

He also provides a lucid analysis of Levinas's view of God, questioning whether it is a "purely phenomenological description as he likes to claim" (69), and suggests that the "very hyperbolic excess of Levinas's ethics is, arguably, the very token of its impossibility" (69). In other words, Kearney argues that Levinas's ethics demands an "*impossible way of being*" (69).

In outlining his alternative interpretation of God, Kearney responds in the negative to one old and unresolved problem: whether God is (or must be, or should be) all-powerful. Not to give away too much, lest I spoil one of many delightful surprises for the reader, suffice it to say that this is also a democratizing God. Rejecting the "*esse*" God, Kearney charts a middle path between the eschatological and the onto-theological in his hermeneutical retrieval of an "onto-eschatological" understanding of God as "*Deus Adventurus*" (81), which, he suggests, is more suitable to a new millennium. In co-creating with God, humanity discovers a hermeneutical God, one who "persuades rather than coerces, invites rather than imposes, asks rather than impels" (30). Kearney's alternative interpretation of God is well supported by his interpretations of a wealth of textual sources and by those drawn from a venerable countertradition of interpretation of the four biblical passages.

It is somewhat disconcerting to come face to face with the realization of the extent to which the traditional notion of God has become an idol. For this reason alone the book is worth reading. There are, however, many other reasons. A brief work, it nonetheless manages to provide much fertile ground for thought. Although the index is too restricted, there is material for further research on the topic in its copious notes and bibliography.

INGRID HARRIS

The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty

ERIC MATTHEWS

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001; 256 pages.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophical works are extremely rich. He is a provocative artist who works with a large pallet to reconfigure preconceptions and use new shades of meaning to express an original philosophical vision. He draws productively upon not only philosophers (eg., Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger) but a variety of psychologists as well, many of whom, regrettably, are infrequently studied today—a consequence of which is that Merleau-Ponty has received less acclaim than he deserves. Furthermore, even those steeped in the phenomenological tradition find it difficult to teach the works of Merleau-Ponty to their students since he presupposes so much. Assigning Merleau-Ponty's works to beginners is a bit like taking a child to a daring contemporary art exhibit; they need a word or two to help with orientation. It is not that they do not see

anything, it is just that they cannot appreciate what one wants them to appreciate. This is unfortunate since the general sensitivity of Merleau-Ponty's texts is energetic, timely, and attractive. Like any great artist, his works continue to evoke new meanings as trends change.

Certainly Merleau-Ponty's works continue to inspire the research of a variety of professionals (mostly philosophers, a few psychologists, some other social scientists, and even some architects and computer scientists). One can see this expressed in monographs and professional journals of all sorts. It is refreshing that Matthews has taken the time and effort to address the aforementioned problems. His goal is to explain carefully some of the central ideas from Merleau-Ponty's works in a way that is accessible for English-reading students who are beginners to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology, and even to philosophy in general.

Matthews organizes his work topically in a way that roughly corresponds to a chronological overview of Merleau-Ponty's career. He begins with a chapter aiming to situate Merleau-Ponty within his philosophical and historical context. Next follow chapters on phenomenology, being-in-the-world, embodiment and human action, self and others, politics in theory and practice, the arts, and Merleau-Ponty's later thought. Matthews also includes a brief bibliography of primary and secondary sources available in English. Each chapter is brief (about twenty pages), and gives philosophical novices clues on how to appreciate this sophisticated *oeuvre*.

Matthews begins by informing the reader that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is relevant for thinking today. Matthews describes the continuous development of Merleau-Ponty's thought and effectively describes how this work recaptures and modifies themes from his earlier works, rather than positing radical ruptures in his career as some have mistakenly done. Matthews states that the general thesis of his interpretation is to understand Merleau-Ponty as a new sort of humanist. He argues that while Merleau-Ponty moves away from transcendental phenomenology and traditional humanism, with its enlightenment-era metaphysics of subjectivity, he does not abandon subjectivity altogether. Merleau-Ponty, Matthews argues, appropriates structuralism to creatively transform humanism rather than eschewing the latter altogether.

