SUMMER 2019

Charles University

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

(BA Module + Erasmus students)

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**(NOTA BENE: Erasmus students need to notify the teacher)**

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**Philosophies and Phenomenologies of the Body**

**(**Friday: 12:30-14:05**)**

**Room: P217**

**1. General Description and Aims of the Module**

There is no doubt that what we call the “body” has been at the center of the Western philosophical speculation at least since Plato (*phroura*) and Aristotle (*empsukhon soma*). And yet, there is also no doubt that the 20th tradition of thought that goes by the name of “phenomenology” seems to have introduced a brand new conception of the “body,” starting with the distinction (first worked out by Husserl) between mere “body” or *Körper* and “lived-body or *Leib*. In what such a new conception actually consists? What is the novelty of the phenomenological approach to the body vis-à-vis more traditional perspectives? In a few, yet blunt words (and without falling pray to hasty and unjustified generalizations), it can be maintained that phenomenology tends to *free*, to so speak, the body from its *embeddedness* within such and such a metaphysical system or construction: phenomenology give the body “back” to itself—if we can so express ourselves. The body is no longer seen and analyzed as a element or component of an overall metaphysical view on the nature of being, for example, but discussed and described as it is in itself; nevertheless, this does not rule out the possibility, nor the necessity for phenomenology to appropriate and re-think in a new way “motives” that are central to the tradition of philosophy (and to more metaphysical approaches to the body)

In order to show all of the above, excerpts and passages will be read from A. Schopenhauer and H. Bergson so as to understand in what sense the “body” can be construed within the framework or, better: against the backdrop of a metaphysical speculation (the former’s metaphysics of the will and the latter’s dynamic conception of reality). Then, we will move on to Husserl’s reflection on the so-called “lived-body” (in opposition to what is usually referred to as material body) and some further phenomenological developments: as we will see, the body is no longer that through which a specific metaphysical view announces itself (e.g., Schopenhauer’s “will” understood as the true nature of the world), but the very element upon whose centrality reality (or being as such) can be re-thought.

**2. Structure**

The module will be divided into “two” parts: while the first part will be dedicated to a systematic presentation and discussion of the role of the body in A. Schopenhauer’s masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation* and H. Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* and the short essay *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the second part will be dedicated to the phenomenological approach to the question of the body. In particular, chapters and excerpts will be read from Husserl’s texts and manuscripts and post-Husserlian phenomenologists, such as M. Merleau-Ponty and M. Henry.

**3. Requirements**

Students will be evaluated based upon the following two distinct parameters:

(1) Participation (which includes, yet is not limited to: doing the assignments, attendance, in-class active participation). If you areabsent, please ask some of your classmates for any assignments or key discussion materials missed.

(2) A Final Paper, whose deadline will be June 10 (prompt and additional information will be provided in due course) (alternative options are: an in-class presentation or a final oral exam (to be discussed with your teacher))

**4. Course Outline**

**Part 1**

**(Week 1-Week4)**

Main Readings From:

*The World as Will and Representation* (Book 1 and Book 2) (Schopenhauer)

*Introduction to Metaphysics* (Bergson)

**Part 2**

**(Week 5-Week 8**)

Main Readings From:

*Matter and Memory* (Bergson)

*Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl)

*Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl)

**Part 3**

**(Week 9-Week 12)**

Main Readings From:

*Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty)

*Incarnation* (M. Henry)

**Recapitulation**

**(Week 13)**

**5. Essential Bibliography**

A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Digitale Bibliothek Band 2)

H. Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Alcan or PUF)

—, *[Introduction à la métaphysique](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique)*[, in Id.,](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique) *[La pensée et le mouvant](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique)* [(Alcan or PUF)](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique)

[E. Husserl,](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique) *[Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Band 2](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique)*[, Hua V (M. Nijhoff)](https://www.puf.com/content/Introduction_%C3%A0_la_m%C3%A9taphysique)

—, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, Hua I (M. Nijhoff)

M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Gallimard)

M. Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (Seuil)

*English Translations:*

A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (Dover)

H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (Zone Books)

—, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Putnam’s Sons)

E. Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy. Volume II* (M. Nijhoff)

M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge)

M. Henry, *Incarnation* (Northwestern University Press)