

The Aesthetics of Normative Meaning and Thought: The Normative Bodily Roots of Philosophy, Science, and Art

Review: Mark Johnson, *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought:
The Bodily Roots of Philosophy, Science, and Art*
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In *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought: The Bodily Roots of Philosophy, Science, and Art*, Mark Johnson seeks to expand his earlier work with George Lakoff in developing conceptual metaphor theory as well as expanding upon his single authored work on embodied experience. Drawing upon elements of his earlier works, Johnson argues that our lived experience of the world proceeds from our bodies, our nervous systems in specific. In so doing, Johnson reasserts his earlier claims, developed with Lakoff and extended in his philosophical work subsequent to *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought*, that the whole of our conceptual experience with the world proceeds from our perceptive, affective, proprioceptive, and cognitive systems all of which operate in interaction with the environment to give rise to our cognition which is made manifest through our deployment of metaphor. It is in service of providing an empirical background for these claims that *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought* draws upon recent work in neuroscience and cognitive science, in combination with recent developments in Pragmatism to not only further explain Johnson's claims with regards to embodied experience, but to expand upon them.

To this end, *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought* is not simply an update to Johnson's work with Lakoff or a sequel to his previous text, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How our Bodies Give Rise to*

1) Hereafter this book will be cited in the main text as AMT followed by page number.

Understanding, it seeks to advance this work philosophically through drawing upon the naturalistic philosophy of John Dewey, whose influence can be felt throughout the text. For Johnson through Dewey, an organism is in constant transaction with an environment. However, the environment itself is not a static exteriority to which the organism merely responds: it is punctuated by dynamism, waxing and waning, which require the human organism to be in constant adaptation to and with the environment. It is on this basis that Johnson, like Dewey, projects all our thoughts, our conceptual enterprises, as a kind of *doing*: a mode of activity that occurs within an environment and because of that environment. Moreover, it is this “doing” that enables us to adapt and maintain equilibrium with our environments. Thus, for Johnson, the kinds of interactions we have with the environment, and the meanings that proceed from them are determined by the *kinds* of bodies we have. The ground of our ability to create meaning and live meaningful lives is rooted in the operations of our bodily transactions with the environment. It is this bodily grounding that, for Johnson, prevents his project from being a simple reduction of the mind to the body, a dualism which Johnson rejects outright: Johnson argues that his naturalistic philosophy allows us to recognize that the products of culture and thought are fundamentally human achievements only made possible by the unique ways that our bodies and our environments are in transaction with one another. To this end, it is neither solely the body nor solely the environment from which human achievement emerges, but the transaction between the two.

The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought also relies heavily upon a neuroscientific perspective described as “simulation semantics”, which Johnson will return to throughout *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought*. Simulation semantics is the view that having meaningful experience involves running a mental simulation of the possible experiences that can emerge from our transactions with the event, object, or person in question. More than that, simulation semantics holds that in the activity of running the “simulation” of the possible experiences that can emerge from our transaction with the object in question we activate the neural structures that are also activated in our non-simulated transaction with the object, person, or event; we also draw upon our cultural, social, and affective experience with the object in question to better simulate the possibilities of our encounter with the object in experience. To this end, the object encountered exists as a range of possibilities for transaction, what Johnson also calls “affordances”, which are limited only by the organization of our bodies and the physical spaces with which we are in transaction.

The work of Antonio Damasio on the evolution of emotions also serves to do significant work in *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought*, specifically where the incorporation of emotion into all aspects of our reasoning is concerned, and to bridge the divide between reasoning and feeling. Put simply, Johnson uses Damasio to articulate a point John Dewey established some eighty years earlier in *Experience and Nature*. In Johnson’s reading of Damasio, “emotions emerged evolutionarily in certain animal species as a way of nonconsciously and automatically monitoring an organism’s ongoing relation with its environment and then instituting bodily changes to serve and protect the organism’s interests in survival and well-being” (AMT, 20). To this end, emotions provide the ways in which an organism is “in tune” with the dynamic processes ongoing within its body and its environment. Moreover, for Johnson, emotions are also the means whereby the organism seeks to restore equilibrium through the resolution of the situation that occasioned them.

Part One: Philosophy and Science

The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought is divided into three sections: Philosophy and Science, Morality and Law, and Art and the Aesthetics of Life. Part one begins with “Pragmatism, Cognitive Science, and the Embodied Mind” which serves to outline the distinctions between what Johnson calls “first generation cognitive science”, which Johnson presents as “a blending of Analytic philosophy of mind, information processing psychology,

generative linguistics, model theory, computer science, and artificial intelligence research” (AMT, 31), out of which a functionalist account of mental activity emerged; and “second generation cognitive science” which sought to provide a more embodied view that included the organism’s transactions with the environment. It is through the work of second-generation cognitive science that Johnson seeks to support his non-dualistic, pragmatist view of aesthetics, which treats experience as relational and culturally situated. Specifically, he supports his view through the non-dualistic, non-reductionist nature of second-generation cognitive science and its emphasis on the organism’s transactions with the environment that enable pragmatism and neuroscience to finally “hook up” through their mutual focus on the transactional nature of experience. This, as indicated in the introduction, allows Johnson to provide an empirical basis for Pragmatism, while Pragmatism, in Johnson’s view, provides cognitive science with a broad conceptual and technical language through which we can return cognitive science to the embodied experiences of the human organism in a social and cultural world.

Here, we should pause for a moment to review some terminological difficulties. While Johnson is relatively clear about defining “first-generation” and “second-generation” cognitive science in this first chapter by their stated orientations towards the mind and the brain, he does not provide such a definition for neuroscience. In later chapters, Johnson appears to use the terms neuroscience and cognitive science interchangeably, despite the provision of his definitions for first and second-generation cognitive science, and his definition of cognitive science supplied in *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, which treats cognitive science as the scientific domain which covers the study of the operations of the mind in precise terms. To this end, Johnson’s interchangeable use of the terms seems to collapse and conflate the two disciplines, a point which Johnson neither addresses nor takes up in his appropriation of their research. That said, given his later comments about the necessity of philosophy to take up the latest in empirical research, it can be assumed that Johnson is less concerned about field specific distinctions, and more concerned about the contributions those fields make to philosophy. This distinction is curious, specifically given Johnson’s later treatment of the role of metaphor in the organization of scientific inquiry.

