

GALILEO COMMISSION | REPORT

BEYOND A MATERIALIST WORLDVIEW



GALILEO COMMISSION REMIT

The world today is dominated by science and by its underlying assumptions; which are seldom explicitly articulated. The Galileo Commission's remit is to open public discourse and to find ways to expand science so that it can accommodate and explore important human experiences and questions that science, in its present form, is unable to integrate.

ISSUES

- The adequacy of scientific materialism as an exclusive basis for knowledge and values
- Scientific and philosophical rigour in relation to background assumptions or presuppositions - they are in fact inescapable
- Relationship between persons and things, third and first person perspectives, I/It, technology and values (scientia/sapientia)
- Relationship between brain and consciousness (hard problem) - is the relationship causal and productive or might it in fact be transmissive and/or permissive, as William James and others have suggested?
- Status of evidence-based spirituality - there are no impossible facts
- Extending science on the basis of expanded presuppositions in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

PROF DR HARALD WALACH

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 senses/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 offering.
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.

RELEVANT QUOTES

"This whole reductive programme – this mindless materialism, this belief in something called 'matter' as the answer to all questions – is not really science at all. It is, and always has been, just an image, a myth, a vision, an enormous act of faith. As Karl Popper said, it is 'promissory materialism', an offer of future explanations based on boundless confidence in physical methods of enquiry. It is a quite general belief in 'matter', which is conceived in a new way as able to answer all possible questions. And that belief has flowed much more from the past glories of science than from any suitability for the job in hand. In reality, not all questions are physical questions or can be usefully fitted to physical answers."
Mary Midgley 1919 - 2018

"Our world view is not simply the way we look at the world. It reaches inward to constitute our innermost being, and outward to constitute the world. It mirrors but also reinforces and even forges the structure, armouring, and possibilities of our interior life. It deeply configures our psychic world. No less potentially, our world view—our beliefs and theories, our maps, our metaphors, our myths, our interpretive assumptions—constellate our outer reality, shaping and working the world's malleable potentials in a thousand ways of subtly reciprocal interaction. World views create worlds."
Richard Tarnas

"The answer to any question presupposes whatever the question presupposes... And because all science begins with a question (for the question is logically prior to its own answer), all science begins with a presupposition."
R.G. Collingwood FBA, 1889-1943

"Technology gives us material power - the greater our material power, the greater our need for the spiritual insight and virtue to use power for good and not for evil."
Arnold Toynbee CH, PBA, 1889-1975

"I regard consciousness as fundamental, matter is derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness. There is no matter as such; it exists only by virtue of a force bringing the particle to vibration and holding it together in a minute solar system; we must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. The mind is the matrix of all matter."
Max Planck FRS, Nobel Laureate, 1860-1947

"Issues such as the procedures and validity of rational thought and argument are presuppositions on which scientific thought and experiment rest, but they are themselves not scientific: they are philosophical. Science depends upon philosophy for the validity of its terms and procedures and the determination of the uses to which scientific knowledge will be put. To say that only factual statements have validity is to be not only dogmatic but self-contradictory, since the statement itself is not factual."
Michael Aeschliman

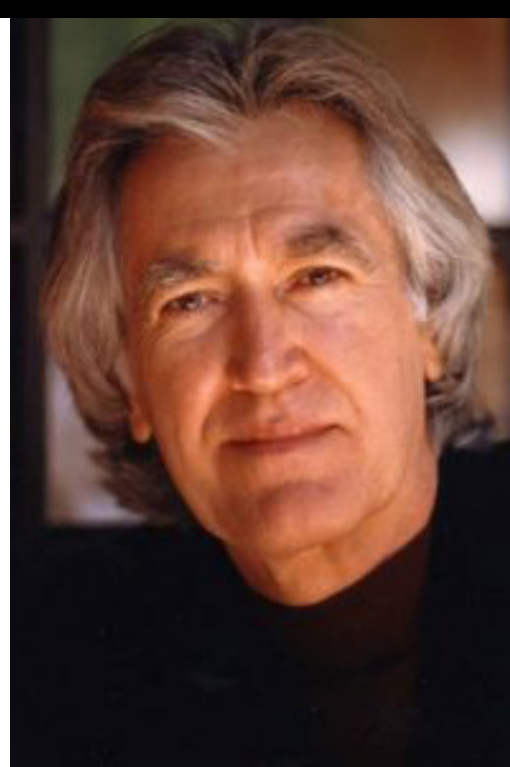
"Scientists animated by the purpose of proving that they are purposeless constitute an interesting subject for study."
Alfred North Whitehead OM, FRS, FBA 1861-1947

"History shows that the advances of science have always been frustrated by the tyrannical influence of certain preconceived notions that were turned into unassailable dogmas. For that reason alone, every scientist should periodically make a profound re-examination of his basic principles."
Duc Louis de Broglie, FRS, 1892-1987

"My first great lesson in the enquiry into these obscure fields of knowledge, never to accept the disbelief of great men, or their accusations of imposture or of imbecility, as of any weight when opposed to the repeated observation of facts by other men admittedly sane and honest. I assert that whenever the scientific men of any age have denied the facts of investigators on a priori grounds, they have always been wrong. To put the matter in a simple form, the asserted fact is either possible or not possible. If possible, such evidence as we have been considering would prove it; if not possible, such evidence could not exist."
Alfred Russel Wallace OM, FRS 1820-1913

"We must conclude, I think, that there is no room for telepathy in a materialistic universe. Telepathy is something which ought not to happen at all, if the materialist theory were true. But it does happen. So there must be something seriously wrong with the materialist theory, however numerous and imposing the normal facts which supported may be."
H.H. Price FBA, 1899-1984, Hibbert Journal, 1949

"I am very astonished that the scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives us a lot of factual information, puts all of our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously."
Erwin Schrödinger FRS, Nobel Laureate, 1887-1961



Larry Dossey MD

In the future, if we have one, our descendants will surely look with astonishment on a hallmark of our age: how we were duped by materialism, how our most brilliant scientists enthusiastically used their minds to prove that minds do not exist, and how they employed their consciousness in the task of proving that no one is truly conscious. A condition for our species' survival is, first and foremost, to survive the dehumanizing, paralyzing, suicidal scourge of materialism. The Galileo Commission Report is a powerful move in this direction.



Jennifer Kim Penberthy PhD

The Galileo Commission Report is a revolutionary work that serves as a "wake-up call" to humanity that there is more to this universe than our physical notions currently allow. This report is a well-written, comprehensible, yet thorough introduction to the big concepts and ideas surrounding a world view beyond physicalism and the necessity for humankind to broaden and deepen our understanding of consciousness. This report is a compelling call for us to re-examine the impact of our belief systems and assumptions on our work and to expand our scope, deepen our introspection, and apply our scientific curiosity towards a more comprehensive understanding of consciousness. The ramifications of such are too big to ignore.



Marjorie Woollacott PhD

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.



Steve Taylor PhD

We are living in a time of crisis, largely as a result of the materialist worldview which underpins our culture, which sees living beings as chemical machines, and the mind as nothing more than a product of the brain. This worldview has created a background atmosphere of nihilism, a sense that life is purposeless and meaningless, and also fuels our reckless abuse of the environment. As the report of the Galileo Commission clearly shows, a great deal of contemporary scientific research shows that the assumptions of this worldview are false, and points towards a more holistic and spiritual perspective. As a culture, we urgently need to embrace this new perspective in full, so that we can begin to live more harmoniously with each other and the natural world. The report of the Galileo Commission is an important part of the movement towards this goal.

Towards an Expanded Science

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