



## **Transcending the Standard Model**

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## Opinion

Psychotherapy treats individuals as psychosomatic wholes, employing both cognitive and pharmacological intervention. Yet, common theoretical frameworks inadequately model human physico-intentional integration. Cartesian dualism cannot explain mindbody interaction. Eliminative materialism rejects the direct and intimate experience of consciousness. Reductive materialism remains stalled by the "The hard problem of consciousness" [1]. Consequently, a default position, which I am calling "the Standard Model" (SM), has been widely accepted. It sees behavior as entirely neurophysical in origin, ignoring falsifying observations. While it is rational to apply the SM to data it is capable of explaining, there is hard evidence that intentionality can modify brain function. For example, in a review of 26 pre-post Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) studies of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) using a variety of neurobiological methods, Andrea Poli et al. [2] found that cognitivebehavioral therapy seems to be able to restructure, modify, and transform the neurobiological component of OCD [2]. On the other hand, thought clearly depends on neural processes.

Thirty years ago I published an article decrying the compartmentalization of thought and suggesting paradigms for a philosophy open to the full range of human experience [3]. Chief among them was the projection paradigm, which involves (1) considering problems from diverse cultural, historical and disciplinary perspectives; (2) seeing the several results not as mutually exclusive, but, like the projections of an architectural design, as mutually illuminating; and finally, (3) identifying points of similarity and difference and using them to construct a more inclusive model. Recently, I applied this methodology to the problem of consciousness [4], showing, in more detail, the inadequacy of the SM, and discussing the obstacles precluding an integrated understanding of mind. Two sources of difficulty were identified: (1) representational artifacts due to an incommensurate conceptual space, and (2) a restrictive fundamental abstraction.

A conceptual space is the set of concepts used to articulate experience. We employ our conceptual space as a standard tool set, rarely reflecting on its adequacy to the job at hand. In dealing with mind, the standard conceptual space, even among those wholly rejecting dualism, is Cartesian. As Charles H Kahn [5] has observed, "... even those contemporary thinkers who entirely reject the principle of Cartesian dualism are obliged to use this dichotomy as a negative point of reference for the definition of their own view" [5]. Problems with a conceptual space are difficult to identify from within an intellectual tradition but can often be seen by comparing other traditions. I compared the post-Cartesian with the Aristotelian conceptual space that preceded it. Representational artifacts are concepts that reflect our representation of reality, rather than reality itself. A well-known example is event simultaneity in physics, which is not a property of nature, but depends on one's frame of reference. Dualism is another such artifact-reflecting not a division in nature, but in our conceptualization of nature.

Since humans are psychosomatic organisms who perceive to know and conceptualize to act, physicality and intentionality are dynamically integrated. Ignoring this seamless

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**Copyright**@ Polis DF, This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited. unity, post-Cartesian thought conceives them separately-creating problems that did not previously exist, e.g. the mind-body problem and the hard problem of consciousness. One of Aristotle's pivotal insights is the identity of action and passion: A acting on B is identically B being acted upon by A. An instance is that physically encoded information informing the intellect is identical with the intellect being informed by physically encoded information. This identity is radically incompatible with dualism's partition of human beings into res extensa (extended stuff) and res cogitans (thinking stuff). Descartes drew the wrong line in the wrong place because thought requires neural representations, his res extensa.

Finding the right line requires reflection. more Neurophysiologists have made great strides in determining how the brain represents and processes information. These strides exemplify Thomas S Kuhn's [6] normal research problems, which do not aim to produce major novelties. The problem is that neurally represented and processed contents are not known contents. They are merely intelligible-potentially, not actually known. Most of the information the brain represents and processes remains unconscious. Only when we become conscious of information is it actually known. That is why Descartes's line is in the wrong place. If a line is to be drawn, it is between potency and act-between the intelligibility of neural representations and the actuality of understanding. Empirical awareness is logically distinct, but dynamically inseparable, from our brain and its processes.

When we become aware of information it crosses from the physical to the intentional theater of operation. Its explanatory principles cease to be structure, energy and momentum, and become belief, experience, desire and, to some degree, logic. These are intentional realities, the workspace of talk therapy. Franz Brentano notes that an essential characteristic of intentionality is its aboutness, the "Intentional Inexistence" of a target [7]. We do not just know, will or hope, we know, will or hope something. Such acts cannot be fully understood without knowing what they are about. Physical states, on the other hand, are self-contained. Even though physicality and intentionality are logically distinct, they are not divided. We sense to know and think to act. How, then, did dualism and its conceptual space become so entrenched? Like all

distinctions, that between the physical and the intentional results from abstraction, from attending to some aspects of experience to the exclusion of others. Almost a century ago, Alfred North Whitehead [8] warned of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, of thinking of our abstractions as concrete realities [8]. That, I suggest, is the case here.

Knowledge invariably involves a knowing subject and a known object. The initial moment of natural science is the abstraction of the object from the subject-attending to physical objects to the exclusion of the inseparable subjectivity. Physical scientists care about what was experienced, not the act of experiencing. Thus, physical science is, by design and appropriately, bereft of data and concepts on knowing subjects and their mental acts. The result of this approach has been powerful theories of mindless reality. Yet, the data and concepts abstracted away are essential to any theory of mind. The SM attempts to apply theories of mindless dynamics to human psychosomatic reality. Philosophically, this is physicalism or metaphysical "Naturalism," but it is unnatural, for it ignores nature's intentional theater of operations.

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