



Gesture and Speech (October Books)

André Leroi-Gourhan

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André Leroi-Gourhan (1911-1986) was an anthropologist and paleontologist whose theoretical endeavors extended well beyond those realms to encompass the culture of the twentieth century and its most advanced developments. His bold and coherent revision of both analytic and archaeological methods revolutionized the study of prehistoric culture. His adoption of the structuralist method for the analysis of prehistoric art enabled a radical rethinking and clearer understanding of its nature, with resulting implications for the understanding of the art of our own times, and for a broad range of contemporary issues. Leroi-Gourhan was, for example, concerned with questions of communication, particularly the ways in which new techniques of communication reshape our understanding of language and writing. His work in this field has proved catalytic for the thinking of other major theorists, among them Jacques Derrida. *Gesture and Speech* combines in one volume *Technics and Language* and *Memory and Rhythms*, which are the cornerstones of Leroi-Gourhan's comprehensive theory of human behavior and cultural development. In *Technics and Language*, Leroi-Gourhan looks at prehistoric technology in relation to the development of cognitive and linguistic faculties, expanding on the cultural ramifications of erect posture, a short face, a free hand during locomotion, and possession of movable implements. *Memory and Rhythms* approaches its subject from the standpoints of sociology and aesthetics. Here Leroi-Gourhan addresses the problems of instinct and intelligence. He defines the relationship between aesthetic behavior, on the one hand, and species attitudes and the personalization of ethnic groups, on the other, and undertakes a sweeping aesthetic analysis from visceral perception to figurative art, including a discussion of the "language of forms" that makes figurative art an abstract expression of language.

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