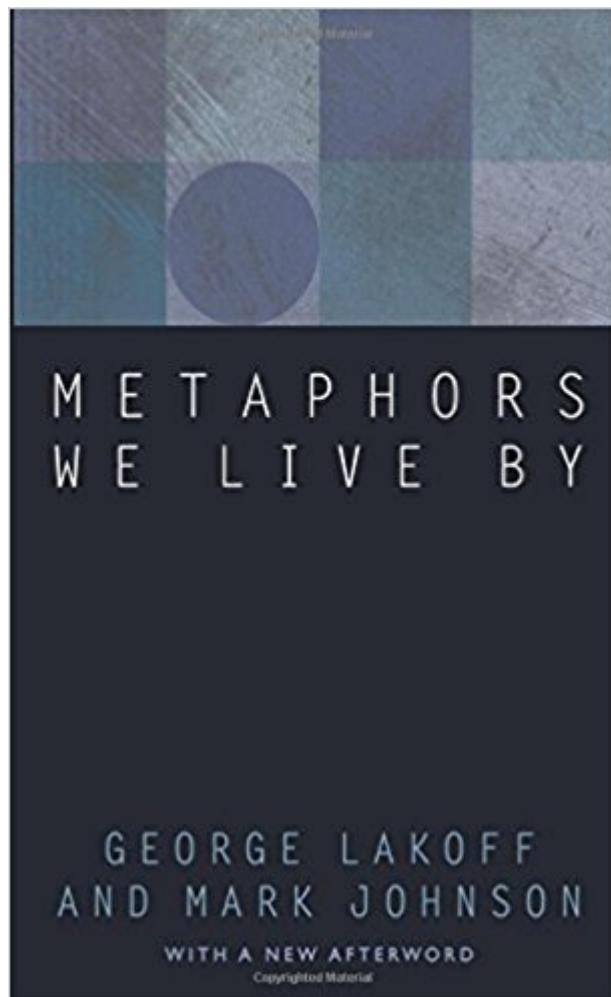


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# Metaphors We Live By



## Synopsis

The now-classic *Metaphors We Live By* changed our understanding of metaphor and its role in language and the mind. Metaphor, the authors explain, is a fundamental mechanism of mind, one that allows us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide understanding of countless other subjects. Because such metaphors structure our most basic understandings of our experience, they are "metaphors we live by"—metaphors that can shape our perceptions and actions without our ever noticing them. In this updated edition of Lakoff and Johnson's influential book, the authors supply an afterword surveying how their theory of metaphor has developed within the cognitive sciences to become central to the contemporary understanding of how we think and how we express our thoughts in language.

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## Customer Reviews

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of how we think and how we express our thoughts in language.

George Lakoff is a professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of, among other books, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* and *Moral Politics*, both published by the University of Chicago Press. Mark Johnson is the Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Oregon. He is the author of *The Body in the Mind* and *Moral Imagination*, both published by the University of Chicago Press. Johnson and Lakoff have also coauthored *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*.

Holy cow everything we didn't know we needed to know about metaphors and their affect on people, highly recommend for anyone in speech writing, public speaking etc George Lakoff is a well of knowledge, and an advisor to political campaigning in the past. This is a good introduction to how we use metaphors and what they emphasize and simultaneously hide. Lakoff and Johnson also give you a deeper look into the philosophy behind language and it's affect on our relationship to the world.

