiS Evaluation](#).

Questions?

For more information contact hello@access-ed.ngo

Introduction to Topic

Does consciousness have a body?



My PhD research focuses on how a French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, explained the foundational role the body plays in understanding the world as well as engaging with the world.

In his "Phenomenology of Perception" (first published in French in 1945), Merleau-Ponty develops the concept of the body-subject (*le corps propre*) as an alternative to the Cartesian "cogito", the idea that we are thinking minds (See René Descartes). This distinction is especially important in that Merleau-Ponty perceives the essences of the world existentially. Consciousness, the world, and the human body as a perceiving thing are intricately intertwined and mutually "engaged."

The topics within this pack will include:

René Descartes

The Phenomenology of Perception

What is embodied cognition?

The body as incarnate consciousness

Language

Flesh

The phenomenal thing is not the unchanging object of the natural sciences, but a correlate of our body and its sensory-motor functions. Taking up and "communing with" the sensible qualities it encounters, the body as incarnated subjectivity intentionally elaborates things within an ever-present world frame, through use of its pre-conscious, pre-predicative understanding of the world's makeup. The world and the sense of self are emergent phenomena in an ongoing "becoming."

Merleau-Ponty emphasized the body as the primary site of knowing the world, a corrective to the long philosophical tradition of placing consciousness as the source of knowledge, and maintained that the body and that which it perceived could not be disentangled from each other. The articulation of the primacy of embodiment led him away from phenomenology towards what he was to call "indirect ontology" or the ontology of "the flesh of the world" (*la chair du monde*), seen in his final and incomplete work, *The Visible and Invisible*, and his last published essay, "Eye and Mind".

Introduction to Subject Philosophy at University



"Philosophy" comes from Greek words meaning "love of wisdom." Philosophy is the study of the nature of existence, knowledge, truth and ethics. It involves consideration of the most fundamental questions about who we are, and examines philosophical thought across the breadth of history right up to the present day.

It hones your ability to reason effectively and form coherent arguments, to write persuasively, and improves your logical and critical thinking. It challenges your understanding and assumptions of concepts like human nature and whether God exists. The diverse sub-sections of philosophy address questions ranging from why we dream to whether our action are pre-determined or the results of free will. Expect lots of creative writing, heated but extremely productive debates, thinking outside the box, questioning your own and other people's beliefs.

Philosophy is often classed as a humanities degree, although there are strands that are in fact closer to mathematics and science. It can be taken as a single honours subject or in addition to another subject. It is particularly complemented by humanities courses like history, politics, English literature, law, a language or classics, but also by science subjects like maths, computer science, physics and psychology. For example, at the University of Aberdeen you can take Behavioural Studies and Philosophy and in the University of Brighton you can study Philosophy, Politics and Art. The University of Nottingham offers a Physics and Philosophy course, the University of Manchester has a Philosophy and Criminology course while in Lancaster University you can study for a combined degree in Politics, Philosophy & Economics (PPE).

Introduction to Subject Philosophy at University



Philosophy graduates have highly transferable skills that are valuable to employers. Graduates secure work in a variety of disciplines after their degree, such as teaching, PR or politics. Those who specialise in ethics, for example, have opportunities to apply their knowledge to medical ethics committees while those who studied political philosophy may veer towards journalism.

Communications, publishing, HR and advertising can be attractive options for philosophy graduates, as well as law, banking, the civil service, business and science. Others go on to further study, research, academia and/or lecturing in philosophy or a related field.

Good luck!

Eleni Lorandou

Meet the PhD Researcher Eleni Lorandou



I am a researcher in the branch of Philosophy commonly called Phenomenology. My research explores the reasons for which a view of knowledge and experience is untenable if it does not consider the fact that we are embodied subjectivities linked to the world around us through the medium of our body – we are not disembodied minds cut from the modalities and complexities of the sensible world. My research opens up a dialogue between Merleau-Ponty, a 21st century French philosopher and Utpaladeva, a classical Indian philosopher of the 8th century. Although these two great thinkers are so distant in time and culture, each one in his one unique way, seek answers to very similar questions such as: how do we perceive? what do we perceive? what is the relation between consciousness and body? is our body just an object in a world of objects

I am currently in the final stages of my PhD journey. Prior to being a researcher, I taught Theory of Knowledge and Philosophy to students of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (16–18 years) in International schools in India, Greece and UK.

A-Level Subjects	Philosophy, Psychology, Ancient Greek, Latin
Undergraduate	Philosophy
Postgraduate	Philosophy

Glossary



Term	Definition
Dualism	The division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided.
Rationalism	The principle of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than on religious knowledge or belief.
Empiricism	The theory that all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses.
Intellectualism	The theory that all knowledge is derived from reason.
Metaphysics	The branch of Philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time and space.
Gestalt	An organised whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.
Lived body	The body understood in terms of its practical engagement with the world.
Body schema	The bodily space is a space of actions endowed with existential meanings, of ways of existing toward objects. The body schema therefore consists of sensorimotor function rather than a sensorimotor representation.
Ontology	The philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations.
Flesh	The mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its spontaneous activity.
Cognition	The action or process of acquiring knowledge
Existentialism	A philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.
Phenomenology	From Greek "phainómenon" ("that which appears") and lógos ("study") is the philosophical study of the structures of experience.

Glossary

[illegible]

Resource One Overview



Topic	René Descartes: The Real Distinction Argument
A-Level Modules	Reason as a source of knowledge
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To understand how Descartes's philosophy favours a dualistic interpretation of the relationship between mind and body.✓ To explore how religious and scientific views have contributed in shaping Descartes' philosophy.✓ To evaluate the possible limitation of such a view.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>René Descartes 1596-1650 was an accomplished mathematician, scientist, and philosopher. He formulated the first modern version of mind-body dualism, from which stems the mind-body problem, and promoted the development of a new science ground in observation and experiment. For these reasons, he has been called the father of modern philosophy.</p> <p>Applying an original system of methodical doubt, he dismissed apparent knowledge derived from authority, the senses, and reason and erected new foundations for knowledge on the basis of the intuition that, when he is thinking, he exists; this he expressed in the dictum "I think, therefore I am" (best known in its Latin formulation, "Cogito, ergo sum" though originally written in French, "Je pense, donc je suis").</p> <p>He developed a metaphysical dualism that distinguishes between mind, the essence of which is thinking, and matter, the essence of which is extension in three dimensions.</p>

Resource One

Data Source



Reading



One of the deepest and most lasting legacies of Descartes' philosophy is his thesis that mind and body are really distinct—a thesis now called "mind-body dualism." He reaches this conclusion by arguing that the nature of the mind (that is, a thinking, non-extended thing) is completely different from that of the body (that is, an extended, non-thinking thing), and therefore it is possible for one to exist without the other. For Descartes the payoff is twofold.

a. The Religious Motivation: In his Letter to the Sorbonne published at the beginning of his seminal work, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes states that his purpose in showing that the human mind or soul is really distinct from the body is to refute those "irreligious people" who only have faith in mathematics and will not believe in the soul's immortality without a mathematical demonstration of it.

b. The Scientific Motivation: Descartes understood one thesis to stand at the heart of the entire scientific tradition: the doctrine that everything ultimately behaved for the sake of some end or goal. Here, Descartes is claiming that the concept of a substantial form as part of the entirely physical world stems from a confusion of the ideas of mind and body. This confusion led people to mistakenly ascribe mental properties like knowledge to entirely non-mental things like stones, plants, and, yes, even non-human animals. The real distinction of mind and body can then show that bodies exist and move as they do without mentality, and as such principles of mental causation such as goals, purposes (that is, final causes), and knowledge have no role to play in the explanation of physical phenomena. In his Sixth Meditation, Descartes states:

[O]n the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing [that is, a mind], and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it (AT VII 78: CSM II 54).

Resource One

Data Source



Reading Notice that the argument is given from the first person perspective (as are the entire Meditations). This “I” is, of course, Descartes insofar as he is a thinking thing or mind, and the argument is intended to work for any “I” or mind. So, for present purposes, it is safe to generalize the argument by replacing “I” with “mind” in the relevant places:

I have a clear and distinct idea of the mind as a thinking, non-extended thing.

