

Introduction

Basic dialectic

Against 'empiricism' (chs. 1, 2)

Against 'intellectualism' (ch. 3)

For 'phenomenology' (ch. 4)

Same dialectic in Part II ch. 1 'Sense-experience' (*Le Sentir*).

Empiricism

Scientific realism

What's fundamental is world as it is 'in-itself' (247)

Understanding is achieved by causal explanations (26-7)

Knowledge is empirical belief produced by sensory data.

Intellectualism

Rationalist idealism

What's fundamental is consciousness as it is 'for-itself' (43-4)

Understanding is achieved by rational 'judgment' (analytical reflection)

Knowledge is comprehensive rational theory

Phenomenology

Phenomenological constitution

Perception as experience 'pregnant with meaning' (25)

Understanding is achieved where it is 'motivated' by what is perceived (authentic reflection) (*motif* – 36, 56-7)

Perception is 'originating' (*originnaire*) knowledge

Conclusions

M-P's phenomenology is closer to intellectualism than to empiricism

Not realist; retains 'constituting subject'.

But this subject is 'the embodied person' – not a 'transcendental self'.

Theological comparison:

Empiricism – Atheism

Intellectualism – Theism with a Transcendental God

Phenomenology – Theism with an Immanent God

What's characteristic of 'empiricism'?

Sensations and 'simple' qualities (60-1)

'Constancy hypothesis': same stimulus, same sensation (256)

Complex perception as a matter of composite of simple sensations (atomism) (25)

Perceptual knowledge as 'association of ideas'

No a priori categories

Objections to all this

Myth of simple sensations (25)

Constancy hypothesis is incorrect

Importance of 'gestalt' (form)

Phenomenon of indeterminacy (20)

Phenomenon of 'horizon' of experience (28-9)

What's characteristic of 'intellectualism'?

Much the same conception of sensation

But 'judgment'/inference replaces association (reasons, not causes)

A priori rules: figure/ground, space, time

Perception is always only provisional – coherence is only test.

No intrinsic indeterminacy

Objections to this

Same problems re sensations

cf. gestalt illusions: see www.jimloy.com/puzz/illusion.htm

Judgment does not accommodate evidence of perceptual experience (33)

Perception is not a matter of rational appraisal

No 'facticity' – no distinctive role for one's bodily 'point of view'

M-P's phenomenological account (i)

Back to 'actual experience' (66)

Sensation is intentional (248): just rudimentary perception

Perception gives meaning to what is perceived (40)

Appearances as neither 'inner' (consciousness), nor 'outer' (things)

Relational (?)

Ways things appear to us (?)

M-P's phenomenological account (ii)

Importance of conception of 'phenomenal field'

'Horizon' of experience (hidden sides etc.) (28)
A Priori/Empirical inseparable (256)
Irreducibility of cultural meanings (27)

Broader themes (i) Scientific realism

Perception is not (just?) a 'natural' fact (241) (as 'empiricism' supposes)
Why? Because (i) it gives 'meaning' to what is perceived
(ii) thus it has a constitutive role
Separate: anti-reductive thesis - from: anti-naturalist thesis
Difficult issue of realism re: properties vs. perception-dependent meanings

Broader themes (ii) The Body (248-9)

Because perception contributes meaning etc, it has a 'subject'
But the subject is not the rational thinker (as 'intellectualism' supposes)
Instead, for M-P, the subject is one's 'body'.
More to come on this; but note here –
connections between perception and action: hence unity of senses and
synaesthesia (266)
bodily axes for perception
'anonymity' of perception – 'one' sees (250)

Broader themes (iii) 'pre' –

Perception as 'pre-scientific' (68)
Perceived world as 'pre-objective' (14)
Subject of perception as 'pre-personal' (242)
cf. Heidegger 'vor' -

Final challenge

How far can 'cognitive science' comprehend M-P's insights?
Is phenomenology compatible with a broad-minded 'scientific' understanding of the
mind?
What is the status of psychology? Science – or Philosophy? (12, 58-9, 68)
cf. Wittgenstein, Ryle