



In Defense of Phenomenology: Merleau-Pontys Philosophy

Douglas Low

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French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued for the primary role perception plays in understanding the world as well as engaging with it. As a contributor to phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty faced his fair share of criticisms. In this new book, Douglas Low comes to the defense of both Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology.

In Defense of Phenomenology uses Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to counter the criticisms raised in Vincent Descombes's Modern French Philosophy point by point, arguing that it often misunderstood or misrepresented Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Low clarifies Merleau-Ponty's claims, then makes the case for them. He also argues against Renaud Barbaras's well-known positions that there is a break in the development of Merleau-Ponty's thought, that Merleau-Ponty abandoned his earlier phenomenology, and that Merleau-Ponty equated being with phenomena. Low also clarifies Merleau-Ponty's complex relationship to Hegel and Marx. Finally, Low addresses the later works of Jean Baudrillard and their move away from phenomenology toward a more postmodernist philosophy, in which language and mass media images dominate culture and even construct our worldview.

In Defense of Phenomenology asserts that Merleau-Ponty more sensibly argued that even though humanity's interpretation of the world is influenced by language and the media, these linguistic and media messages are first suggested by a person's needful, embodied encounters with the world and with others. These messages would make little sense if they did not relate back to this more primordial encounter.

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