



Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy (Studies in Continental Thought)

By Lawrence Hass

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The work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty touches on some of the most essential and vital concerns of the world today, yet his ideas are difficult and not widely understood. Lawrence Hass redresses this problem by offering an exceptionally clear, carefully argued, critical appreciation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Hass provides insight into the philosophical methods and major concepts that characterize Merleau-Ponty's thought. Questions concerning the nature of phenomenology, perceptual experience, embodiment, intersubjectivity, expression, and philosophy of language are fully and systematically discussed with reference to main currents and discussions in contemporary philosophy. The result is a refreshingly jargon-free invitation into Merleau-Ponty's important and transformational way of understanding human experience.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Hass has a profound understanding of Merleau-Ponty's thought." ?Leonard Lawlor, University of Memphis

"[T]his is one of the few [Merleau-Ponty books] that is genuinely important." ?Symposium

"[T]his ambitious text is well worth reading... Toadvine offers a bold, yet carefully constructed reading of the early ontology oriented by Merleau-Ponty's later self-evaluations of it." ?Environmental Ethics

"... a valuable contribution to scholarship bridging analytic and Continental concerns.... clear and largely jargon-free.... Recommended." ?Choice, January 2009

"This book will quickly become the staple Merleau-Ponty reference for both graduate and undergraduate students." ?Dorothea Olkowski, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

One would think that scholarship on Merleau-Ponty nearly a half-century after his death would consist largely of mopping up disputed details. But longtime Merleau-Ponty scholar Hass (Muhlenberg College) contends that central points of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, particularly his understanding of cognition, remain largely misunderstood. Hass's aim is twofold: (1) to interpret and defend major strands in Merleau-Ponty's overall thought, including his phenomenological method, work on perception, embodiment, intersubjectivity, and ontology in a way accessible to relative beginners; and (2) to excavate his theory of expression. For Merleau-Ponty, conceptualization and language are not representational products of the mind's access to an ideal or transcendental realm, but rather evidences of the multifaceted expressive possibilities of bodily life. After extensive stage-setting, Hass delves into philosophy of mathematics to make the case that Merleau-Ponty's model of cognition is a compelling alternative to current theories. Along the way, he considers many of Merleau-Ponty's most influential critics, including Foucault and Derrida, to arrive at a nuanced assessment of Merleau-Ponty's weaknesses as well as his strengths. The result is a valuable contribution to scholarship bridging analytic and Continental concerns. While clear and largely jargon-free, it remains bracing going. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers. --Choice A. B. Curry, St. Joseph College, January 2009

From the Publisher

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About the Author

Lawrence Hass is Professor of Philosophy at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He is editor (with Dorothea Olkowski) of *Re-Reading Merleau-Ponty: Essays Beyond the Continental-Analytic Divide*.

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