In chapter two, Johnson returns to his previous work with Lakoff, with a specific emphasis on the conceptual metaphor, through application to Analytic Philosophy. Thus, chapter two is devoted to establishing his later analysis of philosophy, law, science, aesthetics, architecture and morality, as grounded in conceptual metaphor that proceeds from the body, through an extended critique of Analytic Philosophy. As a primer to the reintroduction and expansion of his conceptual metaphor theory, he devotes significant time to taking aim at Searle, Rorty, Davidson, and ultimately Fodor to demonstrate the distinctions between and necessity of his understanding of philosophy, as grounded in conceptual metaphor, as an alternative to the Analytic philosophy of mind that Johnson claims holds sway over the field of philosophy.

While this approach to indicating the contrasts between Johnson’s work and that of the Analytics is valuable, at times he appears to be addressing a strawman of Analytic Philosophy constructed from theoretical approaches some forty years old. This approach is curious given Johnson’s large corpus of work on the subject and the wide reception that it has received. Moreover, shrewd readers may wonder why Johnson simply did not present a clarified version of the thesis presented in *Philosophy in the Flesh* as a stand-alone chapter and incorporate the advances made in *The Meaning of the Body*, to provide a touchstone for readers for his conceptual metaphor theory. Johnson justifies this approach by stating that his aim is “not to evaluate the adequacy of Fodor’s theory of mind and language. It is, rather, to show that Fodor’s theory is based on a set of intertwined conceptual metaphors that operate (mostly unconsciously) in our culture (AMT, 77),” a demonstration which may have been better executed through reproducing some of the examples from his previous work.

Chapter three once more takes up Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory as a critical tool and applies it directly to what he terms “Analytic” or “Linguistic” Pragmatism as articulated through the work of Putnam

and Brandom. While Johnson recognizes the value of language as a mode of structuring and enacting experience, he argues against the tendency in Analytic and Linguistic Pragmatism to treat only those experiences which can be embodied in language as meaningful. That is, for Johnson, “it is not just linguistic signs that can have meaning. There are many diverse types of things and events that are meaningful insofar as they function as vehicles of possible consequences in experience” (AMT, 90), and it is the capacity for an object to function as a “vehicle” of possible experience that Johnson views as the primary argument against the primacy of language in meaning making. Put another way, meaning is present when or wherever an object can stand as the sign of or point to some experience in the world. This view of meaning as embodied beyond language, in objects, events, things and even persons in the world sets the stage for Johnson’s later analysis of architecture as embodying meaning, albeit problematically.

While much of this chapter owes its ground to Dewey and James, Johnson once more draws upon neuroscience to reject the assertion that language can ultimately replace experience. It is here that Johnson once more deploys simulation semantics to demonstrate the experiential ground of language. Where language is concerned, simulation semantics argues that the processing of it is not the result of organizing relatively stable conceptual structures, that is, it is not a matter of interpreting and organizing linguistic signs; instead, a simulation semantics view argues that language processing requires the activation of the same neurological, affective, and sensory structures in the brain as when the experience being described is encountered. Put simply, “you experience and make meaning by enacting experiences that use the same brain regions for perception, feeling, and action that would be used if you were actually engaged in the situation being described” (AMT, 93).

The main consequence of simulation semantics, for Johnson, is twofold. First, simulation semantics makes clear that language emerges from our embodied transactions with the world, rather than merely symbolizes or represents them. Second, simulation semantics provides Johnson with strong evidence to treat language itself as an experience, or part of the ways in which we are in transaction with the world through our bodies. However, Johnson presents the body as an unmarked universal: simulation semantics, for Johnson, does not simply argue that language is an experience for all organisms, rather, simulation semantics presents compelling evidence that language is an experience for organisms like us who have evolved cognitive capacities like us and are implicated in a social situation. Once more, the body becomes the focus, though it is a body assumed to be universally possessed. For Johnson, this understanding of language is contrary to the neopragmatists, linguistic pragmatists, and Analytic Pragmatists claim that language can act as a contrast to experience or that experience is ultimately reducible to language. For Johnson, the rejection of these assumptions is necessary if philosophy is to engage seriously with lived experience.

The themes of neuroscientific engagement with philosophy finally shift to a co-productive, rather than the critical mode offered in chapter four, whose focus is articulating the value of pragmatist philosophy for a more robust “cognitive neuroscience”, a term that Johnson leaves undefined, but the text infers as including both cognitive science and neurosciences in its ambit. Despite this ongoing terminological flexibility, chapter four aims to enhance the connections between neuroscience and pragmatism through a rearticulation of “Neuropragmatism”. As with previous intersections between neuroscience and Pragmatism, Johnson begins with the transaction between the organism and the environment, however he expands his analysis to include the continuity of experience, the co-constitutive nature of reason and emotion, and a pluralist non-reductionism that Johnson views as characterizing both pragmatism and neuroscience. Here, Johnson deploys Dewey’s principle of continuity in what could have been a critical insight for philosophers interested in the intersection of neuroscience and Pragmatism, had he taken the time to develop it fully.

For Johnson, the principle of continuity enables us to recognize the activity of an organism as proceeding from lower levels of activity to higher levels of activity without being identical with or reduced to those lower

levels of activity. To this end, experience happens in and through these lower levels of activity through the ways that they enable transactions with the environment. As such, Johnson could have used the principle to demonstrate the ways that our neurological structures are the lowest level patterns of transaction with the environment, serving to form the basis for our more complex transactions with the environment without articulating a reductionism to our neurology. Johnson's failure to describe the principle of continuity through neuroscience, or an appeal to neuroscience, ultimately robs his work of a valuable tool to push back against the tendency that he identifies in the sciences to push for a single level, reductionist account of experience, a target he consistently critiques throughout the work.

Much of the section on non-reductionism in both Pragmatism and neuroscience in this chapter lean in the direction of a full application of the principle of continuity, through arguing that one of Pragmatism's chief values for neuroscience is its valuation of multiple intersecting levels of explanation for experience, as opposed to relying solely upon one mode of explanation for experience. To this end, Johnson pushes back against the tendency to reduce the mind to the brain, or cognition as happening within the brain solely, as an end run to set up the larger claim that experience and mind are not simply reducible to the objects of scientific inquiry: they must be considered across multiple empirical fields. Thus, the concluding section of chapter four, "Why Neuropragmatism Needs Pragmatism", suggests that the very nature of science as a method of inquiry robs it of the ability to recognize the limitations of itself as a method of inquiry, because it fails to recognize the need for multiple intersecting levels of explanation that are continuous with one another, as well as responsive to the cultural situation from which it emerges. It is this responsive nature that Pragmatism can provide to the sciences and which can enable the sciences to return to the experiences that spawned them.

