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INCARNATE MIND

Mark Johnson  
Southern Illinois University

About the Author: *Mark Johnson*, is a full professor and chair of the Philosophy Department, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He is the author of *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lanoff, L.M.J., Chicago, 1980; *The Body and The Mind*, University of Chicago Press, 1987; *Moral Imagination*, University of Chicago Press, 1993.

We are beings of the flesh. We experience our world and our selves primarily through our bodily spatial and temporal orientations, through our physical movements, through our perceptions, and through our culturally-embedded projects. In light of the tremendous importance of such bodily interactions for our ability to survive and flourish within our environment, it should come as no surprise that what can be meaningful to us, how we reason about it, and how we communicate our understanding of this experience are intimately tied up with our bodily being.

We are the inheritors of an Enlightenment tradition whose mind-body dualism and whose conception of the self, concepts,

reason, and knowledge have led us to overlook the non-dualistic, embodied dimensions of our experience. As one logical extension of this tradition, contemporary cognitive science has either ignored or undervalued the role of our bodily experience in our cognition, language, reasoning, and self-identity. For materialists and anti-materialists alike, human subjectivity comes to be defined with virtually no attention to the richness of our incarnate experience. Anti-materialists tend to downplay the role of the body, as secondary to the activity of mind. Materialists tend to discuss only the neural networks of the *brain*, leaving aside any mention of our *embodied experience*. In both cases, human beings come to be defined as *knowers* (and thus as *minds*), and what they know are propositions and their relations. A human subject becomes merely a generator and processor of propositions and propositional functions.

The results of this narrowing and dichotomizing of the self have been widespread and extremely harmful. Within the context of a rigid subject-object dichotomy, selfhood is understood either as mind (subjectivity), or as body (objective physical states). Objectivist and materialist versions tend almost universally to ignore the temporal, bodily, and cultural dimensions of our selfhood, while subjectivist versions forget that, because our intelligence is embodied, there exist some soft constraints on meaning, knowledge, and self-understanding.

As a way of beginning to counteract both dualistic and reductionistic tendencies alike, I want to explore concrete examples of some of the ways our concepts and our ability to reason about them are grounded in our bodily experience, though not in such a way as to give absolute foundations. Out of these examples there emerge suggestions for a far more experientially adequate view of meaning,

reason, and self — identity. Meaning and reason are both grounded in our bodily experience, and yet they are imaginative, and so open to ongoing extension and novel development. The self is not a thing, but rather an integrating process that characterizes and gives a degree of continuity to a sequence of temporally developing, related experiences. Thus the continuity of the self is the unity of a meaning-making activity that shows itself in our language, behavior, symbolic activities, and cultural activities.

There is a large and growing body of empirical evidence that supports such a non-reductionistic view. In particular, I want to focus on studies of image schemas and other imaginative structures of experience that are basic to the structure of our conceptual systems and to the way we reason. But linguistic and psychological studies are not the only supports for this view. I have recently been exploring how our Enlightenment legacy concerning concepts, reason, and the self has left us with impoverished views of morality. And I would like to suggest what an alternative view of moral reasoning would involve — one in which imagination is given a central role as the locus of our moral deliberations. On this view, morality is not rule — following, but rather the imaginative exploration of possibilities for enhancing the quality of experience, preserving and developing community, and discovering alternative ways of relating to each other and to our environment.

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