



The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding

Mark Johnson

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In *The Meaning of the Body*, Mark Johnson continues his pioneering work on the exciting connections between cognitive science, language, and meaning first begun in the classic *Metaphors We Live By*. Johnson uses recent research into infant psychology to show how the body generates meaning even before self-consciousness has fully developed. From there he turns to cognitive neuroscience to further explore the bodily origins of meaning, thought, and language and examines the many dimensions of meaning—including images, qualities, emotions, and metaphors—that are all rooted in the body’s physical encounters with the world. Drawing on the psychology of art and pragmatist philosophy, Johnson argues that all of these aspects of meaning-making are fundamentally aesthetic. He concludes that the arts are the culmination of human attempts to find meaning and that studying the aesthetic dimensions of our experience is crucial to unlocking meaning’s bodily sources.

Throughout, Johnson puts forth a bold new conception of the mind rooted in the understanding that philosophy will matter to nonphilosophers only if it is built on a visceral connection to the world.

“Mark Johnson demonstrates that the aesthetic and emotional aspects of meaning are fundamental—central to conceptual meaning and reason, and that the arts show meaning-making in its fullest realization. If you were raised with the idea that art and emotion were external to ideas and reason, you must read this book. It grounds philosophy in our most visceral experience.”—George Lakoff, author of *Moral Politics*

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