Part one concludes with the application of the same conceptual metaphor analysis to science that was applied to philosophy, both in the developmental and critical mode. However, Johnson's aim in this last section is not critical as it was with philosophy, but revelatory and developmental, as he returns once more to his previous single authored work and his with Lakoff in the analysis of three metaphors within science: attention as a spotlight, attention as a limited resource, and attention as resource competition. For Johnson, each of these metaphors serves to structure and direct the kinds of research and processes of inquiry within the areas that draw upon such metaphors. They also articulate the values that emerge within these areas of scientific study. To this end, "*what the metaphors do is to give meaning, specificity, and force to those values. In other words, these generic values do not actually mean anything concrete and do not have specific implications for scientific research until they are given substance and application by the metaphors that organize our scientific models* (AMT, 130; italics in the original)," which is to say that the metaphors themselves appear neutral until implicated in a broader domain of scientific inquiry through which they derive their force and power. Indeed, for Johnson, our ability to conceive of scientific phenomena, explain these phenomena, and relate them to our world depends upon the nature of the metaphor that we are using at the time.

In keeping with his work in the previous section, as well as his overall Deweyan orientation, Johnson grounds the use of metaphor in our bodily transactions with the world. Metaphors, for Johnson, emerge from the ways that we describe our transactions with the environment and are continuous, though not identical, with these transactions. Because these metaphors and the values they supply are grounded in our bodily transactions with the world, they enable the possibility of competing values within areas of scientific research: given the complexity of our interactions with the environment, at times a broader metaphor will be necessary to capture gross elements of our experience, while that same inquiry may also be in tension with a more narrow articulation of that same experience. To this end, Johnson concludes that grounding our scientific values and the metaphors that organize them in our bodies does not guarantee that these values will not be in conflict. Instead, this bodily orientation returns us to the need to recognize science as a mode of problem solving that is

continuous with our other modes of inquiry and thus, “the metaphors are what make possible the great achievements of science, because they set research programs, structure scientific inferences, and give concreteness and explanatory force to our deepest scientific values” (AMT, 134).

Part Two: Morality and Law

Part two takes up the theories elaborated in part one and applies them to questions of morality in three parts: Cognitive Science and Morality, the Moral Imagination, and Mind, Metaphor, Law. Chapter six, “Cognitive Science and Morality”, begins with a rejection of the perspective that cognitive science is irrelevant for both philosophy and morality through challenging the is/ought dichotomy and the fact/value dichotomy, which he treats as interchangeable. To overcome this dichotomy, Johnson relies upon Dewey, James, and cognitive science to develop the position that recognizes that, “the key to overcoming the fact/value dichotomy is to recognize that, in every situation in which we find ourselves, we always start with values that have emerged from previous human experiences, and therefore the normative is already pervasive in our lives. We are awash in values” (AMT, 156). For Johnson, through Dewey and James, these values proceed from our biological needs within an environment and, through the principle of continuity, develop into more expansive and conceptual values that guide our social interaction. To this end, for Johnson, there is no dichotomy between facts and values: there is an ongoing interaction between these two categories that shapes our moral engagement.

Johnson, following Dewey, argues that cognitive science must be brought to bear upon problems of morality, specifically relying upon Dewey’s argument that because ethics is an empirical enterprise concerned with human nature, the results of the empirical sciences, cognitive and neuroscience included, must be brought to bear upon it. It is this position that guides and orients the direction of chapter six through Johnson’s analysis of concepts and rules, reasoning, emotion and moral deliberation, empathy and self-formation, moral development, and gender, each given their own section. To this end, Johnson once more returns to his work on conceptual metaphor, this time in its formulation by Lakoff in the mode of a “radial category structure” that presents our concepts as grounded not in a central essential core, but as emergent through metaphorical extensions or through image schemas that allow for the application of our metaphors beyond their initial “source domains”. Johnson develops this position through application to the concept of “moral personhood”, demonstrating the development of moral personhood as an ongoing work in progress that has expanded through interaction with a changing social and cultural environment. Thus, for Johnson, “there is no essential, literal, univocal concept of personhood valid at all times and in all places” (AMT, 147)

The lengthy paragraph in which he articulates this point represents one of Johnson’s more critical moments in the text. He explicitly notes the ways in which concepts viewed as essential are framed by social and cultural conditions. While Johnson recognizes that “for centuries in Western culture the central member of the category *person* was taken to be a white, adult (and typically heterosexual, and often Christian) male,” and that “non- “white” men, women, children, and animals were either not granted full personhood, or they were marginally included” (AMT, 145), he does not spend much time analyzing the social and cultural conditions that enabled this organization of the category of person. Moreover, Johnson also does not connect the restriction of the concept of persons to white, heterosexual, Christian men, to the privileging of the bodily experiences of this class of individuals, a point that could have served to demonstrate the ways in which even our structures of oppression are grounded in the body. In keeping with Johnson’s uncritical engagement with the body, this is not surprising, however it is disappointing that Johnson fails to recognize the critical promise implicit in his analysis of personhood through radial category formation, especially in light of the way that his work treats the metaphorical organization of our moral concepts as grounded in bodily experience.

In keeping with this bodily orientation, our affective dispositions also orient our moral decision making. Here, Johnson turns back to Damasio for support for an argument that morality is “neither purely rational nor purely a matter of feeling or emotion alone” (AMT, 149). Instead, moral deliberation is coextensive with our affective states insofar as they, as previously demonstrated, provide us with insight into the ongoing status of our transactions with the environment, the social environment included. This, for Johnson, allows us to return moral deliberation to our embodied experience in the world via development of empathy and empathetic relations, through Stern’s (1985) concept of “affective attunement,” wherein a parent and a child mutually respond to one another’s affective states at a pre-conscious level. In keeping with his bodily orientation, this theory allows Johnson to construct a view of moral deliberation that requires empathetic transaction with others through social engagement. Thus, for Johnson, “we exist in and through others, and our moral concern depends on our ability to empathize with others” (AMT, 151), an ability developed through our earliest transactions with our families and other persons. Thus, for Johnson, moral development is a social affair and is coextensive with the kinds of social environments through which it is developed.

Chapter six also represents Johnson’s most significant engagement with gendered experience in *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought*, despite his repeated emphasis on the embodied nature of our experience. This limited engagement is somewhat ironic as Johnson takes up a generalized version of the feminist critique of universal moral rationality as excluding women and members of non-white cultures, without turning the critique back upon his own work to this point. Put another way, since Johnson does not critique his own deployment of the body in the mode of a gender and race neutral depiction of the body and its “affordances” in the environment, as if all bodies are organized in a universal manner, Johnson himself reproduces the assumption of universality he presents feminists as taking aim at. It is unsurprising that Johnson neither reproduces this critique in later sections, nor that he does not extend it beyond mentioning the feminist resistance to universal moral rationality, a position he grounds not in the extensive research on the subject, but in Gilligan’s critique of Kohlberg’s studies. Johnson attempts to justify the limitations of this critique with the argument that neuroscience and cognitive science have not produced “sufficient experimental evidence” to address the question of gender in moral organization or, it seems, in other areas where gender has bearing on embodied experience. The limits of neuroscience, however, do not explain Johnson’s failure to engage with the relevant literature in feminism throughout the text.

