

Idols of the Tribe: The Metaphysics of Modern Science

The new post-quantum scientific knowledge imperative: science and its scientists must make conscious their *a priori* preconceived metaphysical presuppositions, value assumptions and beliefs underlying modern scientific ontology, ideology and methodology. These “idols of the tribe” (Francis Bacon) have become the dualistic biases, the “false absolutes” of science that belie the interdependent unity of subject and object, of experimenter and experiment, of mind and body, of spirit and matter, indeed, of relative/particular and of universal/ultimate. Scientific research into the perfectly subjective base or ground of the nature of mind, of human consciousness, is thereby precluded. For example, the ontology that the whole of reality is objective and physical (Metaphysical Realism/Materialism); or that it is subjective and spiritual (Metaphysical Idealism) is a qualitative judgment of value, not a quantitative scientific fact. Both of these ontologies are unproven and unprovable metaphysical assumptions.

Scientific Materialism (physicalism, objectivism, reductionism) is the “scientific” “web of belief”—the totems of the cult of fundamentalist “Scientism”—that has colonized the “Modern” Western mind. Unfortunately, this concept-belief system has become the prevailing ideology of the physical, biological and social sciences, the humanities, and indeed, of our global mass culture. This quite unscientific science proto-religion is largely responsible for the catastrophic, narcissistic reduction of our inherent compassionate subjective *spirit*, to mere objective consumable *matter*. From the metaphysics you choose, arises the epistemology you deserve.

Let us now consider a brief summary of these unexamined cognitive biases, assumptions and presuppositions, to wit, our deep cultural background scientific “web of belief”.

1. **The Principle of Physicalism (Materialist Realism):** An essentially pre-given separate and independently existing, exclusively *physical* spacetime reality exists as a “real world out there” (RWOT), the basis of all appearing phenomena, *a priori*, independent of observation or experiment by any sentient observer (the “myth of the given”). It's all just *observer-independent* purely physical stuff.
2. **The Principle of Objectivism:** This purely physical reality is ultimately knowable to *separate* human observers *observer,theory,model-independently* via objective, quantitative scientific observation, experiment and mathematical analysis (objective proof of this view has remained unfindable for 400 years). The *observer-dependent* phenomena of Middle Way Buddhist view are denied. Here, reality—Newton's absolute space and time—is not just *relatively*, conventionally objective (Buddhism), but *ultimately* objective (Metaphysical Realism). The mind's *subjective* personal and transpersonal phenomena and experience are not proper study for *objective* science; thus the “taboo of subjectivity”. Subject and its object are split.

3. **The Principle of Material Substance Monism:** Material substance is all there is. There is nothing other than, or transcendent to, or inclusive of this observer-independent, purely objective physical reality; no more inclusive whole; and there is no truth extant, or discoverable, or beyond this objectivist materialist, realist permanent, eternal substance. This view is radically essentialist.
4. **The Principle of Reductionism:** All subjective experience—private, first person, mental, emotional and spiritual events and experiences—can be ontologically or epistemologically *reduced* to their objective, physical electrochemical neural correlates in purely physical brain matter. Mind, experience, behavior, love, God are nothing more or less than an “emergent property,” an “epiphenomenon” or “artifact” of physical brain and its electro-chemical processes. Causality is always “upward” from physical to mental. “Downward causality”, via a holistic, primordial consciousness ground, to a mental, then physical dimension is denied. Indeed, it is ideologically forbidden. On this radically reductionist view, human consciousness is the product of mere material, physical brain. Conversely, in the great wisdom traditions of our species—Veda-Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism, and the monotheistic traditions—we find that matter, brain and mind arise from trans-conceptual, transpersonal formless *ultimate* primordial ground, unbounded whole, by whatever name, in which all *relative* spacetime form arises.
5. **The Principle of Local Universal Causal Determinism:** All events are determined by their local, objective, purely physical causes. If we knew all the initial causal conditions, then we could determine, through classical mechanics alone, with complete certainty all of the effects (objects/events) in the universe (Laplace's Demon). Holistic, “nonlocal” acausal, indeterminate explanation of events is precluded. Here, the metaphysics of modern science with its sacrosanct causal “principal of locality” is at odds with the acausal, nonlocality of its own Quantum Field Theory (Boaz 2017 “The Collapse of Objective Reality: Quantum Nonlocality and Buddhist Emptiness”, www.davidpaulboaz.org).
6. **The Closure Principle:** This purely physical realm of all existence is “causally closed” to any non-physical, even quantum, causal explanation. The validity of any causal explanation beyond the physical local dimension is implicitly or explicitly denied. Again, the incommensurability of relativistic with quantum physics arises. The propitious desideratum of a quantum theory of gravity—the unification of the cosmic with the quantum—is hindered by this Closure Principle.
7. **The Principle of Universalism:** The preceding “scientific” ideology is the only correct explanation as to the nature of reality, its discovery, prediction, explanation and interpretation. No other views or methodologies can lead to truth. All differing views are in error. Cognitive bias indeed.

—David Paul Boaz

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