

# Absence of Embodied Subject in the History of Philosophy

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## Abstract

There have been several important breakthroughs in the fields of philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, and neuroscience in recent centuries. Despite their complexities and varying opinions in each field, the majority of these breakthroughs tend to view human consciousness as a concrete reality influenced by physiological, social, and environmental factors. This raises the question of why such a dominant perspective did not prevail throughout the history of philosophy and why there were inclinations to deny it. Additionally, why did great philosophers throughout history reject the notion of embodied knowledge, which is a revolutionary approach in both philosophy and neuroscience and holds significant implications across diverse fields, from educational sciences to artificial intelligence? In this paper, we explore the reasons behind these questions. Firstly, we trace the origins of this perspective back to ancient Greek philosophers, including figures like Anaxagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. Next, we examine the reasons for the continuation of this line of thought among modern philosophers, including prominent figures like Descartes and Kant. Lastly, we delve into the approaches and attitudes of pioneering philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who diverged from the mainstream and emphasized the significance of the body in knowledge and consciousness. Understanding the historical neglect of embodiment in philosophy is essential to fully grasp the complexities of human consciousness. By incorporating insights from both historical and contemporary perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the embodied nature of knowledge and its far-reaching impact on various philosophical, scientific, and practical domains.

## Keywords

Embodied Knowledge, Language, Metaphysic Subject, Embodied Subject

## 1. Introduction

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that a concept could only be defined when one takes part in a language game in which the concept is deployed. That is, only *a posteriori* definitions are possible, and *a priori* definitions are impossible. Thus, a definition of embodied cognition consists in the knowledge of what has been known as embodied cognition. That is to say, the common differentia of actual theories within the framework of “embodied cognition” provides us with its definition. However, what is the common differentia? The thesis of cognition is defined in the entry on Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy as follows:

Cognition is embodied when it is deeply dependent upon features of the physical body of an agent, that is, when aspects of the agent’s body beyond the brain play a significant causal or physically constitutive role in cognitive processing (Wilson & Foglia, 2017).

In Hegel’s terminology, any phenomenon is identified in and by the negation of certain other phenomena. Thus, embodied cognition can, by the same token, be identified in and by the negation of two other views about cognition: 1) classical theory of knowledge, and 2) classical theories of cognitive sciences.

According to classical theories of knowledge, cognition belongs to a transcendental, or in metaphysical terms, an immaterial, subject, which is not only beyond the body, but also beyond any connections to the physical. Thus, according to this view, cognition exclusively belongs to the transcendental subject, and ideally, the role of the body is to provide the contents of thought and cognition. That is to say, the body is solely in charge of perception, playing no role whatsoever in any cognitive processes, conceptualization, categorization, reasoning, and inference.

This view is contrasted to the thesis of embodied cognition, according to which not only is the body involved in all these processes, but also plays a crucial role in the formation of the whole cognition. On this theory (or theories), it is the body’s organic and neurological properties, as well as its presence in, and interactions with, the environment that enables and constructs cognition in its different aspects. Thus, the first turn in theories of embodied cognition has been from the metaphysical subject to the embodied environmentally present subject.

Why this research would be important? The first we can create a strong connection with the root of this theory and why during the history cannot find the embodied subject and how it developed?

Today, much of research concerning embodied cognition takes place in areas of cognitive science, although it is fundamentally different from earlier theories of the first generation of cognitive scientists. According to earlier theories in cognitive science, cognition has to do with the “mind” and mental functions, as well as the manipulation of abstract symbols. It comes from philosophy of mind, as mental phenomena that consider the connection between mental health, or Mind and environment together. These theories overlook the role of body and

embodiment, as well as the interaction between the body and the environment; as if all matters of cognition are exhausted by mere manipulation of abstract symbols, regardless of organic dimensions of the body and its interaction with the environment. However, recent theories of cognition radically challenge those assumptions, hence creating the second dangerous turn by introducing the body as a knowledge-making agent.

In the following sections, we will elaborate on major theories of embodied cognition by introducing the historical development of these turns. It should be noted that philosophical research concerning the body has not been limited to the body-cognition framework. The connection between the body and socio-political phenomena has also been investigated. For example, Foucault characterizes the body as a tool for the exercise of dominance in the modern world. Alternatively put, he looks for the socio-political structure of the modern world in its relation with the body. Another example consists of widespread debates in the area of feminism and gender issues. However, in this paper we just pay attention to ignoring embodied subject in the history of philosophy and do not take the aspects of it in the contemporary philosophy into account.

## **2. Philosophical Foundations: History**

The history of philosophy is a history of dualism—dualisms of universals and, ideal and concrete worlds, soul and body, mortal and eternal worlds, the spiritual and the material, God and Satan, and so forth. Notwithstanding this, it was Descartes who noticed the intertwinement of these dualities and tried to disentangle them.