Chapter six concludes by offering Johnson’s view, in line with Dewey, that the significance of cognitive science for moral deliberation comes not in the form of moral law or proscriptions about behavior, but in the form of providing additional information of what it is to be human, and the ways in which they present to us “psychologically realistic” depictions of human well-being and flourishing (AMT, 158). It is in search of this “psychologically realistic” depiction that Johnson turns to the moral imagination, or what he calls, “the expansive dimension of intelligence at work in the ongoing remaking of experience” (AMT, 170) in chapter seven. Moral imagination, for Johnson, depends on four elements: our knowledge of the environment we are in transaction with, our knowledge of the development of our affective and empathetic capacities, our awareness of the most relevant in a situation, and our ability to simulate the experiences and responses of other people (AMT, 171). This last element returns Johnson once more to simulation semantics, as the core of what Johnson calls “empathetic imagination”, which is the capacity to imaginatively project ourselves into the situation of other individuals and allow our values and ideals to be critiqued from within that situation. Once more, simulation semantics is treated as key, as our ability to activate our neural and bodily systems, affective structures, and perceptual structures in the projection of ourselves into another’s situation is what enables us to feel what it is to view our values from the position of others.

Johnson’s deployment of simulation semantics allows him to further develop this concept by placing it in conversation with aesthetic works. For Johnson, imagination as understood through simulation semantics is what

enables fictional narrative to provide more in the way of moral cultivation than compilations of moral theory. For Johnson, “our involvement with morally significant narratives can change the way we understand situations, feel toward others, and see them as vulnerable creatures worthy of our care and respect” (AMT, 174), through the capacity to imaginatively inhabit the worlds enacted through these fictional narratives. This point, while only briefly addressed by Johnson, represents an unrealized critical promise for Johnson’s work: the possibility that our fictional narratives are more efficacious than our philosophical treatises provides compelling support for arguments to diversify the canons of literature as circulated through higher education, and representations of marginalized bodies within popular culture. However, like many critical possibilities of Johnson’s text, he does not spend much time developing the implications of this thesis for our lived experience in the world.

To this end, chapter eight mainly concerns itself with retreading the ground of Lakoff’s radial categories, Johnson’s conceptual metaphor, and his thesis of embodied reasoning as present throughout the organization of our legal system. For Johnson, the application of these previously discussed theories to law results in the revelation that law, like science and philosophy, is grounded in metaphors and image schemas that proceed from the organization of our bodies and the patterns of interaction of those bodies with our environments. Thus, Johnson’s main advance in this chapter consists in the recognition that “applying this embodied meaning conception to our moral and legal concepts reveals that such concepts typically have their meaning grounded in basic human bodily experiences that become the source domains for the conceptual metaphors operative in our moral and legal reasoning” (Johnson, 187), a point which Johnson could have elaborated through connection with the ways in which some bodies have different meanings through their transactions with the world under the law than others; alternatively, he could have presented the bodily basis of our legal concepts as rooted in the privileging of some bodies over others. Both points could have proceeded from the recognition of the situated nature of our bodies discussed earlier in the chapter.

Of note in chapter eight is Johnson’s recognition through neuroscience that reasoning, including legal reasoning, takes place through “a living human body that is continually engaging environments that are at once physical, social, cultural, economic, moral, legal, gendered, and racialized” (AMT, 177), which represents a departure from Johnson’s previously presented “neutral” body. This statement is ironic given the lack of attention to the ways that the situated natures of our bodies influences the kinds of legal categories and metaphors we develop, especially given that Johnson concludes this final chapter with the observation that “we must not think of metaphor, in the old way, as a mere figure of speech. It is a figure of life. It is a figure of thought. It is a figure of value. We live, love, fight, die, and enact law by metaphors” (AMT, 195). This point is developed from Johnson’s brief metaphorical analysis of not only the Nazi Final Solution, but the organization of the September 11 attacks not as crimes, but through the deployment of the “war on terrorism” metaphor, which enabled the United States to take actions that would not be ordinarily permitted under a metaphor of “terrorism as crime”. To this end, metaphors that proceed from an assumption of a universal bodily experience, or a universal transaction with the world, can have disastrous consequences: Johnson’s failure to attend fully to the orientation of our bodies and the metaphors that proceed from them once more damage his theoretical presentation through its absence.

Part Three: Art and the Aesthetics of Life

In Part Three, philosophers familiar with the work of John Dewey in his texts *Art as Experience* and *Experience and Nature* will find nothing new in Johnson’s chapters nine and ten. Scholars unfamiliar with Dewey’s work, however, may find these chapters a helpful introduction to Dewey’s work on aesthetics and experience in brief. To this end, Johnson does comparatively less theoretical work in these two chapters than in other chapters of his text, insofar as these two chapters amount to a straightforward rearticulation and presentation of Dewey’s

themes of the aesthetic and the qualitative ground of experience, albeit with some conversation with neuroscience to once more provide empirical support for Dewey's claims. In this vein, Johnson relies on the work of Don Tucker to present a thesis that the very structures of the brain support Dewey's conclusions regarding the qualitative ground of experiences. While this is a lofty goal worthy of pursuit, the highly technical nature of Johnson's deployment of Tucker's work distracts from Johnson's aims in chapter ten. Moreover, given Johnson's previous reliance on Damasio's clear articulation of the biological basis of feelings and emotions, as well as Dewey's own recognition of the transformation of feeling into emotion and qualitative unity through the process of art working, which Johnson references briefly, it is curious why he did not simply redeploy Damasio to accomplish the same aim.

Despite this, chapter nine contains a brief, but valuable exegesis on the nature of identity development that deserved a much more thorough treatment than the one offered. Briefly, Johnson observes that "you are who you are in and through the meanings that are afforded you by your experience. Some of these aspects of your identity are profoundly bodily and physical, while others are interpersonal or cultural. You are the relatively stable habits of experiencing, thinking, valuing, feeling, and acting that interpenetrate in your life" (AMT, 222). He thereby presents the development of our identities as emerging through our transactions with our social, cultural, and physical environments and not something isolated within ourselves. For Johnson, our identities do not exist beyond the embeddedness of our bodies within a changing cultural context, nor do they represent a fixed, enduring selfhood: ourselves, for Johnson, are constant works in progress. While this observation, brief as it may be, is important, it is also one anticipated earlier by Shannon Sullivan and Charlene Haddock Siegfried in their work at the intersection of feminism and Pragmatism, and John Dewey himself in *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*, neither of which Johnson referenced in his work.