I have a clear and distinct idea of body as an extended, non-thinking thing.

Therefore, the mind is really distinct from the body and can exist without it.

At first glance it may seem that, without justification, Descartes is bluntly asserting that he conceives of mind and body as two completely different things, and that from his conception, he is inferring that he (or any mind) can exist without the body. But this is no blunt, unjustified assertion. Much more is at work here: most notably what is at work is his doctrine of clear and distinct ideas. Indeed the truth of his intellectual perception of the natures of mind and body is supposed to be guaranteed by the fact that this perception is “clear and distinct.”

According to Descartes, his ability to clearly and distinctly understand them separately from one another implies that each can exist alone without the other.

Descartes, then, clearly and distinctly perceives the mind as possibly existing all by itself, and the body as possibly existing all by itself. But couldn't Descartes somehow be mistaken about his clear and distinct ideas? Given the existence of so many non-thinking bodies like stones, there is no question that bodies can exist without minds. So, even if he could be mistaken about what he clearly and distinctly understands, there is other evidence in support of premise 2.

Resource One

Data Source



Reading

But can minds exist without bodies? Can thinking occur without a brain? If the answer to this question is "no," the first premise would be false and, therefore, Descartes would be mistaken about one of his clear and distinct perceptions. Indeed, since we have no experience of minds actually existing without bodies as we do of bodies actually existing without minds, the argument will stand only if Descartes' clear and distinct understanding of the mind's nature somehow guarantees the truth of premise 1; but, at this point, it is not evident whether Descartes' "clear and distinct" perception guarantees the truth of anything. However, in the Fourth Meditation, Descartes goes to great lengths to guarantee the truth of whatever is clearly and distinctly understood. This veridical guarantee is based on the theses that God exists and that he cannot be a deceiver.

However, if it turns out that God does not exist or that he can be a deceiver, then all bets are off. There would then no longer be any veridical guarantee of what is clearly and distinctly understood and, as a result, the first premise could be false. Consequently, premise 1 would not bar the possibility of minds requiring brains to exist and, therefore, this premise would not be absolutely certain as Descartes supposed. In the end, the conclusion is established with absolute certainty only when considered from within Descartes' own epistemological framework but loses its force if that framework turns out to be false or when evaluated from outside of it.

These guaranteed truths express some very important points about Descartes' conception of mind and body. Notice that mind and body are defined as complete opposites, as two natures that have absolutely nothing in common. And, it is this complete diversity that establishes the possibility of their independent existence. But, how can Descartes make a legitimate inference from his independent understanding of mind and body as completely different things to their independent existence?

Resource One Activities



Activities



1. Read the text above, before writing a brief response to the following questions:
 - a) What is the religious motivation of the real distinction argument?
 - b) What is the scientific motivation of the real distinction argument?
 - c) How is the real distinction argument constructed?
 - d) What are its possible flaws?
 - e) What, in your opinion, have been the consequences of the real distinction argument on the history of philosophy?



2. Watch [Cartesian Skepticism – Neo, Meet Rene: Crash Course Philosophy](#) Reflect: In what way this video does reflect/extend what you have learnt about Descarte's philosophical views?

Resource One Further Reading



Explore "Phenomenal Films"



<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/may/20/features.paulmacinnes>

Resource Two

Overview



Topic	The Phenomenology of Perception
A-Level Modules	Perception as a source of knowledge
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To develop an understanding of Merleau-Ponty's idea of perception✓ To explore the Gestalt principles of perception and evaluate how they condition the way we experience the world✓ To compare this view with Descartes's and draw conclusions on the nature of the relationship between mind and body
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>Phenomenology of Perception (Phénoménologie de la Perception) is a 1945 book by the French philosopher Maurice –Merleau Ponty, in which the author expounds his thesis of the “primacy of perception”. This work establishes Merleau-Ponty as the pre-eminent philosopher of the body, and is considered a major statement of French existentialism.</p> <p>Merleau-Ponty's account of the body helps him undermine what had been a long-standing conception of consciousness, which hinges on the distinction between the for-itself (subject) and in-itself (object) which plays a central role in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. The body stands between this fundamental distinction between subject and object, ambiguously existing as both.</p>

Resource Two

Data Source



Section A

Maurice Merleau-Ponty



Toadvine, Ted, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/merleau-ponty/>

Completed in 1944 and published the following year, *Phenomenology of Perception* (PhP) is the work for which Merleau-Ponty was best known during his lifetime and that established him as the leading French phenomenologist of his generation. Here Merleau-Ponty develops his own distinctive interpretation of phenomenology's method, informed by his new familiarity with Husserl's unpublished manuscripts and his deepened engagement with other thinkers in this tradition, such as Eugen Fink and Martin Heidegger. *Phenomenology of Perception* again draws extensively on Gestalt theory and contemporary research in psychology and neurology; the case of Schneider, a brain-damaged patient studied by Adhémar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein, serves as an extended case-study. Psychological research complements and, at times, serves as a counterpoint to phenomenological descriptions of perceptual experience across a wide range of existential dimensions, including sexuality, language, space, nature, intersubjectivity, time, and freedom. In *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty develops a characteristic rhythm of presenting, first, the realist or empiricist approach to a particular dimension of experience, followed then by its idealist or intellectualist alternative, before developing a third way that avoids the problematic assumption common to both, namely, their "unquestioned belief in the world": the prejudice that the objective world exists as a ready-made and fully present reality.

Phenomenology of Perception introduces its inquiry with a critique of the "classical prejudices" of empiricism and intellectualism. Merleau-Ponty rejects the empiricist understanding of sensation, treating the basic units of

Resource Two

Data Source



Section A

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

sensation as determinate atoms rather than as meaningful wholes. These wholes include ambiguities, indeterminacies, and contextual relations that defy explanation in terms of the causal action of determinate things. Intellectualism aims to provide an alternative to empiricism by introducing judgment or attention as mental activities that synthesize experience from the sensory givens, yet it adopts empiricism's starting point in dispersed, atomic sensations. Both approaches are guilty of reading the results of perception (the objective world) back into perceptual experience, thereby falsifying perception's characteristic structure: the spontaneous organization or configuration of perceived phenomena themselves, with their indeterminacies and ambiguities, and the dynamic character of perception as an historical process involving development and transformation. By treating perception as a causal process of transmission or a cognitive judgment, empiricism and intellectualism deny any meaningful configuration to the perceived as such and treat all values and meanings as projections, leaving no basis in perception itself for distinguishing the true from the illusory.



In contrast, Merleau-Ponty argues that the basic level of perceptual experience is the gestalt, the meaningful whole of figure against ground, and that the indeterminate and contextual aspects of the perceived world are positive phenomenon that cannot be eliminated from a complete account. In this context, perception is seen as a situated activity that takes place in the context of a real-world environment, and inherently involves a bodily engagement. It is not as Descartes, would have thought, a mental activity (reality as a projection of the intellect).

Sensing is thus a "living communication with the world that makes it present to us as the familiar place of our life" (PhP:

Resource Two

Data Source



Section A

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

79/53), investing the perceived world with meanings and values that refer essentially to our bodies and lives.

We forget this “phenomenal field”, the world as it appears directly to perception, as a consequence of perception’s own tendency to forget itself in favor of the perceived that it discloses. Perception orients itself toward the truth, placing its faith in the eventual convergence of perspectives and progressive determination of what was previously indeterminate. But it thereby naturally projects a completed and invariant “truth in itself” as its goal. Science extends and amplified this natural tendency through increasingly precise measurements of the invariants in perception, leading eventually to the theoretical construction of an objective world of determinate things.

Once this determinism of the “in itself” is extended universally and applied even to the body and the perceptual relation itself, then its on-going dependence on perception as an embodied phenomenon is obscured. For this reason, the “fundamental philosophical act” would be to “return to the lived world beneath the objective world” (PhP: 83/57) and to understand perceptual awareness in terms of its corporeal ties.