A common element among all these varieties of dualism is the belief in the superiority of the spiritual and immaterial over the material and the mundane. This can be obviously observed in mystical and religious traditions in which body is regarded as a cage for the soul and “the bodily” is deemed an obstacle for acquiring superiority and knowing the truth, as well as in philosophical traditions in which the only way of knowledge was believed to be the “proper deployment of the reason” and avoidance of sources of errors, that is, bodily senses (Descartes, 2003: Chapter IV, p. 28).

Contrary to what Descartes has claimed, thought is no longer deemed an attribute of the substance of the soul. What we call thought is a result of an interaction between an embodied mind and the surrounding environment. Origins and features of knowledge are not to be sought in a transcendental and mysterious soul. They should instead be sought in the living organism.

### **Formation of Metaphysical Subject in Ancient Greece**

The issue of knowledge and consciousness in modern philosophy pertains to the subject. As pointed out above, the subject here is metaphysical. But what does “metaphysical subject” mean? Before answering the question, we need to provide a brief history of how the metaphysical subject was formed.

As we know, the majority of philosophical issues date back to Ancient Greece, and the issue of the metaphysical subject is no exception. The account we provide of the formation of the metaphysical subject might seem unusual at first sight, but it might shed some light on the issue. Our account begins with an ontological discussion, through which the formation of the metaphysical subject will be accounted for. This may well be the reason why our account seems unusual. After Kant, we are used to be concerned with epistemology, mainly when the issue at hand, i.e., the metaphysical subject, is mainly epistemological, rather than ontological. Pre-Socratic philosophers usually remained concerned with being or existence in their view of the world and their attempt to explain the being, trying to explain the world in terms of an element of the being. In fact, they reduced the world of being to one or more elements of the world itself. One exception here is Anaxagoras, and he serves as the key to our interpretation of the history of the metaphysical subject.

Anaxagoras was the first person who introduced the notion of “reason” (or intellect: *nous*) into philosophy and tried to explain the world in terms of reason. “Reason” is an abstract unobservable concept, which exists in, and directs the world. Elements appealed to by philosophers before Anaxagoras in an explanation of the world, such as the four elements of water, soil, fire, and air, were all parts of the world and observable. However, reason, as discussed by Anaxagoras, lacks such properties. Now a question might arise about the relation is between Anaxagoras’s views and the metaphysical subject. To answer the question, we need to wait until we explain Plato’s view.

Plato lived in a period when Sophists were widely famous. Their views, such as rejection of any sort of knowledge and morality, were not pleasant to Plato and his teacher, Socrates. For example, consider Protagoras’s well-known statement: “man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not.” Thus, humans must be the criteria of all concepts and all knowledge, as well as moralities. Now since humans are plural and diverse, knowledge and ethics will likewise be diverse, and there will not be an absolute and objective foundation which one can reach.

In order to solve this crisis, Plato began his pursuit of the absolute, the objective, and what is independent of humans. In order to do so, Plato had to either step on the same path as his predecessors or find a new way. The approach adopted by his predecessors was a dead-end. For example, Heraclitus said, “You cannot step into the same river twice, for fresh waters are continually flowing in.” Such constant and continual change and flow of the world constituted a significant obstacle because even if one could know something in the world, it would change in the blink of an eye. Thus, the prior knowledge could not be predicated of the new thing. In other words, if at the time,  $t_1$ , I obtain knowledge,  $Z$ , of something,  $x$ , then at  $t_2$ ,  $x$  has changed into  $x^*$ . Thus, my knowledge,  $Z$ , cannot be predicated of  $x$ , nor can it be predicated of  $x^*$ .  $X$  no longer exists and is replaced by  $x^*$ .

Plato’s problem does not boil down to the problem of change and flow. There

was another problem, as well. The world is a set of particular entities. When we talk about the human, the dog, the water, the tree, or the fire, there is no single human or dog or water or tree or fire. For these species, there are innumerable particular instances that are distinct from one another. Because of the limits of human faculties, neither do we have time for leaning, nor do we have the power to know, all particular entities. However, in order for knowledge to be useful, it should be general. For if I know one or a few particular entities, there is no guarantee that other particular entities are the same. Knowledge is useful as long as it is generalizable, and it can help account for all instances. If knowledge can only explain a few particular cases and leaves the rest unexplained, it cannot satisfy us and will not be useful.

Moreover, if Plato was to explain the world and all entities within it in terms of a single phenomenon, just like his predecessors, differences within the phenomena would constitute another obstacle to such an explanation. For example, if we take water to be the foundation or origin (*arche*) of the world, then which water serves as such a foundation? The water in Greece? That in Asia? The one discovered in America? If all these kinds of water were the same, then how could we account for their distinctness?