I purchased this book without knowing much about it. My expectation was that it would relate in some detail how we use metaphorical language in a subconscious manner to describe the experiences of our lives. And my expectation turned out to be woefully insufficient to cover the reality of what the book delivered. To wit, my expectation was met and exceeded. Lakoff and Johnson do not only discuss how we use metaphorical language absentmindedly in our day-to-day living, but also delve into how we utilize metaphor to structure, conceptualize, and share our understanding of reality. It might not be obvious what exactly is the difference. In effect, the authors argue that metaphor is not just a matter of language, but a process of internally organizing our understanding of the external world. The first half of the book makes the positive case that our perceptions of reality are built upon metaphor. The second half of the book makes the case that other philosophical views fail to adequately account for such conceptual structuring. In the end, the authors argue that an "experientialist" view of truth and meaning not only account for our metaphorical comprehension of reality, but also retain and unite the most compelling aspects of other schools of thought that fail to do so. I think the first half of the book is a roaring success. The authors provide many and thorough examples of how our understanding of reality is structured metaphorically and how these metaphorical concepts are organized into coherent systems. They

provide an explanation of why some mixed metaphors work and why others appear absurd. The idea that some arguments are covered in gargoyles, for example, shall stick with me for some time. I think the second half of the book is a bit less successful. Bear in mind, I am not well-versed in the philosophy of language nor am I well-acquainted with the objectivist and subjectivist views described by the authors. However, their argument seems to falter along one glaring fault (because an argument is a building, you see). The authors appear to assert in an absolute and unconditional manner that there are no absolute and unconditional truths. I want to be charitable here and assume that the authors were merely being careless, and that they meant something different than what they appear to be saying. However, the theme is repeated several times throughout the rest of the book, so it's difficult to tell. The difficulty ought to be obvious. At some level, there must be some kind of objective truth if we are to make anything resembling an objective truth claim -- even those fundamental claims about truth itself. I suspect that the authors are more inclined to affirm that truth cannot be communicated between individuals in an objective manner -- hence, the significant focus on language -- but their claims are stronger than that. If they intend only to claim, say, that we cannot exhaustively describe in an absolute and unconditional manner all (or even most) objective truths concerning reality, I'd be much more persuaded to hop on board. Instead, the authors seem to blunder at this crucial step. It's possible they clarify such a stance in the afterword (which I did not read), in which case this criticism may widely miss its mark. Otherwise, it appears quite fatal. There's another criticism I could leverage - namely, that the authors appear to view human interest in truth as based in its survival value (if that were true, we wouldn't have books like *Metaphors We Live By*) - but I'm not convinced the book was aimed at defending such a position. On a positive note, I thought the authors' attempt to wed objective and subjective accounts of truth into a unified view were admirable and reached closer to the mark than a strict objectivist or subjectivist account of reality. As such, on the whole, I liked the book. It was pretty good. But I also think the ultimate argument is the kind of thing that either says too little to justify such length and breadth of discussion or says too much to be taken seriously. For those interested, it should at the least be read for its delightful and rigorous first half.

Great book on semiotics, it's not intended to be a 'definitive' tome but the theories about language, thought and metaphor are really interesting. Warning: It is dense and I found myself re-reading paragraphs in order to fully extract the ideas but it was worth it. I knocked a star off because the author spends a lot of time arguing his point that metaphors are the best theory/way to discuss semiotics/language and spends a great amount of time explaining every other theory framed such

that you clearly have to believe him that they're wrong, its very defensive.

Good understanding of metaphors and how we use them. People who read a lot about language will like this book. Others may find it difficult to read and understand.

Difficult book to get through from cover to cover. They make some interesting points that make you think differently about our ways of speaking and doing things here and there, but on the whole I wouldn't recommend this to anyone. Very boring and many of their core ideas I disagree completely with.

The discovery that, far from being "flowery" expressions of more fundamental concepts, metaphors are, in themselves, fundamental concepts is clearly shown in this book. It's profound and for those who love language, a lot of fun, too.

A bit dry at times and very short and terse at times. A good reference book especially for how culture is shaped by rhetoric and metaphor

The ancient Greeks proclaimed: Know Thyself. Surely introspection is the supremely Human gift. Behold the brain, beholding itself! We hardly ever inspect the metaphors that we use, which filter the world and apply their subtle influences upon how we see it. Thankfully, Lakoff peels back yet another layer of the onion.

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