A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning

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Hailed as a "masterpiece" (*Nature*) and as "the most important book in the sciences of language to have appeared in many years" (Steven Pinker), Ray Jackendoff's *Foundations of Language* was widely acclaimed as a landmark work of scholarship that radically overturned our understanding of how language, the brain, and perception intermesh.

A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning is Jackendoff's most important book since his groundbreaking *Foundations of Language*. Written with an informality that belies the originality of its insights, it presents a radical new account of the relation between language, meaning, rationality, perception, consciousness, and thought, and, extraordinarily, does this in terms a non-specialist will grasp with ease. Jackendoff starts out by looking at languages and what the meanings of words and sentences actually do. Finding meanings to be more adaptive and complicated than they're commonly given credit for, he is led to some basic questions: how do we perceive and act in the world? How do we talk about it? And how can the collection of neurons in the brain give rise to conscious experience? He shows that the organization of language, thought, and perception does not look much like the way we experience things, and that only a small part of what the brain does is conscious. He concludes that thought and meaning must be almost completely unconscious. What we experience as rational conscious thought--which we prize as setting us apart from the animals--in fact rides on a foundation of unconscious intuition. Rationality amounts to intuition enhanced by language.

Ray Jackendoff's profound and arresting account will appeal to everyone interested in the workings of the mind, in how language links to the world, and in what understanding these means for the way we experience our lives.

Acclaim for Foundations of Language:

"A book that deserves to be read and reread by anyone seriously interested in the state of the art of research on language."
--*American Scientist*

"A dazzling combination of theory-building and factual integration. The result is a compelling new view of language and its place in the natural world."
--Steven Pinker, author of *The Language of Instinct* and *Words and Rules*

"A masterpiece. . . . The book deserves to be the reference point for all future theorizing about the language faculty and its interconnections."
--Frederick J. Newmeyer, past president of the Linguistic Society of America

"This book has the potential to reorient linguistics more decisively than any book since *Syntactic Structures* shook the discipline almost half a century ago."
--Robbins Burling, *Language in Society*

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Warren Ford:

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