Thus, the standard ontology of the time failed to home in on a principle with which general knowledge was possible. Plato had to expand his ontology to find things that lack the properties of actual surrounding entities of the world, and yet could explain the existence of the world, and could serve as objects of knowledge. Moreover, this expanded ontology is what we know as the World of Forms or Ideas—a world in which entities exist in general and eternal unity and in an invariable way. It is such a world that can serve as the object of our knowledge. Here, Plato draws on Anaxagoras's *nous*. In fact, Plato accommodated his general concepts within a world of reason, where they cannot be infected with particularity and the flow of the concrete world. In Plato's world of ideas, only kinds exist, not individuals—the human exists, but Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle do not (they exist in the concrete world)<sup>1</sup>; the fire exists, but this or that particular instance of fire does not, only the universal fire exists.

There was another problem that led Plato to postulate the existence of such a world: the problem that all knowledge is conceptual. Knowledge is obtained through words, and words generate concepts. Consider the word “sugar”, for instance. If asked what sugar is, we would answer something sweet, tongue-tingling, and white. However, all these properties—sweetness, tongue-tinglings, and whiteness—are universal properties that are predicated of many entities. Besides, no matter how much we try to break something down into more specific properties, what we arrive at are still universal properties. Thus, as Hegel says, “the

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<sup>1</sup>In the philosophy of Plato, we deal with a hierarchical structure of existence, in such philosophy “existence” is predicated based on stronger and weaker and higher or lower beings. The particular entities, placed in the world of the senses, have a weaker and lower existence than beings existing in the world of the ideas. Thereby, when we mention that particular beings do not exist in the text, we only refer to the world of ideas and not in general. Our emphasis is on Truth viewed from the world of ideas, not the world of senses.

word is the murder of the Thing” and the generator of concepts. It is as if all we have are concepts.

The conceptuality (and universality) of our cognitive faculties, on the one hand, and the particularity of the concrete, on the other, have always constituted a significant problem for many philosophers. To solve the problem, Plato borrows Anaxagoras’s notion of reason or intellect, clothes the universals with an intelligible coat, sends them to the heavens,<sup>2</sup> and restricts the attainment of knowledge to knowledge of these intelligible universals. Aristotle constructs the concept of form, and so on.

However, two problems remain unsolved; however: first, how can such an abstract world explain our concrete world? For our primary goal was to account for the concrete world, and the abstract world was postulated to enable us to explain this world. By adding a new world, we cannot explain the existence of the world perceived by the senses and the events that happen in that. It is not enough to suppose something like Demiurge, for Demiurge itself, needs to be explained. It needs to be proven; Plato’s trick is like Descartes’s Pineal Gland; none of them are adequate. It is not possible to connect an abstract entity to concrete one by assuming something which is not clear how it works; does it belong to the abstract world or concrete one? If the entity belongs to the former, how is it related to the latter? And if the entity belongs to the latter, how is it related to the former?

Now, if that world fails to explain this world, it would be superfluous to postulate its existence following Ockham’s razor. The second problem is how we acquire knowledge; that is, even if such a universal world exists, then how can we know such a world. Even if all knowledge is conceptual and universal, then how should these concepts correspond to those universal entities? Plato was well aware of the two problems and provided answers to both. His answers are not convincing, however. We do not intend to criticize his answers. Since the first problem is not relevant to the issue at hand, we do not engage with Plato’s answer to it, and we will only be concerned with the second problem, which is where the metaphysical subject is generated.

Our bodily and concrete existence is itself part of this particular and changing world. Thus, such a being will not be able to apprehend universals and intelligible. Now if a bodily and concrete existence is not able to apprehend the universal and the intelligible, then part of us that apprehends such things must be free of, and should indeed be a polar opposite to, such attributes: without a body and immaterial—a metaphysical subject referred to by Plato as a soul. However, the manner of connection between this subject and the intelligible or the universal has not yet been accounted for. Plato responds that, before the creation of the body, the soul existed in the world of forms, where it has apprehended the intelligible (Plato, *Phaedo* 72e). Furthermore, when it descended to its bodily temple, it forgot its knowledge. Thus, any knowledge (that is, knowledge of the

<sup>2</sup>Needless to say the word, “heaven”, here is used metaphorically. Platonic universals are not located in any space, including skies. They are indeed non-spatial.

universals) achieved in this world only achieved via remembrance (Plato, Menon 82a-86b).

In sum, the postulation of the existence of a metaphysical subject for Plato is necessary, for it enables him to account for the possibility of knowledge. A significant part of debates among advocates of the metaphysical subject throughout the history of philosophy was aimed at the problem of knowledge. The gist of the argument, articulated in a variety of forms, is based on an epistemological problem: if we do not accept the metaphysical subject, then we will not be able to obtain any knowledge, and we will fall into a skeptical or relativistic trap.

