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GALILEO COMMISSION

Beyond a Materialist Worldview

Towards an Expanded Science

The Scientific and Medical Network



The Galileo Commission is a project of the Scientific and Medical Network (www.scimednet.org), one of whose principal aims is to challenge the adequacy of the philosophy of scientific materialism (scientism) as an exclusive basis for knowledge and values. The Galileo Commission Report is an invitation to scientists and academics to 'look through the telescope' at research evidence that is currently ignored or dismissed because it is philosophically incompatible with scientism. The Report aims to open up public discourse and to find ways to expand the presuppositions of science so that science (a) is not constrained by an outdated view of the nature of reality and consciousness; and (b) is better able to accommodate and explore significant human experiences and questions that it is currently unable to accommodate for philosophical reasons. The Galileo Commission is represented by a distinguished group of over 90 scientific advisers affiliated to more than 30 universities worldwide. Many of these advisers were active contributors during our consultation process leading up to the publication of the Galileo Commission Report, written by Professor Harald Walach.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

1. No human intellectual activity, including science, can escape the fact that it has to make assumptions that cannot be proven using its own methodology (i.e. absolute presuppositions).
2. The prevalent underlying assumptions, or world model, of the majority of modern scientists are narrowly naturalist in metaphysics, materialist in ontology and reductionist-empiricist in methodology.
3. This results in the belief that consciousness is nothing but a consequence of complex arrangement of matter, or an emergent phenomenon of brain activity.
4. This belief is neither proven, nor warranted.
5. In fact, there are well documented empirical phenomena that contradict this belief. Among them are
 - a. Veridical reports of near death experiences (NDEs) with complex intuitions, perceptions, cognitions and emotions during well documented absence of brain activity.
 - b. Veridical reports of non-local perception that were confirmed independently during such near-death-states of absent brain activity.
 - c. The large data-base of parapsychology and anomalous cognition research shows in a series of meta-analyses that such non-local perceptions are indeed possible.
 - d. The large data-base of children who remember previous lives, some of whom have corresponding deformities.
6. An increasing number of open-minded scientists are already researching these frontier areas using existing scientific methods, and are reaching empirically grounded conclusions that challenge the mainstream majority view.

7. They therefore argue that we need a model of consciousness that is non-reductive and allows consciousness its own ontological status.
8. A minimum-consensus model is a dual aspect or complementarity model, in which matter and mind, consciousness and its physical substrate, are two aspects of reality that are irreducible and simultaneously occurring perspectives of an underlying reality to which we otherwise have no direct access.
9. If that is granted, we can immediately see that consciousness can have its own direct access to reality, not only through sense perception, as in classical empiricism, but also through inner perception or radical introspection.
10. As a result, there may be a different and valid access route to reality, through consciousness, in addition to the classical one science is off
11. This might include direct access, under certain conditions, to deeper structures of reality, which may provide important insights into ethics, meaning, and values.
12. Indeed, insights from NDEs and other transformative experiences suggest that we are all embedded within a larger field of consciousness, with profound implications for ethics in an interconnected world.
13. Integrating an enlarged view of consciousness into science will also yield a new methodology that will have to be developed: the methodology of radical introspection or inner experience.
14. In view of the widespread perception that a narrow materialist world view is often uncritically passed on to young scientists by mainstream authorities as an adequate explanation of reality and as a pre-condition for a successful scientific career, we call for an open exploration of this topic and we encourage the scientific community to become more critically self-reflective of the absolute presuppositions on which their activities are based and to consider expanding their scope.

The report is available for download either in summary form as a PDF on www.galileocommission.org or as a full report. The summary can be ordered as a booklet overleaf and the full report as print on demand.

When I read the Galileo Commission Report, which includes the names of many highly respected advisors from the general scientific community, I was encouraged to see that the materialist view that consciousness is solely the product of brain activity has been challenged in a detailed, clear, and very convincing document. My hope is that the scientific community at large will consider this body of research, which is based on an emerging post-materialist scientific framework, in a thoughtful and professional way, and conclude that it makes a powerful case for consciousness as a primary element of nature rather than a product of biological processes.

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