



Signs (Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy)

By Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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"Speech is a way of tearing out a meaning from an undivided whole."

Thus does Maurice Merleau-Ponty describe speech in this collection of his important writings on the philosophy of expression, composed during the last decade of his life. For him, expression is a category of human behavior and existence much broader than language alone. He maintains that man is essentially expressive, even prior to speaking: in his silence, gestures, and lived behavior.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (French pronunciation: [mœʁis mɛʁlɔpɔ̃ti]) (14 March 1908 – 3 May 1961) was a French phenomenological philosopher, strongly influenced by Karl Marx, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in addition to being closely associated with Jean-Paul Sartre (who later stated he had been "converted" to Marxism by Merleau-Ponty) and Simone de Beauvoir. At the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a sustained argument for the foundational role that perception plays in understanding the world as well as engaging with the world. Like the other major phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty expressed his philosophical insights in writings on art, literature, linguistics, and politics. He was the only major phenomenologist of the first half of the twentieth century to engage extensively with the sciences and especially with descriptive psychology.

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