The necessity of a knowledge of the universal led Aristotle to the view that thought comes from the metaphysical subject. Although Aristotle provides a detailed account of Platonic forms, he nevertheless takes into account the existence of universals and the necessity of knowledge thereof, instead of particular entities. For Aristotle, whereas knowledge begins with particular entities, knowledge's ultimate goal is to abstract and recognize a universal form from the particular entity. Furthermore, although Aristotle generally considers the soul to be in relation with the body and locates it in the natural realm because of his concomitance with the body, he takes the highest dimension of the soul—that is, noetic soul, which though is product of it—to be a universal form detached from the body.<sup>3</sup> Although different parts of the soul cannot be detached from the body, when it comes to thoughts, Aristotle takes the soul to be detached from the body. And this is no accident. Seeing the world through concepts and universals led Aristotle to detach the soul from the body and nature, notwithstanding the fact, throughout his book, *De Anima*, that he discusses issues of the soul under natural phenomena.

As we have pointed out, the reason for the sudden ascension of the soul in Plato's and Aristotle's views was the fear of relativism. Consider the following quote from Aristotle regarding the passive intellect:

Since it thinks all things, it is necessary, just as Anaxagoras says, for it to be “unmixed” so that it may “master” them (that is, so that it may come to know them)—for something foreign intruding into it impedes and obstructs it. Thus, it is necessary for its nature to be nothing other than this: possibility. Therefore, what is called the intellect of the soul (and by intellect, I mean that by which the soul thinks things through and arrives at suppositions) is not actively one of the beings until it is thinking. Hence it is reasonable that it not be mixed with the body, for then it would take on some determinate quality, would be warm or cold, and there would be some organ for it as there is for the perceptive power—which there is not. (Aristotle *De Anima*, III, 4, 429a18-28)

As it is evident, Aristotle takes the soul to be detachable from the body to

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<sup>3</sup>According to Aristotle, the soul is divisible and has different parts. This difference is not accidental. Instead, it is longitudinal and graded. That is to say, some parts of the soul are higher in degree than others. The thought is the highest dimension of the soul.

avoid relativism—to be able to judge; that is, to know. Because we perceive matters of beings with our senses, and we perceive their forms with our intellects. And forms are conceptual and universal. Thus, the active intellect functions to extract or abstract intelligible (universal concepts or entities) from sensory and imagery objects, and then actualize them, just as light actualizes colors that potentially exist in darkness.

### 3. Modern Philosophy and the Issue of Embodiment

Modern philosophy is distinguished from medieval philosophy in virtue of its views of the place of the reason (or intellect) and sources of knowledge. Contrary to modern philosophy, medieval philosophy generally assigned a low (or at least not much high) place to the reason. Most medieval schools of thought did not consider the reason to be sufficient for knowledge, maintaining that, without the Divine Revelation, the reason is inadequate<sup>4</sup>.

However, in modern philosophy, when the Divine Revelation was dismissed as a source of knowledge, deficiencies of the reason, which was to bring about salvation for the human being, had to be compensated in one way or another, while nothing but the reason itself was left for modern philosophy. Attempts to preserve the place of the reason were, in fact, attempts at the revival of foundationalism, that is, to base all knowledge on certainty-providing and indubitable foundations. The undeniable fact was that of innumerable “errors” of the mind. However, interestingly the “body” was blamed for the errors.

Two founders of modern philosophy, Descartes and Bacon, were looking for ways of avoiding errors and obtaining positive knowledge. For Descartes, knowledge was mostly a psychological phenomenon, separate from the material substance. Thus, the body as a material entity was put out of the realm of knowledge.

Thus because we have no conception of the body as thinking in any way, we have reason to believe that every kind of thought which exists in us belongs to the soul; and because we do not doubt there being inanimate bodies which can move in as many as or in more diverse modes than can ours, and which have as much heat or more (experience demonstrates this to us in flame, which of itself has much more heat and movement than any of our members), we must believe that all the heat and all the movements which are in us pertain only to body, inasmuch as they do not depend on thought at all. (Descartes, 1985: p. 8)

Although Descartes’s error theory aims to establish the superiority of the will over understanding, rather than the body, Descartes rules the body and embodiment out from the realm of knowledge, indeed. The point becomes more evident if we recall that he denies any reason or soul in non-human animals, on the one hand, and treats the human body as being the same as the animal body, on

<sup>4</sup>However, there were followers of Averroes who gave a proper role to the reason. For more see Gibson 1939.



the other hand.

However, Bacon, the other founder of modern philosophy, directly targets the body. While he does not trace all errors to the body, the interesting point here is that for him, of all grounds of errors, factors relevant to the body are those that can never be eradicated. Bacon, in *New Organon*, introduces four idols that preclude knowledge (Bacon, 2003: p. 40). Of these, two idols have to do with the human nature: idols of the Tribe and idols of the Cave. The former is about the constraints of human nature in general, such as weaknesses of senses.