One important note concerning Johnson's brief concern with identity in chapter nine should be made: Johnson does not purport to argue that our culture tells us who we are; rather, Johnson's thesis is that we discover our identity through transaction with our social world and physical environments. Identity is thus an emergent process of ongoing transaction with the environment, a point Thomas Alexander notes by stating that "identity is not a useful idea when dealing with a creative process, unless it is understood in terms of the function of 'identifying,' in which case the realities of difference, development, and transformation are taken into account."² Thus, "identity" becomes the result of the consummation of the process of identification through transaction with our social and cultural environments, wherein the "realities of difference, development, and transformation" are integrated together to give rise to a qualitative unity that is denoted as our identity. Again, this point, while valuable for future directions of scholarship, is not fully developed by Johnson in his text and ultimately abandoned as he proceeds to his final chapter, an analysis of architecture.

Johnson concludes his work on embodiment in chapter eleven through an analysis of architecture that extends the themes developed in the preceding chapters into the space of the built world. Johnson succinctly articulates the aim of the chapter in the following:

My hypothesis is that architectural structures are experienced by humans as both sense giving and signifying. That is, architectural structures present us, first, with a way of situating ourselves in, or being "at home" in, and making sense of our world, and, second, they provide physical and cultural affordances that are meaningful for our survival and flourishing as meaning-seeking creatures.
(AMT, 249: italics in the original)

2) Thomas Alexander, *The Human Eros: Eco-Ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt13x0c0w.17>.

Throughout this text, Johnson has presented the case that meaning is relations; objects, persons, words, and situations have meaning through the transactions that humans engage in with them. Meaning, therefore, draws upon our past experiences with the object in question, and the cultural contexts surrounding our transactions with the object which condition the kinds of engagements we can have with those objects. To this end, architecture emerges from similar kinds of image schemas and conceptual metaphors rooted in our bodily experiences as other domains previously addressed by Johnson. As such, architecture itself becomes a process of inquiry whereby we creatively remake and reshape the environment in which we are in transaction to realize values that proceed from our bodies. Architecture, therefore, enacts the various meanings that emerge from our repeated transactions with the world such that architecture emerges as “a response to the human desire to feel ourselves at home in our surroundings” (AMT, 256).

This concept of being “at home” in an environment is grounded in what Johnson calls the “affordances” of architecture. For Johnson, “what any object affords is the result of the nature of our bodies and brains — our perceptual apparatus, our neural processes, our affective responses, our motor programs — *as they interactively engage patterns and structures of our environments*” (AMT, 245), which is to say that our bodily transactions with objects is the ground from which meaning as an affordance arises. The ways in which these affordances are transacted with provide the ways in which we are “at home” with the object or in the situation in question. Johnson, here, is indebted to the phenomenological tradition through Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, insofar as to be at home refers to the ways we in habit or are in the world through our bodies without obstruction. However, it is in this very determination that Johnson, once more, reveals his predication on a universal, general image of the body, as not all bodies are “at home” in the environment given the affordances of that environment. Indeed, the very nature of institutionalized “accommodations” or “accessibility” requirements for structures belies the recognition that architecture itself proceeds from a perspective on the body that does not include all modes of embodied human existence.

Despite the above, Johnson closes his text on an optimistic note, indicating the embodied nature of philosophy, morality, and art while characterizing them as fundamentally human endeavors situated in the ongoing experiences of human activity. For Johnson, the embodied nature of the arts, philosophy, and science renders these disciplines even more impressive due to their bodily and aesthetic nature. However, it is their fundamentally aesthetic nature that Johnson centers on in his concluding remarks stating, “without the aesthetic elements and processes of meaning-making, there could be no philosophy, no science, no morality, no law, and no art. The aesthetic dimensions of experience are what make possible our ability to make sense of, be at home in, and intelligently reconstruct our world” (AMT, 261).

Critical Review: The Invisibility of Disabled, Raced, Gendered, and other Non-Normative Bodies

As mentioned in the main portion of the review, chapter six contains Johnson’s most significant engagement with gender in this text. However, this engagement is not through the feminist tradition, or the pragmatist feminist tradition, but through neuroscience, which represents an ongoing failure to address gendered experience in this text. While a full critique of Johnson’s ongoing failure to engage with feminist work on embodiment is impossible in the space of this review, I want to offer an example of the ways in which inclusion of pragmatic feminist thought can address Johnson’s lack of development of certain ideas that deserved a much more thorough treatment than the one offered in this text. In the above, I noted that Chapter nine contains a brief exegesis on the nature of identity which was preceded by Shannon Sullivan, Charlene Haddock Siegfried, and Dewey himself, none of which Johnson actively engages. For the sake of length, I want to focus on Sullivan’s engagement with gender through Pragmatism as articulated in her article, “Reconfiguring Gender with John Dewey:

Habit, Bodies, and Cultural Change.”³ To restate, Johnson observes that “you are who you are in and through the meanings that are afforded you by your experience. Some of these aspects of your identity are profoundly bodily and physical, while others are interpersonal or cultural. You are the relatively stable habits of experiencing, thinking, valuing, feeling, and acting that interpenetrate in your life” (AMT, 222). He thereby presents our identities as developed through our transactions with our social, cultural, and physical environments and not something isolated within ourselves.

For Sullivan, the relatively stable habits that Johnson appeals to in his statement operate on the cultural and personal level and serve as a constraint on the range of possible options for embodying identity available to a given member of the society in question. To this end, Sullivan, like Johnson, suggests that our transactions with the environment are the means whereby our society and our culture instructs us on the appropriate conduct for our given bodily organization. Moreover, for Sullivan, the dominant identity constructs that circulate throughout our culture serve to inform and cultivate the kinds of persons we become.⁴ Sullivan states, “I am not anchored in my world as a generic person; I am anchored in it as a (white, middle-class, heterosexual) woman. The ways in which I take up my world and transact with it are likely to be very different than the ways that a man might. I have learned to comport my body — that is, myself — as a woman is supposed to do.”⁵ In Sullivan’s work, “supposed to do”, indicates an awareness of power dynamics that Johnson either ignores or chooses not to engage in his construction of a transactional view of identity.

That is, in Sullivan’s view, the purpose of such an analysis as conducted in her article, which bridges Deweyan habit and Judith Butler’s theory of gender performance, is to indicate the ways in which habits can be used to reshape the gender binary that pervades modern western culture. To this end, Sullivan, unlike Johnson, highlights the ways in which the cultural structures, through which we enact our identities, themselves are possessed of rigid, sedimented structures. Therefore, these structures can serve to limit the possibilities for individuality within a cultural context. Johnson, in contrast, leaves this element of culture unmarked: while Johnson recognizes that our identities form in transaction with our cultures, the nature of that transaction is left relatively unmarked, as are the consequences of that transaction. In short, Johnson, despite indicating that our identities are formed in transaction with the world, fails to indicate the ways in which these identities are enacted as *qualities* of our relatively stable habits, and the socio-cultural narratives that frame the formation of our identities.

