



## A Clearing in the Forest: Law, Life, and Mind

Steven L. Winter

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Cognitive science is transforming our understanding of the mind. New discoveries are changing how we comprehend not just language, but thought itself. Yet, surprisingly little of the new learning has penetrated discussions and analysis of the most important social institution affecting our lives—the law.

Drawing on work in philosophy, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and literary theory, Steven L. Winter has created nothing less than a tour de force of interdisciplinary analysis. *A Clearing in the Forest* rests on the simple notion that the better we understand the workings of the mind, the better we will understand all its products—especially law. Legal studies today focus on analytic skills and grand normative theories. But, to understand how real-world, legal actors reason and decide, we need a different set of tools. Cognitive science provides those tools, opening a window on the imaginative, yet orderly mental processes that animate thinking and decision making among lawyers, judges, and lay persons alike. Recent findings about how humans actually categorize and reason make it possible to explain legal reasoning in new, more cogent, more productive ways.

A Clearing in the Forest is a compelling meditation on both how the law works and what it all means. In uncovering the irrepressibly imaginative, creative quality of human reason, Winter shows how what we are learning about the mind changes not only our understanding of law, but ultimately of ourselves. He charts a unique course to understanding the world we inhabit, showing us the way to the clearing in the forest.



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