Moreover, the latter is about the constraints and weaknesses of human individuals in particular. It is only after awareness and minimization, of these idols that the “soul” can obtain knowledge. Thus, Bacon talks about the soul-body dualism and restriction of knowledge to the soul.

Although Kant presents us with a profound epistemological turn, his subject is, nonetheless, a transcendental rather than an embodied subject. By “categories”, Kant refers to factors leading up to knowledge—the keys to knowledge. Without *a priori* categories that are prior to any knowledge, no conceptualization and cognition would be possible, indeed. Cognition obtains only in light of these categories<sup>5</sup> (Kant, 1999: B 161, 261). However, these *a priori* categories have nothing to do with the body; instead, they are related to a transcendental subject. Kant does not explicitly talk about the substance of this subject. However, his distinction between the empirical ego and the transcendental ego reveals that he separates the body from the transcendental subject as well. Thus, in Kant’s analysis, the body as a knowledge-making agent is ignored. Therefore, the body was not studied long after Kant.

Just like empiricists, Kant put aside essentialism about objects—a position influenced by Aristotle’s definition of the primary substance<sup>6</sup>. In the first instance, Kant defined an object as a multitude of sense-data which are distinct from one another. A particular sense-datum via vision is distinct from a sense-datum coming from, say, olfactory, or tactile senses. We are faced with a multitude of sensory data, so to speak. However, we treat the object as one, whereas such a unity is not given in the experience. If these sensory data are not unified, there will not be an experience of an object. Thus, categories of the mind are what gives unity to multitudes of sense data, to give rise to experience. According to Kant, the subject should have unity within itself in order to be able to unify multitudes of experience. What is plural or what changes over time cannot bestow unity on multitudes, and so it will fail to give rise to experience. Since the body changes over time, it cannot occupy such a unifying role. Transcendental subjects can provide such unity (Kant, 1999: A107, 232).

With the above background in mind, we can return and provide a better an-

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<sup>5</sup>In *Critique of Pure Reason* in this part Kant explains his position: The Human Intellect, even in an Unphilosophical State, is in Possession of Certain Cognitions “a priori”.

<sup>6</sup>According Aristotle’s definition in *Categories* (5, 2a11-13) the primary substance is an individual object like this table, that person... He defines first substance as a solid whole and studies it in his *ontology*. But In Kant’s philosophy we are not concerned with ontology. It is worth to mention that in his later works Aristotle provides different meanings of the term “substance.”

swer to the above question: “what is a metaphysical subject?”: the metaphysical subject is a non-embodied, independent, and a priori subject, which grounds the prior and transcendental conditions of any consciousness and cognition, and without it, cognition is impossible.

It should be noted that this definition of subject has a crucial difference from its pre-modern definition. Despite their similarities: the word, “subject”, is originated from the Latin, “*subjectum*” which literally means *thrown under* (Critchley & Dews, 1995); that is, a substratum on the existence of which the existence of other things depends. Interestingly, back in the pre-Cartesian period until sometime after the Cartesian period, in philosophical terminology, the word “subjective” refers to what we refer to today as “objective”. That is to say, the meanings of “subject” and “object” were the reverse of how they are philosophically used today.

In Aristotle’s philosophy, a subject is the matter that remains invariant throughout changes, on the one hand, and on the existence of which the existence of all other forms depends, on the other hand; In Aristotle’s philosophy, a Subject can be the essence of something as well as matter: (Metaphysics, Book VIII, 1042a26-29) To put things differently, a subject is a prior condition of existence. A subject always presumes an absolute foundation. Therefore, from the beginning, the subject was, in the context of Aristotle’s metaphysics, a metaphysical subject<sup>7</sup> (p. 15). Thus, it would hardly be an overstatement to say that the replacement of subject by the body has been a great revolution and invention in the history of philosophy. Embodiment is an alternative for the metaphysical subject that was appealed to throughout the history of philosophy.

### 3.1. The Role of Language

Probably (and not positively) the reason why concepts found a central role for many philosophers is that if we break down the language into its part, its most fundamental part would be words, rather than language as a whole, or a sentence consisting of two propositions (for example, conditional propositions), or a single proposition, or complex phrases. One might object that letters and phonemes are more basic than the former. However, these linguistic parts do not signify meaning. In fact, words are the most basic “meaningful” units of language. If we ignore words such as “and”, “if”, and “or”, which have no meanings on their own, we will be left with ordinary words of the language, including nouns, adjectives, and relations. Furthermore, since words are universals in the view of these philosophers, we arrive at *concepts*.