To this end, as Sullivan suggests, it is not the case that we are simply our, “relatively stable habits of experiencing, thinking, valuing, feeling, and acting”; it is the case that we experience, think, value, and act through our bodily habits. In the context of gender, for Sullivan, we experience, think, value, and act *as the gender identity constituted by those acts*. To this end, gender matters as Sullivan notes, our embodied habits materially affect the ways in which we transact with the world through them. Johnson’s failure to recognize this distinction is curious as, in chapter eight, Johnson acknowledges that we are, “continually engaging environments that are at once physical, social, cultural, economic, moral, legal, gendered, and racialized” (AMT, 177), without recognizing that our transactions with these environments result in the incorporation of the habits that enact these qualities from the environment. *We become* raced, gendered, oriented sexually, through our engagement with the environment, an engagement which is structured by the habits that we develop through transaction with our culture. To that end, we are not simply individuals or human organisms in transaction with an environment as humans, we do so as gendered, raced, and sexualized.

3) Shannon Sullivan, “Reconfiguring Habit with John Dewey: Habit, Bodies, and Cultural Change,” *Hypatia* 15, no 1 (2000): 23–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hyp.2000.0009>.

4) *Ibid.*, 28.

5) *Ibid.*

With the above in mind, I want to turn from Johnson's failure to engage meaningfully with the gendered body to Johnson's failure to engage meaningfully with the disabled body. Throughout this review, I have pointed briefly to Johnson's problematic articulation of a universal or "default" body as limiting his analysis to individuals who fit within a limited range of embodiments. To this end, the critique I am advancing, like that of Vidali⁶ is not grounded in a critique of the functions of metaphor, but the ways in which the body as described and assumed by Johnson excludes the disabled, as well as raced, gendered, and sexualized body from consideration in the process of meaning making. I view this critique as operating in tandem with critiques of the use of metaphors of disability, like "paralysis" and "blindness," in feminist literature by scholars like May, Ferri, and Schalk, all of whom take issue with the ways in which the disabled body as metaphor is used exclusively to refer to negative experiences. Schalk, effectively summarizes this thesis in the following:

The use of disability metaphors promotes an ideology of impairment as a negative form of embodiment. These metaphors typically position disability as invariably bad, undesirable, pitiful, painful, and so on. They are, therefore, ableist because they promote discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities.⁷

Schalk further explains that the metaphors of disability used in common language and feminist scholarship are grounded in a presumption of what the experience of a disabled body must be like, rather than drawing upon the actuality of that experience. To this end, Schalk argues that Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory, upon which much of *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought* is predicated, cannot capture the sociocultural basis of disability metaphors, nor does it account for the ways in which our cultural ideas, or "mythoi" in the words of Thomas Alexander, serve to shape the ways that these metaphors are developed and circulated through our culture. Put another way, because able-bodied members of our society have treated their embodied experience as the primary mode of being in the world, and because our metaphors proceed from our embodied experience in the world, metaphors of disability are taken to be the opposite of the "normal" experience of the world as articulated by the able-bodied population. It is in this vein that Johnson's work contributes to the circulation of the able-body as the default body, specifically in so far as Johnson presumes the able-body from the outset of his text. As stated by Johnson, in the introduction to *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought*:

Relative to fleas and whales, we are middle-sized creatures whose perceptual and motor capacities allow us to see, touch, taste, smell, and hear certain other objects. We exist in a gravitational field that constrains the patterns of our bodily movement. We have evolved to stand erect, rather than moving on all fours, and we have an opposable thumb that lets us grasp and manipulate certain objects. Our visual system permits us to perceive only certain wavelengths of light and to have good depth perception only over a limited range of distances. Our auditory system records only a specific range of sound frequencies. In other words, out of our bodily interaction with our environmental affordances, we take the meaning of things and events in certain specified ways, according to specific interactional patterns. (AMT, 18)

6) Amy Vidali, "Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010): 33–54, Project MUSE, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jlc.0.0032>.

7) Sami Schalk, "Metaphorically Speaking: Ableist Metaphors in Feminist Writing," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33, no 4 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v33i4.3874>. In the online open access version of this essay, the text is given as one continuous whole without page numbers.

As indicated by Vialdi,⁸ the way in which Johnson articulates the body through his conceptual metaphor theory makes specific presumptions about the kinds of bodies we have and the kinds of capacities that those bodies possess. Moreover, we may take this description of the body as the ground of Johnson's articulation of "the body" throughout the text. As an example of this construction of the normal body in Johnson's text, he states, in chapter nine, "given our upright stance within a gravitational field and our proprioceptive and kinesthetic senses, we humans have developed a sense of bodily balance as key to successful transactions with our world" (AMT, 218). What is in question here is not the possession of a sense of balance by humans, but how that sense of balance is articulated across diverse body types. Johnson, in this example, assumes that our sense of bodily balance as correlated with our "upright stance," which assumes a body that stands upright in specific ways. Wheelchair users, as an example, do not stand upright in the ways Johnson indicates yet still have a sense of balance; cane and crutch users rely upon their mobility aids to remain upright and thus develop a different meaning to balance based on their transaction with the environment, a point that Johnson acknowledges, albeit only through the presentation of an extreme, and science-fictional, metaphor: "Were we to have radically different bodies, or were we to have radically different environments — such as existing outside a gravitational field — we might have either no sense of balance or a quite different sense than we currently possess" (AMT, 218). Indeed, Johnson's very suggestion that we would have to seek out a radically different environment in order to conceive of a body that might have a different sense of balance than the assumed default erases the existence of bodies for whom balance is experienced differently.

