Course Outline

Part 2 - Merleau-Ponty
By Prof. Renaud Barbaras

18 August (Monday): First Lecture
This introductory lecture aims at clarifying the husserlian legacy in Merleau-Ponty's work, particularly concerning the status of intentionality. This lecture establishes the way in which Merleau-Ponty brings to the fore the finiteness of subjectivity in order to criticize husserlian idealism. This enables him to understand intentionality as “being-in-the-world" rather than as an apprehension of a meaning.

19 August (Tuesday): Second Lecture
This lecture explores Merleau-Ponty's theory of intentionality in his first two works: The structure of Behavior and Phenomenology of Perception. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is focused on perceptual intentionality and the only way to account for this intentionality is to take as starting point one's own body (Corps propre, Leib). In Merleau-Ponty's first two works, the theory of intentionality is grounded on a phenomenology of that phenomenal body. This lecture establishes the way in which this phenomenology uses a lot of results coming from gestaltpsychology and Goldstein's physiology by showing their convergence with the phenomenological account of our perceptual experience.

21 August (Thursday): Third Lecture
This third lecture is focused on Merleau-Ponty's last work: The visible and the invisible. This work is characterised by a very marked shift in relation to the earlier works, still dependant on the philosophy of consciousness and a form of idealism. This last work tries to overcome the philosophy of consciousness by radicalizing the notion of body, which leads to an ontology of Flesh (Chair). But, insofar as intentionality is a determination of consciousness, we will have to wonder if, in Merleau-Ponty's ontology, there is still room for intentionality.

22 August (Thursday): Fourth Lecture
This concluding lecture tries to evaluate Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of intentionality. More precisely, we will wonder to what extent Merleau-Ponty manages to overcome the philosophy of consciousness, which is his husserlian legacy. We will show that, even in the last work, Merleau-Ponty does not question deeply enough body's phenomenological meaning, which prevents him to account for intentionality as he had defined it previously, that is to say as a genuine opening to the world. We will show finally that the only way to reach this goal is to exploit Patočka's phenomenology of existence and movement.