We seek to show that knowledge is *propositional*, rather than conceptual. As

<sup>7</sup>In Aristotle’s writings the term “subject” sometimes refers also to something material and thus also to bodies, But his metaphysics is based on an application of the word we have described.

<sup>8</sup>See Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione*.

<sup>9</sup>There is a conceptual distinction between “meanings” and “concepts” in philosophy. However, we use these two terms alongside each other to establish the position that an account of concepts as self-organizing and separate from meanings and words is wrong. Such an error has been perfectly pointed out by philosophers such as Wittgenstein.

pointed out, earlier philosophers mainly begin their linguistic analysis from meaningful words,<sup>8</sup> unaware that this analysis is propositional in turn. *Words have no meanings or concepts on their own.* They acquire their meanings or concepts within propositions.<sup>9</sup> Concepts in traditional philosophy or meanings in contemporary philosophy are generally present either in a Platonic world or as an intelligible in this world.<sup>10</sup> However, if we take the level of analysis from words to propositions, then the question will no longer be the application of a concept to particular entities; instead, the question will be about relations between propositions themselves, or between propositions and external things.

Hegel was right that there is no direct knowledge. Even when we try to avoid concepts altogether and focus on our experience here and now, there is nothing that we can immediately grasp. The assumption that there is something here and now, which can be grasped without our intervention, implies certain other propositions. It implies a distinction between objects and subjects, as well as a unification of both objects and subjects. The very assumption of the existence of something before me implies a distinction between me and that object. Moreover, it implies a distinction between this object and other objects, as well as “me”.

From this fact, Hegel infers that all knowledge is obtained via concepts. However, we, in fact, obtain knowledge via propositions as well as comparisons of propositions with one another. Even when we only use one word such as “dog”, that word is short for a sentence such as “there is a dog here”, or “be careful! The dog might attack you.” When we use the word “this”, it has no meaning except as a symbol for a full proposition. For example, it can be short for “there is something in this place; take note of it.” This is easier to discern in the case of other words. We have frequently observed that a word can have different meanings from context to context.

As we have pointed out, for realists, the ultimate level of analysis is that of words, which refer in turn to concepts, rather than propositions. In addition, if these concepts do not correspond to anything in the external world, it will lead to a version of relativism or pure subjectivism. Thus, in order to avoid relativism, realists had to accept a correspondence theory of truth, as well as universals to which concepts correspond. We have nevertheless shown that, in order to know concepts are not required. We must deal only with propositions. Now, In order to avoid the radical relativism, do we need to assert the existence of universals? In what follows, we briefly sketch some dimensions of a pragmatic theory of truth and then answer the latter question in terms of this theory.

Wittgenstein was one of the first people who considered propositions as basic, seeing words only in terms of propositions. However, given the long-term dominance of the correspondence theory, he remained an exponent of its framework. Early Wittgenstein obviously defended the correspondence theory. Here is

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<sup>10</sup>By the latter group, we mean to refer to philosophers such as Kant and Hegel. According to Kant, a concept is what arises from applying categories to sense data, and Hegel’s spirit explains concepts as self-organizing. Notwithstanding this, the two philosophers finally accept the intelligible and have to acquiesce to do dualism.

the first sentence of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: “the world is a set of facts.” In our view, the motive behind this statement is Wittgenstein’s internal dilemma between the fundamentality of propositions and the correspondence theory of truth. For if what matters are propositions, rather than concepts, and yet the criterion of truth is correspondence, then the world must no longer be a set of objects; instead, it must be a set of facts. Only in this case can propositions be applied to the world, as put by Wittgenstein. Prior to Wittgenstein, concepts were applied to a plurality of instances, and now that propositions substitute concepts, propositions must be applied to something. Seeing the world in the form of separate objects does not allow propositions to be applied to reality, or, more precisely speaking, it does not allow correspondence. Thus, the world must be seen in a way in which things are combined, just as propositions which are combined of words. It is the later Wittgenstein (especially in *Philosophical Investigations*) with his tendency towards pragmatism, who recognizes that a proposition does not require correspondence for its truth. This is when he comes to be convinced that the correspondence theory is too flawed to be defensible (Wittgenstein, 2004: p. 136).

So, what is the criterion for the truth of a proposition? According to pragmatism, other propositions. However, the traditional metaphysics of truth believe in a reality beyond propositions, in virtue of correspondence to which the proposition is true. A second-order viewpoint will quickly reveal to us, nevertheless, that the proposition that “there is a reality independent of propositions” is itself a proposition. Every claim is a proposition. We do not think except through propositions. Philosophical thought is primarily concerned with propositions. Every affirmative or negative claim is propositional. Whomever, the Philosopher is, what a person says is propositional. Whatever we say about the world is a proposition. The idea that “an external world outside the mind exists” is itself a proposition. If it is said that we have a self-evident and immediate experience of the world, we will repeat our previous answer that every piece of knowledge is mediated. Every piece of knowledge takes into account other propositions as well as their compatibility with one another. What would it mean to say “I perceive this” if it was not possible to use “I” and “me” consistently. Is it not incompatible to say that “I exist” and “this exists” independently of one another?

