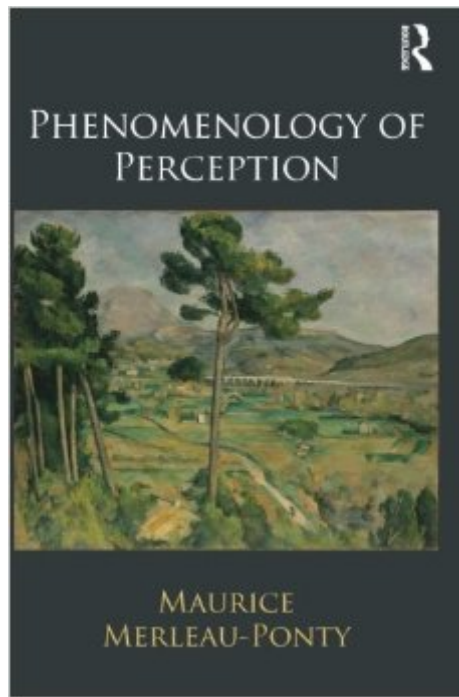


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Phenomenology Of Perception



Synopsis

First published in 1945, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's monumental *Phénoménologie de la perception* signalled the arrival of a major new philosophical and intellectual voice in post-war Europe. Breaking with the prevailing picture of existentialism and phenomenology at the time, it has become one of the landmark works of twentieth-century thought. This new translation, the first for over fifty years, makes this classic work of philosophy available to a new generation of readers. *Phenomenology of Perception* stands in the great phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. Yet Merleau-Ponty's contribution is decisive, as he brings this tradition and other philosophical predecessors, particularly Descartes and Kant, to confront a neglected dimension of our experience: the lived body and the phenomenal world. Charting a bold course between the reductionism of science on the one hand and "intellectualism" on the other, Merleau-Ponty argues that we should regard the body not as a mere biological or physical unit, but as the body which structures one's situation and experience within the world. Merleau-Ponty enriches his classic work with engaging studies of famous cases in the history of psychology and neurology as well as phenomena that continue to draw our attention, such as phantom limb syndrome, synaesthesia, and hallucination. This new translation includes many helpful features such as the reintroduction of Merleau-Ponty's discursive Table of Contents as subtitles into the body of the text, a comprehensive Translator's Introduction to its main themes, essential notes explaining key terms of translation, an extensive Index, and an important updating of Merleau-Ponty's references to now available English translations. Also included is a new foreword by Taylor Carman and an introduction to Merleau-Ponty by Claude Lefort. Translated by Donald A. Landes.

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Customer Reviews

As shown in his first book, *The Structure of Behavior*, and this extension of that piece, Merleau-Ponty was a philosopher who was way ahead of his time. While Husserl was off sputtering abstractly about phenomenology and 'essences', Merleau-Ponty planted himself squarely into the concrete, thick, world of lived experience: this book is a detailed phenomenological description of of attention, memory, space-perception, free will, and other psychological/phenomenological categories. M-P claims that simply by paying attention to this lifeworld, we see that previous philosophical systems have overlooked ineliminable dimensions of what it is like to be a person, and that this oversight has led to radically incomplete philosophical accounts of things like memory, perception, etc.. The book is so rich, original, and nuanced that it is hard to do it justice in a short review here. Not saddling himself with narrow academic techniques or fields, he draws on any resources he can to come to make sense of human experience. He cites not only philosophers such as Heidegger and Sartre, but draws equally heavily upon the Gestalt psychologists and neuroscientists of his day. He discusses phantom limbs, experiments on spatial perception, and psychophysical results from the Gestalt psychologists. Many ideas that are popular in modern analytic philosophy and psychology can be found in this book: the view that 'sense data' are simply theoretical constructs, the view that attention focuses on objects not abstract spatial locations, and the claim that our original concepts cannot be understood independently of the embodied interactions with the world where we first come to use them.

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