

Chomsky

Ideas and Ideals

Noam Chomsky is one of the leading intellectual figures of modern times. He has had a major influence on linguistics, psychology, and philosophy, and a significant effect on a range of other disciplines from anthropology to mathematics, education to literary criticism.

In this rigorous yet accessible account of Chomsky's work and influence, Neil Smith analyzes Chomsky's key contributions to the study of language and the study of mind. He gives a detailed and partly historical exposition of Chomsky's linguistic theorizing, and examines the ideas (from deep and surface structure to the economy considerations of the Minimalist Program) for which he is best known. Smith discusses the psychological and philosophical implications of Chomsky's work, and argues that he has fundamentally changed the way we think of ourselves, gaining a position in the history of ideas on a par with that of Darwin or Descartes. Finally, he examines Chomsky's political ideas and how these fit intellectually with his scholarly work. Smith argues that, despite Chomsky's own disavowal of any very close connection, there are fundamental ideas of rationality, creativity, and modularity that draw together the disparate strands of his vast output. Throughout, Smith explores the controversy surrounding Chomsky's work, and explains why he has been both adulated and vilified.

This much needed book will be welcomed by a wide range of readers: students and researchers in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, and politics, and anyone with an interest in the impact of Chomsky's work.

NEIL SMITH is Professor and Head of Linguistics at University College London. He is the author of *An Outline Grammar of Nupe* (1967); *The Acquisition of Phonology* (1973); *Modern Linguistics: the Results of Chomsky's Revolution* (with Deirdre Wilson, 1979); *The Twitter Machine: Reflections on Language* (1989); *The Mind of a Savant* (with Ianthi Tsimpli, 1995), and he has edited a volume on *Mutual Knowledge* (1982). In addition, Neil Smith has published around one hundred essays, articles and reviews in a wide variety of publications, including *Journal of Linguistics*, *Lingua*, *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, and *Glott International*.

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Dedication to my friends

Dear friends, I say friends here
In the larger sense of the word:
Wife, sister, associates, relatives,
Schoolmates, men and women,
Persons seen only once
Or frequented all my life:
Provided that between us, for at least a moment,
Was drawn a segment,
A well-defined chord.

. . . remember the time
Before the wax hardened.

“To my friends” by Primo Levi (Levi, 1990:5)

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