We have frequently learned from our experiences that propositions sometimes contradict or exclude one another. They are sometimes incompatible with each other, and a contradicting proposition can be found for every proposition. A philosopher’s philosophical thought challenges other philosophers as well as the philosopher himself. These controversies are sometimes endless. We logically know that two conflicting or contradictory thoughts cannot be both true. Thus, at least one proposition should be put aside.

Moreover, truth should be conceived of in terms of these propositions:

Purely objective truth, truth in whose establishment the function of giving human satisfaction in marrying previous parts of experience with newer

parts played no role whatever is nowhere to be found. The reasons why we call things true is the reason why they are true, for “to be true” means only to perform this marriage-function (James 1931: p. 64).

For a pragmatist, the external world exists, but the validity of the proposition that “the external world exists” is not derived from a dogmatism based on recourse to so-called “self-evident” propositions. Its truth is derived from the fact that all of our propositions as a system are compatible with this proposition. Moreover, a pragmatist is ready to set this proposition aside if he finds a host of incompatible propositions.

Now we are prepared to answer the realist’s linguistic objection based on concepts: if the propositions that “the world consists only of concrete entities” and “knowledge depends on an embodied subject” are compatible with other propositions, then these two will be true<sup>11</sup>, and no universal concept will be required. The realist claimed that when stating a proposition, we assume certain universal concepts. However, we have shown that what we primarily assume are propositions, which are valid in virtue of their interrelations, and not in virtue of their correspondence to external instances. Thus, it suffices if our theory can work well; that is, if it has a high degree of explanatory and predictive powers, and can survive various tests<sup>12</sup>.

Much of what we have said so far was concerned with the traditional view of the concept of soul and its historical roots, which were mainly grounded in metaphysical issues. Now it is time to see how the metaphysical subject is developed in modern philosophy.

Here we will discuss more the literature of body in modern philosophy.

## 3.2. Body in Modern Philosophy

### 3.2.1. Schopenhauer

Schopenhauer can be referred to as the first philosopher who has characterized the body as a knowledge-making agent. Moreover, he has characterized the body as an entity to which knowledge is attributed. In his famous work, *The World as Will and Representation*, he portrays the world as a representation of the will. Concerning the human knowledge, he believes that the world of which the human is aware is not the world in itself. Instead, it is the world that represents the will in nature, wherein human beings, the will in nature, occur via the *body*. In the case of humans, the will in nature and the will in the body will be the same: “there is no causal connection between the act of will and the action of the body, for they are directly identical” (Schopenhauer, 1958: p. 248).

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<sup>11</sup>This is true of all propositions, including those that accept the existence of universals; But if it can be shown that these two statements are compatible with those of our epistemic system and are superior to competing theories, the problem will be solved. The point is that by changing the theory of language one can avoid ontological commitments, so it is not necessary here to prove the two abovementioned propositions.

<sup>12</sup>We do not intend to defend the pragmatic or coherence theory of truth here. Our main purpose was to provide an example to prove the main point that is metaphysical subject depends on a particular conception of language and truth.

Schopenhauer considers embodiment at both levels of perception and thought, in both of which the body is key to, and an agent of, cognition. In his view, not only do we, at the level of perception, perceive in ways that depend on bodily properties and structure but also, at the level of thought, we think in ways that depend on the bodily structure and the will in nature which is manifested in such structure (Schmicking, 2007: p. 93). In general, he conceives of consciousness and intelligence as a function of the bodily organism:

The organism is the will itself, embodied will, in other words, will objectively be perceived in the brain. For this reason, many of its functions, such as respiration, blood circulation, bile secretion, and muscular force, are enhanced and accelerated by the pleasant, and generally robust, emotions. The intellect, on the other hand, is the mere function of the brain, which is nourished and sustained by the organism only parasitically. Therefore, every perturbation of the will, and with it of the organism, must disturb or paralyze the function of the brain (Schopenhauer, 1958: p. 216).

Therefore, we see how significant the body becomes in Schopenhauer's philosophy. For, in his view, the smallest disorder in the organic body affects the whole consciousness. Medical studies today have shown such a correlation notwithstanding their constraints—dramatic advances in these studies may well have been achieved, had there not been specific ethical considerations!