This is important for our understanding of the ways that Johnson marginalizes the disabled body as Vialdi indicates in her critique of the "seeing as believing" metaphor in Johnson's earlier work, how the assumption that all individuals can see, or see equally well, privileges the construction of the sighted body as a "normal body," and the capacity to "see" as crucial to the capacity to know, which marginalizes other modes of knowing and experiencing the world.⁹ For Vialdi, Johnson's articulation of a "normal body" with the capacity for "normal" sight described above thereby excludes disabled bodies and experiences from the construction of meaning by privileging a specific kind of experience, and experience that proceeds from the body as described in Johnson's organization above.¹⁰ To this end, Schalk succinctly captures this critique of Johnson's position in the following:

Experiences of disabled bodies are refused meaningful existence and elaboration within cognitive metaphor theory. The theory assumes that there can be no common cultural metaphors based upon the experiences of tremors, stuttering, or using a wheelchair because these experiences are regarded as random, accidental, and idiosyncratic. Within the terms of the theory, nondisabled experiences are considered the universal grounding of metaphor, despite the fact that not even all people who (for instance) see, hear, speak, and walk perform and experience these actions in exactly the same way, especially given that these actions are in many ways conditioned by factors such as gender, age, and body size.¹¹

Schalk's thesis in the context of *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought* is made manifest through the ways that Johnson alludes to a plurality of embodiments yet fails to explore the consequences of those embodiments for

8) Vialdi, "Seeing What We Know," 36.

9) Ibid., 38.

10) Ibid.

11) Schalk, "Metaphorically Speaking."

his theory. At times, Johnson attempts to address the plurality of human embodiments, as in the following examples from Chapter one with regard to the verticality metaphor: “up and down are important concepts to us, because we are bodily creatures who can sometimes stand erect in a gravitational field in which we experience things going up and coming back down” (AMT, 47); “given the ways human bodies are typically (but not universally) put together” (AMT, 47); and “consider, for example, how people who have use of their legs routinely move around in their environment” (AMT, 48). All of these examples imply the existence of the disabled body, albeit only through the possibility that there are human bodies that are “atypically put together”, or “cannot stand erect in gravitational fields”, or “do not have use of their legs”. In as much as the implication of the existence of the disabled body through absence opens the possibility for Johnson to discuss ways in which bodies that he would consider “atypical,” which we might read as disabled, create meaning through their unique transactions with the world, he does not attempt to articulate these experiences through his conceptual metaphor theory. Indeed, by mentioning and not exploring the transactions of the disabled body, either through engaging with the relevant literature critiquing metaphors of disability, and Johnson’s theory in particular, or through engaging with literature on disabilities studies, Johnson serves to reify the place of the able-body as the point from which the world of meaning and embodiment unfolds. Thus, despite making explicit reference to the possibility of the disabled body, able bodies are given primacy in Johnson’s work over the consideration of a diversity of embodied experience.

To this end, even the examples that Johnson uses when demonstrating the application and prevalence of conceptual metaphor theory rely on the exclusion of the disabled body. Once more returning to the introduction, Johnson briefly mentions the presence of conceptual metaphor in Sign Language through a brief reference to Sarah Taub’s *Language from the Body: Iconicity and Metaphor in American Sign Language*, though he does not offer an account of how metaphor and meaning making functions within sign language. Again, this is worth noting as other bodily forms of meaning making, like dance, are given more extended treatments within his text as an example of the extension of conceptual metaphor into the bodily domain. Moreover, as Meir and Cohen¹² indicate, body-part metaphors in sign languages are more constrained than their counterparts in spoken languages due to the need for the metaphor in sign language to point directly to the body part in question. As indicated in their discussion of the metaphor, “the foot of the hill”, Meir and Cohen state, “in spoken languages, the metaphorical use is built on the resemblance of the spatial relations between the foot and the body it is part of, abstracting away from the actual form of the human vs. geographical foot. In sign languages, the actual form of the organ is there as part of the form of the sign, and is highlighted in the sign,”¹³ which indicates that the form of the language used has important implications for the ways that the metaphor is deployed. Because sign language requires the use of the body part in question in making a sign, body-part signs are not used *as metaphors* in the ways that body part words, as in “the foot of the hill”, are used in spoken language. However, they can be used as the “autonomous element”, or the element that indicates what Johnson calls the “target domain” of the metaphor to create meaning.

While the above is a brief exegesis of the functions of metaphor in sign language and represents a single example of how diverse embodiments use metaphor and create meaning, it should be noted that this does not reject the possibility that metaphor exists in sign language. Rather, it acts as an indication that conceptual metaphors, as they proceed from the body, must be embodied differently due to the diversity of human embodiment. Consequently, this leads to a diversity of ways of making meaning, a point that Johnson ignores in favor

12) Irit Mier and Ariel Cohen, “Metaphor in Sign Languages,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9, (June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01025>.

13) *Ibid.*, 8.

of privileging a universal, default human. Indeed, as Meir and Cohen note, “in spoken languages, metaphor is often described as a process of making novel use of existing means.... In sign languages, this description is not accurate: metaphor is usually not making novel use of existing means, but rather the means for creating novel forms,”¹⁴ which indicates that the function of metaphor within sign language is to create new forms of meaning making whole cloth, a function that is not present within the use of metaphor in spoken language. That is to say that while metaphor may be present across multiple modes of embodied meaning making, the kinds of bodies engaged in meaning making matter for how meaning is made, a point that is particularly salient in this critique of Johnson, given his statement of the following in chapter two, in response to Searle, Rorty, and Davidson: “It does matter where these metaphors come from — that is, why we have the ones we do, how they are grounded experientially, and how they shape our thought” (AMT, 72). If this is the case, then Johnson’s failure to attend to the ways in which a diversity of bodies should produce a diversity of metaphors and meanings through their transactions with the world is a noticeable gap in Johnson’s cognitive metaphor theory and the vision of philosophy, science, law, and life as embodied that proceeds from it.

To conclude this brief critical review of Johnson’s text, I would like to take up Johnson’s concept of being “at home” in an environment through the “affordances” of a space organized by architecture. This, in my view, represents another way that Johnson fails to consider the multiplicity of ways that the body transacts with the world, broadly construed. To review, for Johnson, “what any object affords is the result of the nature of our bodies and brains – our perceptual apparatus, our neural processes, our affective responses, our motor programs — *as they interactively engage patterns and structures of our environments*” (AMT, 245). This means that our bodily transactions with objects is the ground from which meaning as an affordance arises, and subsequently provides the ways in which we are “at home” with the object or in the situation in question. Johnson, here, is indebted to the phenomenological tradition through Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, though his deployment of them is comparatively thin. For Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, to be “at home” in an environment is to be in the environment in such a way as to be able to extend the body through the environment without encountering resistance to the movement. Here, being “at home” is related to the similar concept of being “comfortable” in a space, insofar as the organization of the space and of our bodies does not impede our motion through that space. To that end, we become “comfortable” with spaces and activities as we habituate ourselves to those spaces, and as those spaces adjust to the presence of our bodies through repeated transactions with that space. For Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, these habitual bodies are bodies that do not call attention to themselves, are not interrupted in their passage through the space. In short, they trail behind their actions in the world.

