

LAKOFF, George; JOHNSON, Mark. *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*¹. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

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Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge To Western Thought , a book written by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in four parts with twenty-five chapters, currently with no translation into Portuguese, brings understandings relating to cognitive sciences and the Western philosophical tradition, questioning most of the beliefs that bind rationality to the human existence.

George Lakoff is a professor of linguistics at the University of California in Berkeley. Mark Johnson is a professor of philosophy at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, he also published the book *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*²(1987).

The authors point to three major findings of cognitive science: the mind is embodied, the thought is partly unconscious and abstract concepts are partly metaphorical. Analyzed in detail, these findings show the inconsistency of the central questions of Western philosophy pointing to the need for revision of part of Anglo-American and postmodernist analytic philosophy. For this, they discuss the view of philosophers at different times, the implications

1-Translation of the authors: *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind and challenge to Western thought*.

2-Translation of the authors: *The body in mind: the bodily basis of meaning, imagination and reason*.

of the findings of cognitive science in human life and the review of concepts about body, mind and their bonds.

For over two millennia, reason has been the defining characteristics of humans. It includes the capacity of logical inference and the ability to conduct: to inquire, solve problems, evaluate, criticize, decide how to act and reach an understanding of ourselves, others and the world. A change in the understanding of reason is therefore a shift in the understanding of ourselves.

The central theme discussed by Lakoff and Johnson is the understanding of reason according to the cognitive sciences from scholars of the second generation. The research explains the realism embodied in the cognitive unconscious³ and the role of conceptualization and questions, which are intentional and representational. These actions depend on the sensory organs, the ability to move and manipulate objects, the brain structure, culture and other interactions with the environment. This body transition occurs at a neural level, phenomenological level and also in the cognitive unconscious.

This theme is contemporary and has caused controversy among fans of traditional Western philosophy and the new understandings of the body. Defending their ideas, the authors resort to arguments of cognitive science and neuroscience. They say reason is in the body, reflected from the nature of the brains, bodies and sensory-motor experiences, being built by the peculiarities of the human body, the details of neural structure and the specific function in the everyday world.

Lakoff and Johnson explain that reason is evolutionary, building and using forms of motor and perceptual inferences present in other species, it is the place of continuity between us and animals. It is a skill universally shared by all human beings; it is conscious, having an unconscious part. They also claim that reason is not entirely literal, but largely metaphorical, imaginative and emotionally engaged, co-dependent on the context.

The prevailing idea in the work is linked to the organization and

3-Unconscious Cognition refers to actions that are performed without the conscious intervention of the subject, they are the actions we do without focusing attention on the event. Ex: breathing, walking, etc.

function of the brain that are based on integrating body/mind. These ideas change the philosophical concepts of reason, as oppose to the Cartesian, mechanistic and dualistic epistemology that has long pervaded the understandings of body and mind.

In the introduction, "How does the embodied mind challenge the Western philosophical tradition", the authors review the understanding of central philosophical questions of human existence by the changes in understanding the concept of reason. The understanding of the cognitive unconscious as a constituent part of consciousness is fundamental to the process of building the system mediated by conceptual understanding of the world. The authors believe that abstract reason is not separate from the sensory-motor system, but built together from the action on the world.

Lakoff and Johnson discuss the theories that underlie the construction of simple metaphors, noting that during the conflation⁴, young children do not distinguish between subjective experiences of sensory-motor experiences and associations are automatically built between the two areas, and this is the basis for learning the primary conceptual metaphors. They also say that even after this period the cross-domain associations persist.

In the first chapter, entitled "Basic philosophical ideas of cognitive science", the authors note experimentalism as a philosophy that emerges from the second generation of cognitive science, it is important for understanding basic ideas and concept of time, cause and effect relation, mind, "inner me" and moral in such perspective. These terms are metaphors established by the conceptual system in the cognitive unconscious. They are dependent on reality and emergents of human biology by the association of subjective experiences to the sensory-motor experiences.

In the second chapter, "The cognitive science of philosophy", there is a dismantling of the epistemological foundations of Western philosophy from the analysis of empirical methodologies of philosophy itself. They are considered examples of theories and analyzed general topics such as metaphysics, epistemology and moral theory discussed by philosophers, such as the Pre-Socratics, Plato,

4-Conflation: the pre-recognition of experiences, it depends on the understanding of primary metaphors and learning.

Aristotle, Descartes, Kant and the authors of Analytic Philosophy from arguments of cognitive science.

Lakoff and Johnson also review some of the findings of embodied cognitive science to philosophy, seeking a new understanding of basic concepts seen in the second part of the book. These new concepts resulting from the use of tools and methods of the embodied cognitive science to analyze philosophical concepts.

In the final part - "Embodied Philosophy"⁵ - the authors propose a dialogue between philosophy and cognitive science, space in which they co-evolve and mutually enrich. They argue about the importance of practicing an "empirically responsible philosophy", based on the experience in understanding what we are in this perspective of human existence. Thus, epistemological strategies are drawn for dealing with issues relating to the person, the evolution and spiritual experience.

The authors propose the concept of embodied reason, i.e. the conceptualization in/by the body which exists between humans and the environment, co-evolutionary and characterized by the use of perception, imagination and sensory-motor system in daily life. This level of understanding allows the maximization of contact with reality and to develop the imagery projection capacity, recognized as a vital cognitive faculty.

Embodied spirituality, designed by the authors, argues in this cognitive faculty, corresponding to most of what we call a spiritual experience. At this point, the speech emphasized is that part of the experience called "spiritual" is based on metaphors focused on body mechanics and requires an attitude and ecological ethics.

Finalizing, the authors discuss the embodied philosophy remembering that we are philosophical animals able to critically reflect on our own lives, able to ask and sometimes explain why things happen the way they do.

For Lakoff and Johnson, cognitive science philosophy can help realize its importance and usefulness for knowledge and understanding of concepts related to human existence and embodied from a vision focused on our physical existence: flesh, blood, nerve

5-Embodied philosophy: the understanding that body and mind are one-time events and the reason is not outside the body, the reason is the body itself is a network woven between emotion and reason.

cells and synapses and all the things we see in daily life and that make us who we are.

They also claim that the mind is not purely body, but also passionate, desiring and social; it is dependent on culture, it has a history as well as an unconscious aspect on which we have no domain, but what is indirectly known. They observe that our conceptual system is limited, being, however, an expanding system that has the ability to form new understandings. They also note that all experiences are embodied and are part of the life of human beings anywhere in the world, corresponding to the primary metaphors. Thus, human beings are constructed in transit between nature and culture.

The ideas presented in the work make compelling reading for professionals working with the body, promoting new understandings of human existence, the role of the sensory-motor and conceptual system, reason and emotion in networks woven into a single body. These understandings enable systems to establish connectivity between the self, others and the environment in a continuous process of co-evolutionary possibilities of movement, thought, language, communication, behavior and learning.

Realizing the need of such knowledge to a reorganization of concepts and the ability to act consciously from these new understandings of the body is what makes this book interesting, as for Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 566): "The human body is part of the corporeality of the world".

References

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