



Meaning (Central Problems of Philosophy)

David E. Cooper

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Meaning is one of our most central and most ubiquitous concepts. Anything at all may, in suitable contexts, have meaning ascribed to it. In this wide-ranging book, David Cooper departs from the usual focus on linguistic meaning to discuss how works of art, ceremony, social action, bodily gesture, and the purpose of life can all be meaningful. He argues that the notion of meaning is best approached by considering what we accept as explanations of meaning in everyday practice and shows that in these situations we are explaining the appropriate fit of an item - whether a word or an artwork - with something larger than or outside of itself. This fuller account of meaning explores questions of the meaning of meaning and tackles issues such as whether meaning is just a misleading 'folk' term for something more basic, whether there really is meaning at all, and whether we should strive for meaning or let our lives 'just be' rather than mean. By taking the problem of meaning out of the technical philosophy of language and providing a more general account, Cooper is able to offer new insights into the import, function, and status of meaning that will be of interest not only to philosophers of language but to students and philosophers working in areas such as epistemology and metaphysics.

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