Another thought-provoking idea in Schopenhauer's theory, which can similarly find its counterparts in recent scientific studies, is the existence of an unconscious part in the body. The unconscious is not just a minor part of the body, and to the contrary, it is thought to play a remarkable role in cognition and knowledge. As it happens, the conscious part is to this unconscious part, as a small island to a vast ocean. For Schopenhauer, significant activities of the will (the organic body) do not fall in the scope of consciousness. Notwithstanding this, they play the most part in consciousness and our actions. As will be delineated in what follows, Lakoff refers to this part as "cognitive unconscious", believing, as Schopenhauer would, that much of our consciousness is affected by this domain,<sup>13</sup> which, they both maintain, is not available to us and can only be discovered from specific actions and consequences thereof, and which directs our cognition and behaviors.

### 3.2.2. Nietzsche

The next philosopher who seriously grappled with embodiment and assigned a pivotal role to the body in the process of cognition and consciousness was Nietzsche, who was, in turn, influenced by and an admirer of Schopenhauer. For Nietzsche, cognition and knowledge that are appealed to by proponents of the

<sup>13</sup>Notice that although Schopenhauer has had a deep influence on Freud and his theory of the unconscious, his theory, as well as Lakoff's, differ from Freud's in that they do not give a central role to sexual desires. All three agree, however, that there are unconscious parts within the human organism that direct the human actions and consciousness. For more on Schopenhauer's view of the unconscious see (Schmicking, 2007: p. 91).

metaphysics of truth are merely wills to power, which is closely tied to the human body as an active force:

Most of a philosopher's conscious thought is secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts. Even behind all logic and its autocratic posturings stand valuations or, stated more clearly, physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life. (Nietzsche, 2002: p. 7)

The will to power, which pursues its desires via drives and instincts and constructs the illusion of consciousness, treats the truth as so higher value entity that is deemed too great to depend on low-level bodily instincts (p. 6). In his essay, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", Nietzsche presents us with a more profound aspect of his view of the relation between the body and truth. In this essay, he regards concepts and thoughts that we know as truths to be mere metaphors, which are anthropomorphic and dependent on neural stimuli:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. (Nietzsche, 1989: p. 250)

Concept is nevertheless merely the residue of a metaphor, and that the illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept. (p. 251)

Nietzsche's consideration of the role of metaphors as going beyond language and literature to the whole process of cognition was later pursued by people such as Mark Johnson, George Lakoff, and Rafael Núñez. Similarly, and of course, prior to contemporary cognitive scientists, Nietzsche believes that when a metaphor refers, it, in fact, refers to the structure of thought, albeit a thought is totally unified with our bodily structure. He treats as cognitive metaphors not only much of our thoughts, but also concepts such as space, time, and causation, which Kant had considered as *a priori* categories (Marietti, 2008: p. 3).

Nietzsche defines consciousness in its relation to the body. For him, the body is a collection of inferior and superior forces. Borrowing Schopenhauer's parlance, higher-level forces are instinctual and physiological drives, or Lakoff's cognitive unconscious, while Consciousness is always the consciousness of an inferior about a superior to which he is subordinated or into which he is incorporated. As Deleuze (1983) says:

Consciousness is never self-consciousness, but the consciousness of an ego in relation to a self which is not itself conscious. It is not the master's con-

sciousness but the slave's consciousness in relation to a master who is not himself conscious... Consciousness usually only appears when a whole wants to subordinate itself to a superior whole... Consciousness is born in relation to a being of which we could be a function. (p. 39)

Just like Schopenhauer, Freud, Lakoff, and others, Nietzsche endorses the existence of a superior body as what directs consciousness—a body of which we are unconscious, but in which our entire cognitive process takes place; in fact, all mental circumstances that we have imagined have been a consequence of the body. A body we have always been ignorant of!

#### 4. Conclusion

The dominance of reasoning in philosophy led to the neglect of the role of the body in knowledge. The Greeks, influenced by a universal rationality governing the cosmos, justified this rationality ontologically. Their analysis of language and truth, coupled with their apprehensions about the irrational world of sophists, contributed to this perspective. The correspondence theory of truth, a prevalent assumption among the Greeks, necessitated such rationality. Additionally, their language analysis, centered on words rather than propositions, led to the establishment of fixed concepts insensitive to contextual variations, as seen in Aristotle's work on interpretation. In modern philosophy, particularly in Kant's philosophy, rationality stems from the subject rather than the world itself. Consequently, the epistemological aspect remains common, while the subject remains disembodied. This issue remains connected to the linguistic analysis of philosophers. Despite an epistemological shift, a linguistic turn was still required, which was undertaken by pragmatists and later by second Wittgenstein. Words and concepts were brought down to earth from the heavens through this turn. Some philosophers recognized the significance of the body in knowledge, moving away from the linguistic turn. Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were among the first to discuss the embodied subject. However, the evolution of the concept of embodiment in contemporary philosophy was not explored in this paper, leaving room for future research.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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