Section B

Gestalt: A theory of perception

According to the Gestalt psychologists – notably Max Wertheimer (1880–1943), Wolfgang Khler (1887–1967) and Kurt Koffka (1886– 1941) – certain features in visual perception are universal. Gestalt theory proposes that we see by forming light and dark objects, edges and contours into a whole image without thinking about it. Gestalt (the German word means “organized whole”) is a theory that the brain operates holistically, with self-organizing tendencies. Gestalt states that we perceive the whole without being aware of the

Resource Two

Data Source



connection of the parts, and that the essence of the whole does not change when we transpose it. In the more direct sense of the word "transpose," a musical tune remains in essence the same even if played in a different key. We recognize a square as a square even if we transpose it by changing its size and color (Figure C). But if we rotate a square 45 degrees (Figure D), we see a diamond. Gestalt psychologists have outlined fundamental and universal principles, sometimes called "laws," of perceptual organization. The terms vary from theorist to theorist, but these eight are generally accepted:

1. proximity
2. similarity
3. good continuity
4. common fate
5. closure
6. figure and ground
7. symmetry, surroundness
8. prägnanz

Figure One

This panda is really just a collection of shapes.

How do we make sense of it?

Explore the Gestalt principles to find out.



Resource Two

Data Source

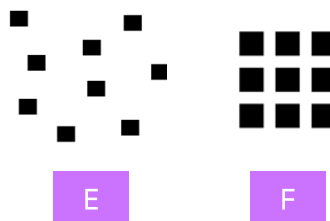


connection of the parts, and that the essence of the whole does not change when we transpose it. In the more direct sense of the word "transpose," a musical tune remains in essence the same even if played in a different key. We recognize a square as a square even if we transpose it by changing its size and color (Figure C). But if we rotate a square 45 degrees (Figure D), we see a diamond. Gestalt psychologists have outlined fundamental and universal principles, sometimes called "laws," of perceptual organization. The terms vary from theorist to theorist, but these eight are generally accepted:

1. proximity
2. similarity
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6. figure and ground
7. symmetry, surroundness
8. Prägnanz



1. Proximity



The principle of proximity is apparent in Figures E and F. We perceive Figure E as a random pattern of dots because they are unevenly spaced. In Figure F the close proximity of some dots leads us to see them as a unified composition.

Resource Two

Data Source

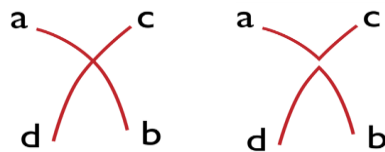


2. Similarity



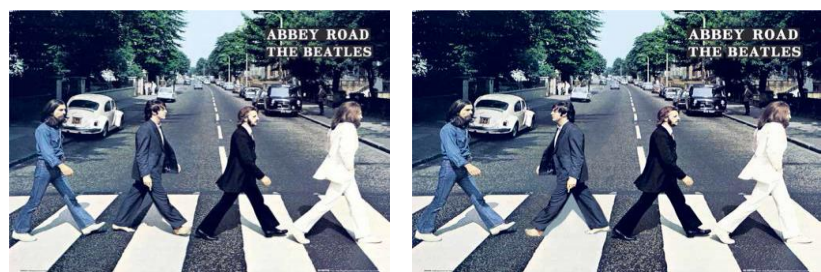
The principle of similarity states that things which share visual characteristics such as shape, size, color, texture, value or orientation will be seen as belonging together. The Beatles album cover (above) uses images of the same shape and size, but as we study them, we find subtle, interesting differences, such as the blacked out image of George Harrison at center.

3. Good continuity



We prefer to see contours based on smooth continuity instead of abrupt changes of direction. We are more likely to identify lines a-b and c-d crossing than to identify a-d and c-b or a-c and d-b as lines.

4. Common fate



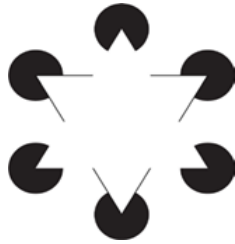
According to the principle of common fate, we see groups of objects as lines moving along the smoothest path. The Beatles provide another famous example with the cover of their album Abbey Road. Consider the debate that would have ensued had one of the Beatles walked in the opposite direction.

Resource Two

Data Source



5. Closure



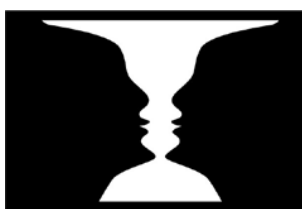
Closure states that we tend to perceive figures as “closed” rather than “open.”

Closure and comics



- ✓ First, we could not read comics if we didn't do our part in filling in the gaps between frames; We connect the two frames into action-reaction.
- ✓ Second, we fill in the details of simple drawings, such as Charlie Brown. This gives comics a universal quality because we can complete the picture in a way that suits us.

6. Figure and Ground



This principle of Gestalt is really several principles that fall under the heading figure and ground. It attempts to explain how the brain separates figures from the background, a critical skill for prehistoric man, who had to decide quickly if something far off was a threat. Theorists believe several factors figure into how we perceive figure and ground:

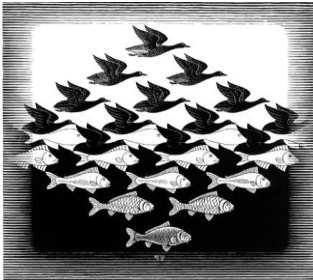
- Smallness: Smaller areas tend to be seen as figures against a larger background.
- Light/dark: Dark objects on light backgrounds are more common, so when we have a light figure/dark background, we are more likely to interpret the drawing as two faces.

Resource Two

Data Source



7. Symmetry, surroundedness



Symmetrical areas tend to be seen as figures against asymmetrical backgrounds.

Which shapes do you see as figures and which as ground? Because some shapes are dark and some light, some symmetrical and some asymmetrical, we might be confused about figure-ground relationships.

The principle of surroundedness states that areas surrounded by other areas tend to be seen as figures.

Resource Two

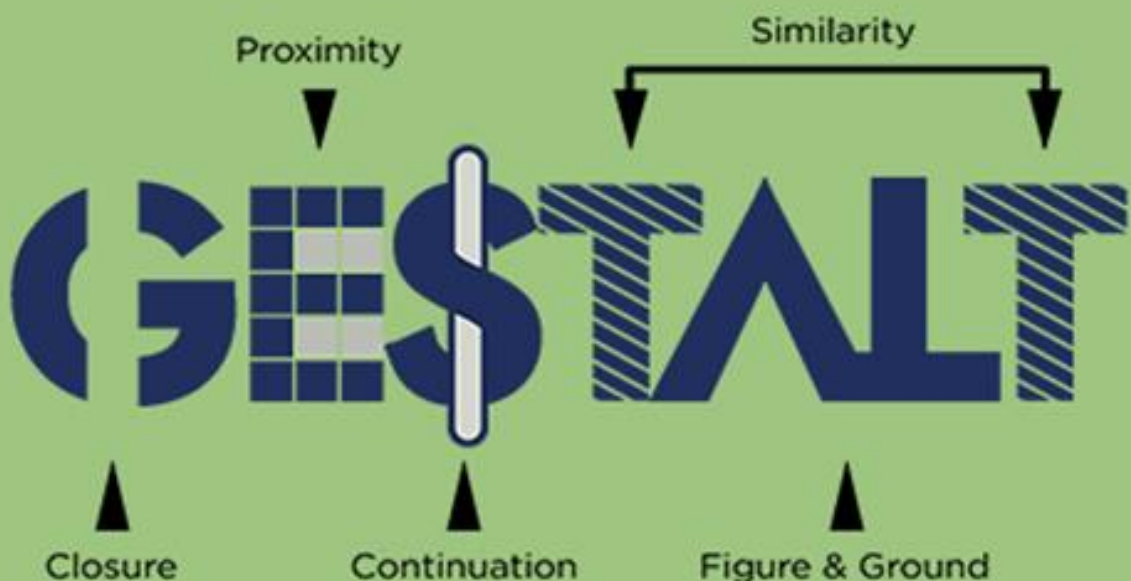
Activities



Activities



1. Read the "Gestalt: a theory of perception". Create a poster with pictures, photos and drawings to illustrate the key ideas of the Gestalt principles.
2. Read extracts from "Gestalt : a theory of perception" and the "Phenomenology of Perception". Prepare a Power Point Presentation to explain the Gestalt principles to a group of fellow students. In simple words, explain how the study of these principles has helped Merleau-Ponty to review the traditional philosophical view on perception.
3. Watch the [Gestalt Principles at Work in Logo Design](#)
4. Listen to Hubert Dreyfus' podcast on Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception
<https://syntheticzero.net/2017/03/15/hubert-dreyfus-on-merleau-pontys-phenomenology-of-perception/>