Chapter 2 provides a rudimentary account of phenomenology that should help students understand important texts like the preface to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Matthews correctly notes, albeit briefly, the confluence of Hegel's and Husserl's senses of phenomenology in Merleau-Ponty's transformation of phenomenology (contra Spiegelberg). Matthews argues that Husserl's work was Merleau-Ponty's primary inspiration. He briefly discusses transcendental phenomenology, how Merleau-Ponty begins with Husserl's later thought, and finally how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology differs from Heidegger's and Sartre's. This is all accomplished in just over twenty pages, so it would be a mistake to expect much depth here. But given the purpose of the book, this is a reasonable sacrifice.

There are a few minor errors here. For example, it is impossible to claim both that Merleau-Ponty heard Husserl's Paris lectures in 1929 and that Merleau-Ponty's first exposure to phenomenology was in Aron Gurwitsch's courses at the *École normale*. (Gurwitsch did not arrive in Paris until 1933.) Nonetheless, this chapter will serve to assist students in reading original phenomenological texts.

The three central chapters (3, 4, and 5) contextualize Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in different ways. Chapter 3 elaborates upon Merleau-Ponty's complicated relations with Heidegger's and Sartre's thought. Matthews focuses upon the embodiment of the body-subject as the principal divergence from Heidegger, and dwells almost exclusively upon Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* to accomplish his reading. Merleau-Ponty's ontology is unlike the early Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Instead, it is an implicit and indirect ontology with which Merleau-Ponty himself became increasingly aware throughout his career. He also situates Merleau-Ponty in the context of the historical debate between rationalism and empiricism, and the parallel psychological debate between mentalism and mechanism. In fact much of this chapter is an interesting exposition of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project in the context of contemporary philosophical trends. Matthews erects some nice bridges between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project and analytic thought as well as empiricism.

The fourth chapter begins by retrieving the project of Merleau-Ponty's first book, *The Structure of Behavior*, in terms of the aforementioned dualism between which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology worked. Matthews does a fine job of showing the continuity of Merleau-Ponty's first two books. Matthews carefully explains how Merleau-Ponty's account begins in, but departs from, Gestalt psychology as well as how Merleau-Ponty develops an analysis of the relation of consciousness and world into a phenomenology of perception. This chapter is an asset for students interested in the early work of Merleau-Ponty.

Chapter 5 addresses a specific aspect of Matthews's thesis that Merleau-Ponty was fashioning a new humanism. He adroitly explains how Merleau-Ponty continues phenomenology's struggle to escape the lonely world of Cartesian thought. Matthews even manages to include a brief excursus on temporality and lived experience. But the high point of this chapter is that Matthews features one of Merleau-Ponty's most important contributions to phenomenology—namely, the emphasis on the social world. All talk of the self and its relation with others is rooted in the social and the political. Another way of saying this (going slightly beyond Matthews's account) is that the subjectivity of Merleau-Ponty's new humanism displaces an abstract epistemological and metaphysical construct via its attention to social and political institution. Much more needs to be said about Merleau-Ponty's contribution to social and political philosophy, but this chapter effectively describes the manner in which this important aspect of his thought is entangled with his phenomenology of perception. Although Matthews emphasizes this point in his introduction more than here, his account here

demonstrates the way that different aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thought are intercalated without misrepresenting him as a system-builder.

Given this, it is odd that Matthews falters a bit when he explicitly addresses the political writings of Merleau-Ponty. He does not do justice to the interesting story of the collaboration, friendship, and eventual enmity between Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and de Beauvoir. Details of the estrangement are particularly misleading and occasionally incorrect. Also disappointing is the conspicuous absence of any discussion of the important influence upon Merleau-Ponty by his friend and mentor Jean Wahl. In fact, Wahl is mentioned only once in the book, and then only in passing. Finally, Matthews exaggerates the shifts in Merleau-Ponty's political thought and fails to link its later development to the turn toward ontology via a sort of phenomenology of history—a trend that was always present in Merleau-Ponty's thought. This is an important feature of the organic nature of Merleau-Ponty's later work. Nonetheless, this chapter does contain clear accounts of much of Merleau-Ponty's two major works on political philosophy, *Humanism and Terror* and *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Students will no doubt benefit from this chapter as well, though they will need to be alerted to its occasional shortcomings.