To provide a more concrete example, we can describe our bodies as habitual in the action of writing or typing which, ironically, is the prototype for Husserl’s description of the actions of a habitual body. In the experience of writing in my native language with a keyboard with a standard layout, my body trails behind the actions of typing: I do not consciously attend to the positioning of my hands and my body as I move my fingers around the keys, nor do I attend to the pressure of my feet on the ground, my back against the chair. My body, for Husserl, is not experienced as an impediment to the completion of the activity. Indeed, my body is hardly noticed in the execution of the activity unless some function in the environment calls attention to my body. Thus, to return to Johnson, the affordances of any object is the result of the nature of our bodies and brains as they interact with the patterns and structures of our environment in such a way as to not impede those patterns of interaction. To that end, I am not at home in an environment if my body is not suited for transaction with that object or the environment. As an example, I would be not “at home” typing on an ergonomic keyboard, nor would I be at home typing in a language that I had not mastered.

14) Ibid., 11.

It is on this point that I want to turn to Sara Ahmed's pathbreaking work, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness", wherein she takes up the phenomenological project sketched above through the work of Frantz Fanon. For Fanon, it is not simply the case that we can take up the corporeal schema, the image of our bodies that incorporates all of Johnson's elements, in our discussion of our embodied action in the world: we must do so in the context of the historical, racial, and I would argue along with Ahmed, sexual and gendered dimensions of bodily experience. To rearticulate Johnson's thesis through Ahmed, what any object affords is not just the result of the nature of our bodies and brains as they interactively engage patterns and structures of our environments; what any object affords is the result of the ways that that our bodies are oriented prior to our transactions with the patterns and structures of our environment. That is, for Ahmed, the affordances of any object are the result of the histories that we inherit upon arrival, and the ways in which the world is already given before our arrival in it.¹⁵

Johnson recognizes the given nature of the world in chapter nine, when he describes the human organism as reasoning through "a living human body that is continually engaging environments that are at once physical, social, cultural, economic, moral, legal, gendered, and racialized" (AMT, 177), though he does not devote much, if any, space to articulating the ways in which the organization of the environment as gendered, classed, racialized, and sexualized affects our transactions with the environment itself. Comparatively, Ahmed argues that the organization of the environment around the elements Johnson described as a direct effect on the ways in which we are "at home" in the world.¹⁶ For Ahmed, these elements of the environment can be viewed as inheritances, or the shaping of the world as a consequence of histories passed down. In the context of race, it is the history of colonialism that shapes the world, makes the world white before our arrival in the world. In so doing, the world is not only made ready for white bodies, but whiteness becomes an orientation that we inherit upon arrival in a world made white.¹⁷ This understanding has bearing on Johnson's concept of affordances and the ways we are "at home" in the world:

Such an inheritance can be re-thought in terms of orientations: we inherit the reachability of some objects, those that are "given" to us, or at least made available to us, within the "what" that is around. I am not suggesting here that "whiteness" is one such "reachable object", but that whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach. By objects, we would include not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, habits. Race becomes, in this model, a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do "things" with.¹⁸

Here, we can update Johnson's concept of affordances: what any object affords is the result of the ways that our bodies are oriented by the histories we inherit prior to our transactions with the patterns and structures of our environment through the organization of the world as physical, social, cultural, economic, moral, legal, gendered, and racialized. That is, a body that is heir to the history of colonialism, a body that is heir to the history of ableism, a body that is the heir to a history of heterosexism, and a body that is heir to the history of capitalism will all transact differently with the world due to the different ways that these histories place objects in reach for them. To this end, in keeping with Sullivan, the embodied habits of our identities become a question of what we can reach for, and how we may reach for them. To this end, habit becomes important. For

15) Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 149–168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>.

16) *Ibid.*, 152–153.

17) *Ibid.*, 154.

18) *Ibid.*

Ahmed, whiteness, in a world made white, becomes habitual in the phenomenological sense: it trails behind its actions in a world made white by histories of colonialism, while bodies of color immediately stand forth in their actions as they reach for objects.

To bring this critical section of the review full circle, Johnson's thesis concerning architecture, that "*architectural structures present us, first, with a way of situating ourselves in, or being 'at home' in, and making sense of our world, and, second, they provide physical and cultural affordances that are meaningful for our survival and flourishing as meaning-seeking creatures*" (AMT, 249), should be re-evaluated in terms of the kinds of humans that can be situated in and made "at home" in such environments. As Johnson's thesis on architecture requires that, "the meaning of any object is grounded in the affordances for possible experiences related to that object" (AMT, 250), I submit that the kinds of meaningful experience of architecture are, like Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, grounded in the idea of an able-bodied subject that transacts with a world that is made ready for able-bodied individuals.

This able-bodied subject is presupposed in the kinds of experiences that Johnson describes in his discussion of the conceptual metaphors common to architecture. As an example, in the conceptual metaphor of "containment", Johnson argues, "from infancy on, we climb in and out of boxes, baskets, cribs, closets, cars, and other containers. We find what it feels like to be confined within tight containers, as compared to roaming more freely in open spaces" (AMT, 251), which privileges a body that can both see and possesses full range of motion with its limbs; in the metaphor of verticality, "one of the most significant human transitions from infancy to childhood is the emergence of an upright posture. We struggle to stand erect, and we learn that standing requires a firm base (ground) and an appropriate balance" (AMT, 251), which privileges a body that can walk upright; in the metaphor of balance as connected to verticality, "we strive for bodily balance as the basis for our capacity to remain upright, in control, and able to act effectively.... Babies, after many trials over an extended period, come to tentatively master an upright posture. Eventually, they push forward and have to learn the balance of a walking motion" (AMT, 252). This position also privileges the ability to walk.

As with his previous applications of conceptual metaphor theory, Johnson constructs the prototypical world, and our experience within it, as one which is inherited by able-bodied humans. Moreover, Johnson constructs the possibility for meaning as grounded in the ongoing experiences of transacting with a world already prepared for able-bodied humans. Insofar as the embodied meanings of architecture proceed from the image schemas and conceptual metaphors of an able-bodied engagement with the world, architecture, as structured by Johnson, appears as a way of remaking the world in the image of able-bodied humans. Architecture, on this reading, serves to prepare the world for inheritance by individuals whose bodies match the assumed norm and, in so doing, interrupts the disabled body in its attempts to extend itself in the world. While it is possible that Johnson had this situation in mind in his description of "bad architecture," which "holds before us and habituates the impoverishment of our lives, social arrangements, and relations to our environment and other people" (AMT, 258), it is unclear whether or not Johnson considers the inaccessibility of most architecture as it proceeds from able-bodied image schemas and conceptual metaphor, to be indicative of the ways in which architecture, like conceptual metaphor theory, contributes to the impoverishment of the lives of those people rendered invisible by his theoretical approach to embodiment.