Resource Two

Further Reading



Explore



Maurice Merleau-Ponty (14 March 1908 – 3 May 1961) was a French phenomenological philosopher, strongly influenced by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. The constitution of meaning in human experience was his main interest and he wrote on perception, art and politics. He was on the editorial board of *Les Temps Modernes*, the leftist magazine created by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1945. At the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a sustained argument for the foundational role perception plays in understanding the world as well as engaging with the world. Like the other major phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty expressed his philosophical insights in writings on art, literature, linguistics, and politics. He was the only major phenomenologist of the first half of the twentieth century to engage extensively with the sciences and especially with descriptive psychology. Because of this engagement, his writings have become influential in recent project of naturalizing phenomenology, in which phenomenologists use the results of psychology and cognitive science. Merleau-Ponty emphasized the body as the primary site of knowing the world, a corrective to the long philosophical tradition of placing consciousness as the source of knowledge, and his insight that the body and that which it perceived could not be disentangled from each other. The articulation of the primacy of embodiment led him away from phenomenology towards what he was to call "indirect ontology" or the ontology of "the flesh of the world" (*la chair du monde*), seen in his last incomplete work, *The Visible and Invisible*, and his last published essay, "Eye and Mind".

Merleau-Ponty was born in 1908 in Rochefort-sur-Mer, Charente-Maritime, France. His father died in 1913 when Merleau-Ponty was five years old. Thomas Baldwin in Introduction to Merleau-Ponty's *The World of Perception*

Resource Two

Further Reading



Explore



(New York: Routledge, 2008): 2. After secondary schooling at the lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, Maurice Merleau-Ponty became a student at the École Normale Supérieure, where he studied alongside Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Simone Weil. He passed the agrégation in philosophy in 1930. Merleau-Ponty first taught at Chartres, then became a tutor at the École Normale Supérieure, where he was awarded his doctorate on the basis of two important books: *La structure du comportement* (1942) and *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (1945). After teaching at the University of Lyon from 1945 to 1948, Merleau-Ponty lectured on child psychology and education at the Sorbonne from 1949 to 1952. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952*. Translated by Talia Welsh. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010. He was awarded the Chair of Philosophy at the Collège de France from 1952 until his death in 1961, making him the youngest person to have been elected to a Chair. Besides his teaching, Merleau-Ponty was also political editor for *Les Temps modernes* from the founding of the journal in October 1945 until December 1952. In his youth he had read Karl Marx' writings. Jean-Paul Sartre even claimed that Merleau-Ponty converted him to Marxism. Merleau-Ponty died suddenly of a stroke in 1961 at age 53, apparently while preparing for a class on Descartes. He is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

Selected Works

Phenomenology of Perception—trans. by Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962); trans. revised by Forrest Williams (1981; reprinted, 2002); new trans. by Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012).

The Visible and the Invisible, Followed by Working Notes trans. By Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

The Prose of the World trans. by John O'Neill, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973; London: Heinemann, 1974

Resource Three Overview



Topic	What is embodied cognition?
A-Level Modules	Supra-curricular content
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To develop an understanding of the notion of embodied cognition in real-life situations.✓ To explore more complex texts and develop a better understanding of the conceptual framework that informs them.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>In philosophy, embodied cognition holds that an agent's cognition is strongly influenced by aspects of an agent's body beyond the brain itself. Varela et al. defines "embodied":</p> <p>"By using the term embodied we mean to highlight two points: first that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological , psychological and cultural context."</p> <p>Francisco J. Varela, Eva Thompson, Eleanor Rosch, <i>The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience</i> (pp. 172–3)</p>

Resource Three

Data Source



Maximum Grip: Intentionality Without Representation

in Hubert L. Dreyfus' *The
Current Relevance of
Merleau-Ponty's
Phenomenology of
Embodiment*, University
of California – Berkeley

*Active
Reading*

*Deep
Dive*

The first of the three major parts of *Phenomenology* concerns the body. Through a contrast with pathological cases such as phantom limbs, Merleau-Ponty describes the body's typical mode of existence as "being-toward-the-world"—a pre-objective orientation toward a vital situation that is explicable neither in terms of third-person causal interactions nor by explicit judgments.

This kinaesthetic awareness is made possible by a pre-conscious system of bodily movements and spatial equivalences that Merleau-Ponty terms the "body schema". In contrast with the "positional spatiality" of things, the body has a "situational spatiality" that is oriented toward actual or possible tasks (PP: 129/102). The body's existence as "being-toward-the-world", as a projection toward lived goals, is therefore expressed through its spatiality, which forms the background against which objective space is constituted (PP: 170/137)

The body's relationship with space is therefore intentional, although as an "I can" rather than an "I think"; bodily space is a multi-layered manner of relating to things, so that the body is not "in" space but lives or inhabits it. Trying to find out what Merleau-Ponty means by the "I can" leads us to a crucial feature of embodiment: motivation.

Merleau-Ponty has an original account of what leads one to act on the basis of the skills one has, and to acquire new ones. The philosophical tradition since Plato has held that what motivates animals and people to acquire skills and act on them is the desire to achieve certain goals. These goals are worth achieving because they are associated with certain satisfactions. But, as we have seen, once one has a skill one is solicited to act without needing to have in mind a goal at all. Thus, Merleau-Ponty is interested in exploring a more basic kind of motivation. According to Merleau-Ponty,

Resource Three

Data Source



in everyday, absorbed, skillful coping, acting is experienced as a steady flow of skillful activity in response to one's sense of the situation. Part of that experience is a sense that when one's situation deviates from some optimal body-environment relationship, one's motion takes one closer to that optimum and thereby relieves the "tension" of the deviation. One does not need a goal or intention to act. One's body is simply solicited by the situation to get into equilibrium with it. "Whether a system of motor or perceptual powers, our body is not an object for and I think, it is a grouping of live-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium" (1962: 153). When everyday coping is going well one experiences something like what athletes call flow, or playing out of their heads. One's activity is completely geared into the demands of the situation. Aron Gurwitsch offers an excellent description of this absorbed activity:

[W]hat is imposed on us to do is not determined by us as someone standing outside the situation simply looking on at it; what occurs and is imposed are rather prescribed by the situation and its own structure; and we do more and greater justice to it the more we let ourselves be guided by it, i.e., the less reserved we are in immersing ourselves in it and subordinating ourselves to it. We find ourselves in a situation and are interwoven with it, encompassed by it, indeed just "absorbed" into it. (Gurwitsch 1979: 67) To get the phenomenon in focus, consider a tennis swing. If one is a beginner or is off one's form one might find oneself making an effort to keep one's eye on the ball, keep the racket perpendicular to the court, hit the ball squarely, etc

But if one is expert at the game, things are going well, and one is absorbed in the game, what is experienced is more like one's arm going up and its being drawn to the appropriate position, the racket forming the optimal angle with the court

Resource Three

Data Source



- an angle we need not even be aware of - all this so as to complete the gestalt made up of the court, one's running opponent, and the oncoming ball. One feels that one's comportment was caused by the perceived conditions in such a way as to reduce a sense of deviation from some satisfactory gestalt. Such skillful coping does not require a mental representation of its goal. It can be purposive without the agent entertaining a purpose. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 139)

An even more striking case, where the goal the skilled perceiver is being led to achieve is not available to the actor as something to aim at, will make the point clear. Instructor pilots teach beginning pilots a rule determining the order in which they are to scan their instruments. The instructor pilots teach the rule for instrument scanning that they themselves were taught and, as far as they know, still use. At one point, however, Air Force psychologists studied the eye movements of the instructors during simulated flight and found, to everyone's surprise, that the instructor pilots were not following the rule they were teaching; in fact their eye movements varied from situation to situation and did not seem to follow any rule at all. They were presumably responding to changing situational solicitations that showed up for them in the instrument panel thanks to their past experience. The instructor pilots had no idea of the way they were scanning their instruments and so could not have entertained the goal of scanning the instruments in that order.

