

## Human Moral Thinking

**Mark Johnson**

**Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and  
Sciences**

**Department of Philosophy  
University of Oregon**

**March 30, 2006**

**3:30 - 5:00 p.m.**

**Wesley New Media Center  
Skiles, Room 2**

**with reception to follow**



The Ivan Allen College Science and Technology Series is pleased to present Professor Mark Johnson to discuss "Human Moral Thinking." The colloquium will take place Thursday, March 30 at 3:30 p.m. in the Wesley New Media Center, Skiles, Room 2 with a reception to follow.

### **ABSTRACT**

We have inherited a moral tradition in which morality is regarded as a system of universal moral principles that are to be rationally applied to concrete situations. Research in the cognitive sciences has shown that many of the founding assumptions of this traditional model--assumptions about the nature of mind, self, will, reason, concepts, and principles--are seriously mistaken. A psychologically and scientifically realistic view of human moral thinking will therefore require a new understanding of mind, thought, and values. I will suggest that John Dewey opened the way for this new orientation, which places imagination at the heart of moral understanding and reasoning. From this perspective, we must learn how to cultivate moral imagination and to live without moral certainty.

---

*Mark Johnson (PhD in Philosophy, University of Chicago, 1977) is Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Oregon. His current research explores the grounding of meaning, concepts and reason in bodily experience. This work has led to his study of the role of imagination in human reasoning - in science, art, moral deliberation, and day-to-day problem solving. In addition to numerous articles and book chapters, Dr. Johnson has published Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics (University of Chicago Press, 1993), and The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason (U. of Chicago Press, 1987). Dr. Johnson also co-authored (with George Lakoff) Metaphors We Live By (University of Chicago, 1980) and Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought (Basic Books, 1999), both of which have been translated into numerous languages. Johnson has won several awards for his scholarship and innovative teaching.*

### **Additional Support:**

**With thanks to the School of Public  
Policy for additional support.**