Merleau-Ponty's contribution to aesthetics emerged in counterpoint with his analysis of perception throughout his career. Matthews does a good job of drawing upon a variety of Merleau-Ponty's works dealing with different artistic media, including painting, film, photography, and literature, though of course Merleau-Ponty's favorite aesthetic medium to discuss was painting. Matthews does not provide much critical evaluation of Merleau-Ponty's work here, unfortunately. He only hints at the profound intimations of Merleau-Ponty's later ontology in *Eye and Mind*. One might think that is because he saves such reflections for the last chapter, which immediately follows this discussion. Alas, such is not the case.

In the final chapter of the book, Matthews addresses the unfinished manuscripts of *The Prose of the World* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, both of which were published posthumously. Although it is true that both were late works in the sense that their author was by then the *late* Merleau-Ponty, it is misleading to group them together this way. As Matthews himself somewhat begrudgingly admits ("if Claude Lefort is to be believed" [159]), *The Prose of the World* was abandoned long before the other text in question. So it should come as no surprise that *The Prose of the World* presents "a different view from that expressed in *Eye and Mind*" (158). Obviously, the proper contemporary of *The Visible and the Invisible* is *Eye and Mind*. But this grouping is more important for their complementary content than their temporal coincidence. *Eye and Mind* gives us our only glimpse at a completed aspect of his later work. Although I do not think it makes sense to posit radical ruptures in Merleau-Ponty's thought, he clearly was concerned with something quite new at the end of his life—developments he had not foreseen at the time he was working on *The Prose of the World*.

Although there is a nice summary in this chapter of parts of *The Prose of the World*, far more of the chapter is devoted to that work than to *The Visible and the Invisible*, although the latter work unquestionably is more consequential for contemporary philosophy. Indeed, Matthews might have achieved his goal more effectively (the goal of showing the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's thought today) by making more of the connections between contemporary French thinkers whose ideas emerge from Merleau-Ponty's innovative work.

All in all, this work does much of what it sets out to do. It will be very useful to help students appreciate the important but difficult works of Merleau-Ponty.

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Hegel: A Biography

TERRY PINKARD

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; 780 pages.

Philosophers, with rare exceptions, lead uninteresting lives. The bare bones of Hegel's sixty-one years are a case in point: birth in Stuttgart; education at Tübingen; a short-lived position as lecturer at Jena (and romantic dalliance); nine years of nonacademic work as newspaper editor and highschool principal; marriage and children; eventual achievement of longed-for university posts, first in Heidelberg and then in Berlin; sudden death of suspected cholera—nothing very dramatic, and all fitting a pattern typical of the modern academic life.

Hegel the intellectual figure, on the other hand, offers a wealth of material for the scholar: his oeuvre is large and wide-ranging; his *Phenomenology of Spirit* is one of the most abstruse works in the philosophical canon; his influence is as enormous as it is controversial. It is no surprise that most literature neglects Hegel-the-man in favor of Hegel-the-figure; this has long been the philosophical norm. What is surprising is the emergence of a new genre, the "intellectual biography," which attempts to combine the two. Terry Pinkard's contribution to this body of literature meets this challenge with limited success.

The book has obvious strengths, of which Pinkard's authority is the most important. Having published an excellent work on Hegel's *Phenomenology* in 1996, and with an account of German philosophy of the same general period (1760–1860) published this year (both by Cambridge University Press), he knows his material well. Further, Pinkard possesses that all too rare gift of being able to examine difficult philosophical ideas in accessible language and to provide novel and thought-provoking interpretations of unresolved textual problems while doing so.

Pinkard acknowledges from the outset the difficulty this type of volume presents and attempts to resolve it by breaking the book into sections that will appeal to different readers. Chapters 4, 5, 8, 11, and 14 are what Pinkard calls