Resource Three

Data Source



The phenomena of purposive actions without a purpose is not limited to bodily activity. It occurs in all areas of skillful coping, including intellectual coping. Many instances of apparently complex problem solving, which seem to implement a long-range strategy, as, for example, a masterful move in chess as we have seen, may be best understood as direct responses to familiar perceptual gestalts. As we have seen, after years of seeing chess games unfold, a chess grandmaster can play master level chess simply by responding to the patterns on the chess board while his deliberate, analytic mind is absorbed in something else. Such play, based as it is on previous attention to thousands of actual and book games, incorporates a tradition which determines the appropriate response to a situation, and then to the next etc., and therefore makes possible long range, strategic, purposive play, without the player needing to have in mind any plan or purpose at all. Thus, although comportments must have logical conditions of satisfaction, i.e. they can succeed or fail, there need be no mentalistic intentional content, i.e. no representations of a goal. If one can act without representing one's goal, what motivates skillful action?

Merleau-Ponty's inspiration for his notion of maximal grip comes from perception and manipulation. When we are looking at something, we tend, without thinking about it, to find the best distance for taking in both the thing as a whole and its different parts. When grasping something, we tend to grab it in such a way as to get the best grip on it. One is no doubt consciously motivated to acquire a skill like tennis, but one does not try consciously to discriminate more and more subtle tennis situations and pair them with more and more subtle responses.

Gurwitsch, Aron (1979). *Human Encounters in the Social World*.
Duchesne University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. C.
Smith (translator). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Resource Three Activities



Activities

1. Watch examples of kinaesthetic awareness at work in sports and dance:
 - a) Archery Tournament
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzq_ISBmS9g
 - b) Balinese dance lesson
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpewWVdvHCl>
2. Listen to [Hubert Dreyfus' podcat on 'Embodied Cognition'](#)
3. Using the reading in this resource, along with the videos and podcast from activities 1 and 2, write an essay of at least 500 words in which you describe and analyse the idea of Embodied Cognition. Your essay should reference key philosophers and include evidence (e.g. quotes) from the resource.



Resource Three

Further Reading



Explore Explore "The Embodied Mind Project"

<https://www.jarmanlab.org/the-embodied-mind-project/>



Resource Four Overview



Topic	The body as incarnate consciousness
A-Level Modules	Supra-curricular content
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To develop an understanding of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of reversibility✓ To explore the philosophical dimensions of the phenomenon of touch✓ To evaluate the idea of an "incarnate consciousness"
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>Reversibility is a central concept of Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy. Yet, as Merleau-Ponty admits, this concept is quite enigmatic. The idea of reversibility allows to conceptualize perception and sense not as products of the perceiver merely but of an operation beyond the perceiver wherein the field of perception internally diverges into active and passive moments. Reversibility is a sign of this divergence and is thus a sign of a sort of gap or excess in being that allows the genesis of sense, a creative operation, within being itself.</p>

Resource Four

Data Source



Reynolds, Jack. Maurice
Merleau-Ponty.

Internet Encyclopaedia
of Philosophy
<https://www.iep.utm.edu/merleau/>

*Active
Reading*

*Deep
Dive*

Rather than maintaining a traditional dualism in which mind and body, subject and object, self and other, are discrete and separate entities, in his later writing, *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty argues that there is an important sense in which such pairs are also associated. For example, he does not dispute that there is a divergence, or dehiscence, in our embodied situation that is evident in the difference that exists between touching and being touched, between looking and being looked at, or between the sentient and the sensible. On the contrary, this divergence is considered to be a necessary and constitutive factor in allowing subjectivity to be possible at all. However, he suggests that rather than involving a simple dualism, this divergence also allows for the possibility of overlapping and encroachment between these two terms.

For example, Merleau-Ponty has somewhat famously suggested that the experience of touching cannot be understood without reference to the tacit potential for this situation to be reversed. Merleau-Ponty argues that we can never simultaneously touch our right hand while it is also touching an object of the world. He suggests that "either my right hand really passes over into the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted, or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch it" (VI: 148). There is then, a gap (or *écart* in French) between ourselves as touching and ourselves as touched, a divergence between the sentient and sensible aspects of our existence, but this gap is importantly distinct from merely reinstating yet another dualism. Touching and touched are not simply separate orders of being in the world, since they are reversible, and this image of our left hand touching our right hand does more than merely represent the body's capacity to be both perceiving object and subject of perception in a constant oscillation.

Resource Four

Data Source



As Merleau-Ponty suggests: "I can identify the hand touched in the same one which will in a moment be touching... In this bundle of bones and muscles which my right hand presents to my left, I can anticipate for an instant the incarnation of that other right hand, alive and mobile, which I thrust towards things in order to explore them. The body tries... to touch itself while being touched and initiates a kind of reversible reflection" (PhP: 93). This suggests that the hand that we touch, while it is touching an inanimate object, is hence not merely another such 'object', but another fleshy substance that is capable of reversing the present situation and being mobile and even aggressive.

Given that we cannot touch ourselves, or even somebody else, without this recognition of our own tangibility and capacity to be touched by others, it seems that the awareness of what it feels like to be touched encroaches, or even supervenes upon the experience of touching (VI:147). Any absolute distinction between being in the world as touching, and being in the world as touched, deprives the existential phenomena of their true complexity. Our embodied subjectivity is never located purely in either our tangibility or in our touching, but in the intertwining of these two aspects, or where the two lines of a chiasm intersect with one another. The chiasm then, is simply an image to describe how this overlapping and encroachment can take place between a pair that nevertheless retains a divergence, in that touching and touched are obviously never exactly the same thing.

More significantly, the hand touching itself represents the body's capacity to occupy the position of both perceiving object and subject of perception, if not at once, then in a constant oscillation. However, as he puts it, "when I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt

Resource Four

Data Source



together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the role of 'touching' and being 'touched'" (PhP :93). This double touching and encroachment of the touching onto the touched (and vice versa), where subject and object cannot be unequivocally discerned, is considered to be representative of perception and sensibility generally. For Merleau-Ponty, the "reversibility" of the body, its capacity to be both sentient and sensible is a proof that incarnate consciousness is the central phenomena of which mind and body are abstract moments (PhP: 193).

But these observations also retain an applicability that extends well beyond the relationship that obtains between touching and being touched. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the realisation that the world is not simply an object: "does not mean that there was a fusion or coinciding of me with it: on the contrary, this occurs because a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that the things pass into us, as well as we into the things" (VI :123). The world is capable of encroaching upon and altering us, just as we are capable of altering it. Such a view rejects any absolute antinomy between self and world, as well as any notion of subjectivity that prioritizes a rational, autonomous individual, who is capable of imposing their choice upon a situation that is entirely external to them.

References PHP – [Merleau-Ponty, Maurice](#).(1945) *Phénoménologie de la Perception* Paris: Gallimard, Translated by Colin Smith as *Phenomenology of Perception* (1981) Revised by F. Williams. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

VI – Merleau-Maurice Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Followed by Working Notes trans. by [Alphonso Lingis](#), (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

Resource Four Activities



Activities

1. Read the extract and write a brief response to the following questions:
 - a) Does Merleau-Ponty refute the idea of a distinction, a "divergence" between touching and touched, sensing and sensed?
 - b) What shows that the hand that we "touch" is not just an inanimate object?
 - c) What does the notion of "chiasm" convey in Merleau-Ponty? How does Merleau-Ponty reach the idea of an "incarnate consciousness"?
 - d) In what way(s) reversibility extends beyond the relationship between the (hand) touching and the (hand) touched?
 - e) Can you think of an objection to Merleau-Ponty? How do you think he would have responded to it?
2. Create a complete sentence by joining the sentence halves together.

