On the Advantages of a Concerted Philosophical Argument that the Earth Is Flat, Despite Anecdotal and Nonrandomized Experimental Evidence to the Contrary

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In keeping with the fashion of Higher Ed journalism, we'd like to produce a long editorial acknowledging that a disturbing current of dissent against the Western Scientific Trinity of physicalism, objectivity and determinism has been noted lately in various philosophical circles (Nagel 2012, Tallis 2012, Doyle 2011) which shall be dealt with swiftly and efficiently by the verified methods of public pillorying, harmonic derision and academic peer reprimand. Unfortunately we find that everything which could be said on the subject from a philosophical perspective has already been said over 30 times in every conceivable combination of arguments and in every surviving human dialect including the Whanganui version of North Island Māori, which leaves us exposed to the risk of copyright infringement. In other minor news, several government-sponsored US and European research initiatives are starting to look at novel sensor technology and cancer pharmacotherapeutic applications of quantum biological effects, as part of a global push to understand the surprising ubiquity of such features in living systems (Palmer and Mansfied, 2013; U. Surrey 2012 Quantum Biology Workshop). The unexpected demonstration of robust entanglement, coherence and quantum computation in bacteria, plants, insects, birds, as well as human physiological processes has opened the door to the possibility that other exotic, non-classical features may also play a role in living systems. However, for the moment there is no reason to panic: according to most science experts, if a tree utilizes quantum superposition to photosynthesize but you don't hear about it, it's not really quantum.

Considering the lengths to which the intellectual classes go to buttress their arguments for or against consciousness as an emergent property of the brain, it is surprising how little experimental data actually makes its way into these complex theses. If what is defended so vehemently is the supremacy of objective experimental facts over subjective experience and conjecture, then this prolonged cultural debate should routinely come with tables and statistical analyses. It is a curiously overlooked detail that such objective references are almost universally omitted by the Materialism Party, and treated as "inadmissible evidence" when offered by the opposition. But the Golden Rule being that "he who has the gold makes the rules", nonlocal mind-matter interactions are *a priori* impossible, and no amount of "extraordinary

evidence", statistically or case-based, is ever extraordinary enough to change that "empirical" conclusion. Indeed the ideological lockstep is working marvelously: as long as no data is allowed in, the axiomatic foundations of the western scientific enterprise remain perfectly solid.

That however might change with the advent of emerging disciplines like quantum biology and epigenetics. Where philosophy can afford a dignified and principled stance, science itself must put on its muddy prospecting boots and go chasing results; and if those results lead to the wrong side of the tracks, then some redistricting is in order. The basic feature of mind-matter/psi interactions (nonlocal action) is also the key obstacle to their acceptance by the mainstream science community; and yet, given the rising interest in quantum biology and consciousness studies, nothing would be more natural than to turn to the vast body of controlled psi studies conducted over the past century by hundreds of laboratories worldwide, and use that empirical trove to formulate the theoretical and experimental framework necessary to the joint advancement of these disciplines. That is clearly not happening, and not going to be happening any time soon. Despite the massive irreplicability problems faced by even the most highly scrutinized and lavishly funded biomedical research (see Hiltzik, 2013), and the superior methodological proofing of the average REG-psi or Ganzfeld protocol over its hard-sciences counterpart (Sheldrake, 1999b; Sheldrake, 1998a,b; Radin, 1997; Carter 2007; Schwartz, 1994; Honorton, 1975; Thalberg and Storm, 2005), the myth of parapsychology as a pseudoscience based on anecdote, exaggeration and shoddy lab work remains a perfect excuse to be used by every scientist, academic department and editorial board "not wanting to go there".

The answer to these objections is simple: pre-determined, collectively proofed protocols with multi-lab replications under independent observer conditions. Such carefully vetoed methodology and stringently reinforced execution are essential today not so much with respect to the classical proof of existence psi experiments, but in particular when it comes to innovative, mechanism-oriented protocols. This point cannot be overemphasized: whether we are talking about REG-psi or healing experiments, anomalous perception or collective consciousness effects, the study of nonlocal biological interactions is sorely deficient in concrete modeling and falsifiable hypotheses – all of which require going far into uncharted territory, both theoretically and experimentally. One can only praise the pioneers who succeed in thinking outside the box, looking at the challenges posed by this empirical data from a different perspective, or in a different scale, and formulating bold new approaches to uncover critical aspects of its yet-obscure dynamics. But bold new approaches are also highly susceptible to marginalization and a lack of follow-up independent replications, especially in an era when academic budget pressures make every grant recipient risk-adverse. It is true that many of the most original and potentially groundbreaking experiments in remote healing or mental influence on non-living targets are still in need of further methodological refinement and that their results can only be considered preliminary at this stage. But that preliminary data is essential: without it we are at a standstill, with no idea about what lies beneath the surface or which direction to proceed in. It is easy to find fault with pilot experiments run on a shoestring budget while weathering the frowns of department heads and the snickers of colleagues. But without such acts of vision and courage there is little hope that parapsychology, mind-body medicine, consciousness research or indeed quantum biology will see truly significant breakthroughs in the next few decades. Instead of dismissing such studies as "the fringe of a fringe science", we should recognize the value of these

ingenious trailblazing approaches to the mind-body problem and support them with constructive criticism, independent replications and cross-disciplinary dialogue.

Should we decide to pursue this path to the likely convergence point of quantum physics, biology and consciousness, the experimental costs would be a fraction of what is spent yearly on reputable academic research like comparing the basket-making techniques of ancient Egyptians or the mating songs of the North American Cackling Goose, not to mention the reams of paper darkened by daily philosophical debates about the nature of consciousness, life and the "fabric of reality". Philosophy alone won't provide a solution: experiments will. And until we muster the courage to address the right questions and accept whatever answers nature provides, we should be prepared to recognize that what we are engaged in is doctrine-building, not scientific exploration. Picking out the pleasing pieces of reality from the uncomfortable ones makes for a cozy nest, but a lousy life raft; at this point we can only hope that consciousness has nothing to do with epigenetic control, experimenter effects, placebo and the collective impact of millions of people on the behavior of random physical processes.

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