- i. The phenomenon of reversibility...
 - ii. The reversibility is never complete...
 - iii. Every experience of the visible...
 - iv. There is double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and ...
 - v. Between my movements and what I touch...
 - vi. The intertwining of the touching with the touched ...
-
- a. has always been given to me within the context of the movements of the look.
 - b. of the tangible in the visible.
 - c. blurs the boundaries between subjective and objective experience.
 - d. there must exist some relationship by principle.
 - e. shows that the body exhibits a sort of reflexivity, is capable of cognizing.
 - f. because a coincidence of the touching with the touched would abolish the body and bring us to a pure consciousness.

Resource Four

Activities



Activities

3. Read the 2 extracts below from Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and fill in the gaps with the missing words. Do the two philosophers advance similar or differing views?

Missing Words

exploration
world
hand
touch
interrogate
opening
useless
them
relationship
feel

We are dealing with two essentially different orders of reality. To _____ and to be touched, to _____ that one is touching and to feel that one is touched – these are two species of phenomena which it is _____ to try to reunite....In fact they are radically distinct, and they exist on two incommunicable levels.

Jean Paul Sartre, (1969). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. (H. E. Barnes, Trans.). London: Routledge, pp.402-403)

Between the _____ and what it will teach me, between my movements and what I touch, there must exist some _____ by principle, some kinship, according to which they are not only, like the pseudopods of the amoeba, vague and ephemeral deformations of the corporeal space, but the initiation to and the _____ upon a tactile _____. This can happen only if my _____ while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of _____, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they _____ are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Followed by *Working Notes* trans. by Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p.133)

Resource Four

Further Reading



Explore

You may need to create a free account to be able to download this article but you can also ask your teacher to download the article for you.



https://www.academia.edu/269896/The_Enigma_of_Reversibility_and_the_Genesis_of_Sense_in_Merleau-Ponty

Resource Five

Overview



Topic	An embodied view of Language
A-Level Modules	Supra-curricular content
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To develop an understanding of language from a phenomenological perspective✓ To understand in what sense language is an embodied phenomenon✓ To explore in what ways linguistic signification is linked to bodily gestures
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>According to Merleau-Ponty, linguistic meanings are neither perceptive nor conceptual, but function as the processes generating conceptual meanings from the perceptive field. More precisely, language accomplishes the passage from an affective level of meaning to a properly linguistic meaning : while in the first case each gesture is intimately linked to what it means and its significance cannot be separated from the occurrence of the gesture itself, on the linguistic level meanings are still open and can change, but are not arbitrary, as they must take into account the complex web of reciprocal differentiations shared by an intersubjective community.</p>

Resource Five

Data Source



**Body and Language:
Butler, Merleau-Ponty
and Lyotard on the
Speaking Embodied
Subject**

Vasterling, V. (2003).
International Journal Of
Philosophical
Studies, 11(2), 205-223.



A phenomenological reading of language is indeed “a reflection upon our being-in-the world through embodiment”. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty says that ‘it is the body which speaks’ (PhP:197). This statement does not refer to the fact that speaking requires physical equipment like vocal chords. What Merleau-Ponty means to say is that the body is an expressive and intentional body and, as such, a source of meaning.

Although the body is a biological entity, the biological dimension is transcended by the intentionality characteristic of the body. Merleau-Ponty describes the intentionality of the body as a way of being in the world, of a relating to and shaping of the world. Drawing on Heidegger’s analysis of human existence as being in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty explicates the bodily dimension that Heidegger overlooks. According to Merleau-Ponty, it is the body’s perceptions and capacities that open up the world and enable us to move around in it with confidence.

The body’s intentionality is linked to the body’s expressiveness. That is, bodily intentionality expresses itself in gestures of, for instance, anger or love. In Part I, Chapter 6 of *Phenomenology of Perception*, entitled ‘The Body as Expression and Speech’, Merleau-Ponty analyses bodily gestures as the primary form of language. Bodily and more specifically emotional gestures express possible ways of encountering and living the world; they give shape to stimuli and situations. As such they create and convey meaning. By understanding the phenomenon of speech in terms of “gesture”, Merleau-Ponty believes that we will be able to overcome traditional philosophical dichotomies (PhP:206)

Resource Five

Data Source



If speech presupposed thought, if talking were primarily a matter of meeting the object through a cognitive intention or through a representation, we could not understand why thought tends towards expression as towards its completion, why the most familiar thing appears indeterminate as long as we have not recalled its name, why the thinking subject himself is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them, as is shown by the example of so many writers who begin a book without knowing exactly what they are going to put into it.

According to Merleau-Ponty, behaviour creates meanings which are transcendent in relation to the anatomical apparatus, and yet immanent to the behaviour as such, since it communicates itself and is understood' (PhP:189). Bodily gestures cannot be reduced to purely natural signs emanating from a body that is equipped or programmed to produce these signs. Even if human beings share the same psychophysiological equipment, this equipment 'leaves a great variety of possibilities open' (PhP:189). As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'It is no more natural, nor less conventional, to shout in anger or to kiss in love than to call a table "a table". Feelings and passionate conduct are invented like words' (PhP:189). Language is rooted in corporeality, in the signifying powers of the body. Linguistic signification, that is, the expression of meaning in speech, prolongs and accomplishes the gestural signification that is deployed in bodily forms of behaviour.

Resource Five

Data Source



Speech does not consist of verbal signs representing a meaning external to them. Speech consists of linguistic gestures, which, like bodily gestures in general, express and hence contain their meaning. Instead of the usual distinction between a bodily language consisting of natural expressive signs on the one hand and a verbal language consisting of conventional referential signs on the other, Merleau-Ponty posits a continuity of expressive gestures which are neither natural nor purely conventional, a continuity of expression starting with bodily gestures and ending with spoken (and written) words.

Yet, if the intentional and expressive body is the source of meaning or, to put it another way, if the body is the source of an open and indefinite power of giving significance, how does Merleau-Ponty explain the fact that we are able to understand each other's bodily and linguistic gestures? Expressive gestures do create meaning, but they do not create meaning *ex nihilo*, as it were from scratch. Expressive gestures presuppose and make use of an 'alphabet of already acquired meanings' (PhP:194). The world we live in is a linguistic world 'where speech is an institution' (PhP:184).

PhP = Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012/1945). *Phenomenology of Perception* (Donald A. Landes, Trans). Routledge.
/ *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. Gallimard.

Resource Five

Activities



Activities

1. Read the text and write a mini essay on "Language & Embodiment in Merleau-Ponty.

Points to consider:

- How the body's intentionality is linked to the body's expressiveness (give examples)
 - Why speech is not a function of the intellect.
 - In what sense Merleau-Ponty's view of language is gestural.
2. Film various persons talking and interacting. Based on your material create a short video to illustrate Merleau-Ponty's idea of language. Present your video to a group of students & teachers at your school.
 3. Listen to Merleau-Ponty on Mallarmé and Poetic Language (brief excerpt from Merleau-Ponty's radio lecture "Art and the Perceived World" (Causeries 1948).



Building an argument

In French with English subtitles: [Merleau-Ponty: Art and the Perceived World \(1948\)](#)

Resource Five

Further Reading



Explore

Read "Merleau-Ponty: from perception to language". Visit web link below and download PDF.



<https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/Lebenswelt/article/download/7962/7626>

Resource Six Overview



Topic	The notion of flesh and the embodied mind
A-Level Modules	Supra-curricular content
Objectives	<p>After completing this resource you should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To develop an understanding of the notion of "flesh" in Merleau-Ponty's writings✓ To explore how "flesh" completes and extends Merleau-Ponty's thesis on the incarnate consciousness✓ To evaluate how the idea of flesh is used in different fields of knowledge (through further reading)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>In "The Visible and the Invisible", Merleau-Ponty develops his ontology of flesh in a stand-alone chapter entitled "The Intertwining-The Chiasm" as the culmination of all his philosophical considerations. Chiasm is a crisscrossing or a bi-directional becoming or exchange between the body and things that justifies speaking of "flesh" of things, a kinship between the sensing body and sensed things that makes their communication possible. Flesh in this sense is the union of the sensible and the idea, body and consciousness, a notion that does not correspond to any traditional philosophical concept, but is closest to the notion of an "element" in the classical sense.</p>

Resource Six

Data Source



The Logic of the Chiasm in Merleau-Ponty's Early Philosophy

Muller, Robin (2017).
Ergo, An Open Access
Journal Of
Philosophy, 4(20181115)

*Active
Reading*

*Deep
Dive*

After the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*, a problem became decisive for Merleau-Ponty. As he tells us in a Working Note from 1959, "the problems posed in *PhP* are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'-'object' distinction" (VI:200/250). To begin again, he needs to locate the common ground from which the subject-object division emerges, accounting, at the same time, for the primitive divergence within this ground that allows the division to take shape.

The tension between these demands gives rise to the concept Merleau-Ponty first makes use of in 1951 the concept of "flesh." With "flesh," Merleau-Ponty describes a basic ontological structure that hitherto "has no name in any philosophy" (VI:139, 147/181, 190) because philosophy has been caught on one side or another of the antinomy that flesh is meant to resolve. To name and to develop this concept is therefore to respond to the question of the relation of the human being and the world, the object, or nature without presupposing a specific account of their difference.

The term "flesh" appears for the first time in "Man and Adversity"(1951) in which Merleau-Ponty refers to "the notion of flesh, that is, animate body" (S:227/287). "Flesh," therefore, calls to mind what Merleau-Ponty names the philosophical advancement of "our century": that philosophy has succeeded in "wip[ing] out the dividing line between 'body' and 'mind,' and sees human life as through and through mental [spirituelle] and corporeal" (S:227/287). Whereas in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty spoke of the body as a "fabric into which all objects are woven," and as "the general instrument of my 'understanding'" (*PhP*:244/282), the emphasis on the flesh of the body brings out its living aspect. The body is not an instrument that my conscious processes could take hold of, it is an "intertwining of vision and movement" (EM:124/20) that is in and of the world.

Resource Six

Data Source



By invoking this double (rhetorical and biological) sense of a crossing, Merleau-Ponty implies that flesh is not simply a carnal “thickness” that is shared by myself and world; it is an overlapping or “folding back” of one on the other that functions as the pre-condition of thought (VI:152/197). Already in the 1930s and 1940s, Merleau-Ponty links the chiasmic structure of the mind- body to the reciprocity of that body and world. By the time of *The Visible and the Invisible*, however, the development of the notion of flesh as Gallagher and Zahavi’s notice, shows the centrality of “the notion of an embodied mind or a minded body” in Merleau-Ponty’s thought (2012: 153).

EM = Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1994/1964). *Eye and Mind*. In Galen Johnson (Ed.) and Michael Smith (Trans.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (35–56). Northwestern University Press / L’Œil et L’Esprit. Gallimard.

PhP = Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012/1945). *Phenomenology of Perception* (Donald A. Landes, Trans). Routledge. / *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. Gallimard.

S = Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964/1960). *Signs* (Richard C. McCleary, Trans.). Northwestern University Press. / *Signes*. Gallimard.

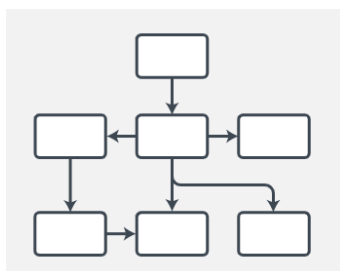
VI = Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968/1964). *The Visible and the Invisible* (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.). / *Le Visible et L’Invisible*. Gallimard.

Gallagher, Shaun and Dan Zahavi (2012). *The Phenomenological Mind* (2nd. ed.). Routledge.

Resource Six Activities



Activities



A concept map is a diagram that depicts suggested relationships. Most concept maps depict ideas as boxes or circles (also called nodes), which are structured hierarchically and connected with lines or arrows (also called arcs). These lines are labelled with linking words and phrases to help explain the connections between concepts.

1. Using the text, can you create a concept map in which you explore how the idea of flesh can be extended in other domains of human knowledge?

- Tip: Before beginning your concept map, it can be helpful to come up with a list identifying the key concepts that need to be included.

2. What might the implications be of the extensions in your concept map?

- Tip: Get inspired from further reading!

3. Merleau-Ponty developed his notion of flesh inspired from the experiences of painter Paul Cézanne. Watch "Cezanne and Merleau Ponty"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRM6ubTGxco>

**Problem
solving**



Resource Six

Further Reading



Explore Explore an “ecological” account of the idea of flesh

<https://sensualanimist.com/2012/04/13/phenomenology-of-perception-maurice-merleau-ponty/>



Final Reflection



Topic	Philosophy of Embodiment: an overview
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To reflect on the objectives and conclusions of the resources 1–6.✓ To allow for further philosophical reflection on the studied topics and the expression of agreement/disagreement with the ideas they advance.✓ To develop critical thinking skills and advancing arguments/counter-arguments.✓ To offer an opportunity to share your thoughts and new acquired knowledge with others.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Imagine that you had been invited to give a speech on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of Embodiment. Write a speech in which you either, wholeheartedly agree with Merleau-Ponty's claims, strongly disagree, or agree/disagree to a limited extent with different parts of his philosophy. <p>In planning your speech you might want to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perception as a bodily phenomenon• The body's capacity for self awareness (kinaesthesia)• Language and body• The role of the notions of reversibility and flesh to the formulation of the idea of "incarnate consciousness"



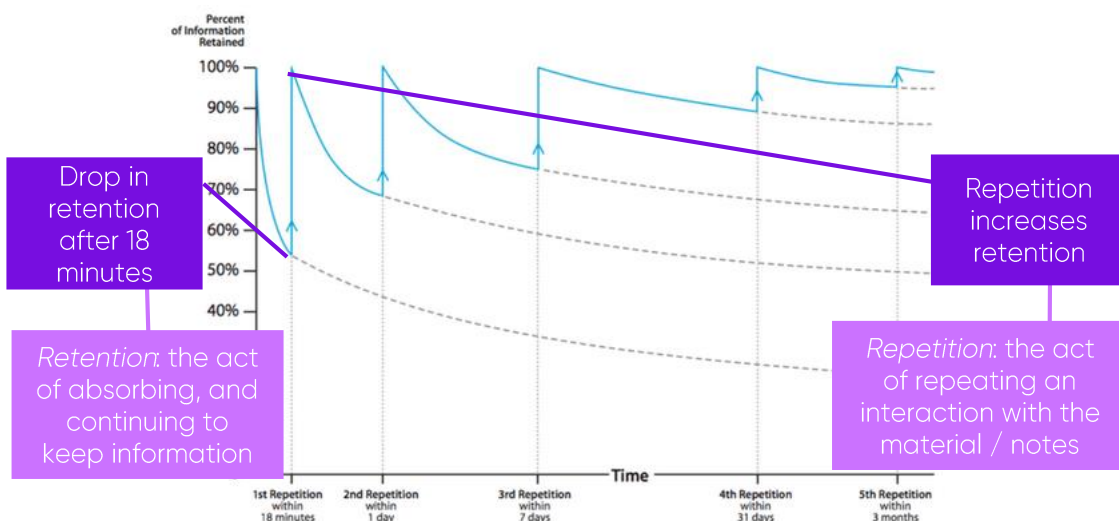
University Study Skills Cornell Notes



Why is good note taking important?

If it feels like you forget new information almost as quickly as you hear it, even if you write it down, that's because we tend to lose almost 40% of new information within the first 24 hours of first reading or hearing it.

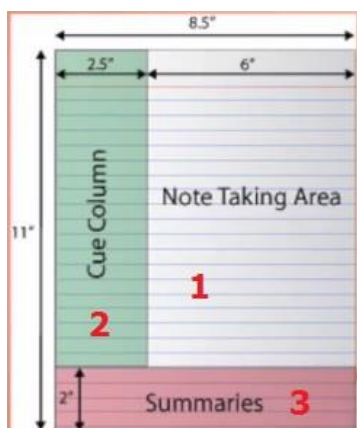
If we take notes effectively, however, we can retain and retrieve almost 100% of the information we receive. Consider this graph on the rate of forgetting with study/repetition:



Learning a new system

The Cornell Note System was developed in the 1950s at the University of Cornell in the USA. The system includes interacting with your notes and is suitable for all subjects. There are three steps to the Cornell Note System.

Step 1: Note-Taking



1. Create Format: Notes are set up in the Cornell Way. This means creating 3 boxes like the ones on the left. You should put your name, date, and topic at the top of the page.

2. Write and Organise: You then take your notes in area on the right side of the page. You should organise these notes by keeping a line or a space between 'chunks' / main ideas of information. You can also use bullet points for lists of information to help organise your notes.

Step 2 Note-Making

1. Revise and Edit Notes: Go back to box 1, the note taking area and spend some time revising and editing. You can do this by: highlighting 'chunks' of information with a number or a colour; circling all key words in a different colour; highlighting main ideas; adding new information in another colour

2. Note Key Idea: Go to box 2 on the left hand side of the page and develop some questions about the main ideas in your notes. The questions should be 'high level'. This means they should encourage you to think deeper about the ideas. Example 'high level' questions would be:

- Which is most important / significant reason for...
- To what extent...
- How does the (data / text / ideas) support the viewpoint?
- How do we know that...

Here is an example of step 1 and step 2 for notes on the story of Cinderella:

Questions:	Notes:
How does C's mother die?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinderella is an only child • Cinderella's dad might <u>spoil</u> her • Cinderella's Step-Mother is <u>jealous</u> of her beauty • Maybe Cinderella becomes the <u>woman of the house</u>
Why does C make the Step-M so angry?	<p>↳ BUT then the Step-Mother wants that <u>position</u>.</p>
↓ What language shows this?	<p>* <u>Key point</u> → Fairy takes teach is <u>morals</u></p>
* What is the moral of 'C'?	
How do I know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinderella is <u>kind</u> → her Step-M is not
Is this just one side of the story?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a <u>reason</u> for C to be badly be treated?

Step 3 Note-Interacting

1. Summary: Go to box 3 at the bottom of the page and summarise the main ideas in box 1 and answer the essential questions in box 2.

Summary:	<p>Because C is an only child, she takes over as 'woman of the house' when her real M dies. Her Step-M is jealous and angry. We only get C's side of the story so it is difficult to know whether C is really badly treated for no reason.</p>
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Give the Cornell Note Taking System a try and see if it works for you!

University Study Skills

Key Instruction Words



These words will often be used when university tutors set you essay questions – it is a good idea to carefully read instruction words before attempting to answer the question.

Analyse – When you analyse something you consider it carefully and in detail in order to understand and explain it. To analyse, identify the main parts or ideas of a subject and examine or interpret the connections between them.

Comment on – When you comment on a subject or the ideas in a subject, you say something that gives your opinion about it or an explanation for it.

Compare – To compare things means to point out the differences or similarities between them. A comparison essay would involve examining qualities/characteristics of a subject and emphasising the similarities and differences.

Contrast – When you contrast two subjects you show how they differ when compared with each other. A contrast essay should emphasise striking differences between two elements.

Compare and contrast – To write a compare and contrast essay you would examine the similarities and differences of two subjects.

Criticise – When you criticise you make judgments about a subject after thinking about it carefully and deeply. Express your judgement with respect to the correctness or merit of the factors under consideration. Give the results of your own analysis and discuss the limitations and contributions of the factors in question. Support your judgement with evidence.

Define – When you define something you show, describe, or state clearly what it is and what it is like, you can also say what its limits are. Do not include details but do include what distinguishes it from the other related things, sometimes by giving examples.

Describe – To describe in an essay requires you to give a detailed account of characteristics, properties or qualities of a subject.

Discuss – To discuss in an essay consider your subject from different points of view. Examine, analyse and present considerations for and against the problem or statement.

University Study Skills

Key Instruction Words



Evaluate – When you evaluate in an essay, decide on your subject's significance, value, or quality after carefully studying its good and bad features. Use authoritative (e.g. from established authors or theorists in the field) and, to some extent, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations of the subject. Similar to **assess**.

Illustrate – If asked to illustrate in an essay, explain the points that you are making clearly by using examples, diagrams, statistics etc.

Interpret – In an essay that requires you to interpret, you should translate, solve, give examples, or comment upon the subject and evaluate it in terms of your judgement or reaction. Basically, give an explanation of what your subject means. Similar to **explain**.

Justify – When asked to justify a statement in an essay you should provide the reasons and grounds for the conclusions you draw from the statement. Present your evidence in a form that will convince your reader.

Outline – Outlining requires that you explain ideas, plans, or theories in a general way, without giving all the details. Organise and systematically describe the main points or general principles. Use essential supplementary material, but omit minor details.

Prove – When proving a statement, experiment or theory in an essay, you must confirm or verify it. You are expected to evaluate the material and present experimental evidence and/or logical argument.

Relate – To relate two things, you should state or claim the connection or link between them. Show the relationship by emphasising these connections and associations.

Review – When you review, critically examine, analyse and comment on the major points of a subject in an organised manner

Exploring Careers and Study Options

- ✓ Find job descriptions, salaries and hours, routes into different careers, and more at <https://www.startprofile.com/>
- ✓ Research career and study choices, and see videos of those who have pursued various routes at <http://www.careerpilot.org.uk/>
- ✓ See videos about what it's like to work in different jobs and for different organisations at <https://www.careersbox.co.uk/>
- ✓ Find out what different degrees could lead to, how to choose the right course for you, and how to apply for courses and student finance at <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- ✓ Explore job descriptions and career options, and contact careers advisers at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- ✓ Discover which subjects and qualifications (not just A levels) lead to different degrees, and what careers these degrees can lead to, at <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5457/informed-choices-2016.pdf>

Comparing Universities

- ✓ <https://www.whatuni.com/>
- ✓ <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>
- ✓ <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>
- ✓ Which? Explorer tool – find out your degree options based on your A level and BTEC subjects: <https://university.which.co.uk/>

UCAS

- ✓ Key dates and deadlines: <https://university.which.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/ucas-deadlines-key-application-dates>
- ✓ Untangle UCAS terminology at <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/about-us/who-we-are/ucas-terms-explained>
- ✓ Get advice on writing a UCAS personal statement at <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement>
- ✓ You can also find a template to help you structure a UCAS statement, at <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/ucas-personal-statement-worksheet.pdf>
- ✓ How to survive Clearing: <https://university.which.co.uk/advice/clearing-results-day/the-survivors-guide-to-clearing>



Philosophy at University



- ✓ Philosophy involves reading, thinking, and writing critically and creatively. It is diverse and can lead to a wide range of careers in various sectors and industries.
- ✓ Philosophy graduates are employed in a wide range of sectors, and are well placed to gain highly sought after jobs requiring excellent communication skills, critical thinking and analysis, writing, or undertaking research.
- ✓ You can find out more about different courses, entry requirements, and careers by exploring the UCAS Philosophy Subject Guide online:
<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/subject-guide-list/philosophy>

A Deeper Look Into Philosophy

- ✓ Listen: Philosophy radio <http://www.angelfire.com/ego/philosophyradio/>
- ✓ Watch: The film "Agora" narrating the story of 4th century A.D., astronomer and philosopher Hypatia . Also the following films: Derrida (2002); Being In The World (2010); When Nietzsche Wept (2007); The Last Days Of Immanuel Kant (1994); The Alchemist Of Happiness (2004)
- ✓ Short video/ films: Plato's allegory of the cave
<http://www.openculture.com/2014/02/two-animations-of-platos-allegory-of-the-cave.html> Also: 10 Documentary films (Philosophy)
<https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/category/philosophy/>
- ✓ Read: The Philosopher's magazine <https://www.philosophersmag.com/> and
Ephilosopher <https://www.plato-philosophy.org>
- ✓ Browse: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
<https://plato.stanford.edu/about.html> and Philosophy now – a magazine of ideas <https://philosophynow.org/>



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