

Toward a Metaphysics for Integrating Understandings of Complementary and Alternative Healthcare: A Review of Bernard Kastrup's *Why Materialism is Baloney*

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Abstract

Bernard Kastrup's *Why Materialism is Baloney* is reviewed. The book critiques the weak metaphysical assumptions that underlie current mainstream Western science and medicine, then goes on to develop a mind/energy-based, rather than a Newtonian matter-based, alternative metaphysics of how the physical world, the human body and the brain actually function. Kastrup applies the logic of 'true scientific skepticism' to the materialist orthodoxy itself, concluding that the uncontested assumptions underlying 'solid-matter'-based models fail basic falsifiability and Occam's razor tests, have never been genuinely scientific, and do not therefore constitute a realistic foundation for understanding the physical world and human body--since modern quantum physics reveals 'matter' is ultimately reducible to configurations of vibrating energy interacting with consciousness. Kastrup's elaborately developed alternative metaphysics has useful implications for integrating diverse strands of complementary and alternative therapeutic practice.

Keywords: Materialism; Idealism; Metaphysics; Mind-body; Whirlpool; Self-reflection; Localization; Consciousness; Perception; Complementary medicine

Review

Kastrup B (2014) *Why Materialism is Baloney: How True Sceptics Know There is No Death and Fathom Answers to Life, the Universe, and Everything*. Iff Books, Winchester, UK. Pp. 239. [1]. Despite the trendy title, Bernard Kastrup's *Why Materialism is Baloney* is a dead-serious volume, by a first-rate scientist, which goes into considerable detail 'skeptically' exploring the weak metaphysical assumptions that underlie mainstream Western science and medicine. Kastrup meticulously walks us through an alternative 'non-materialistic' metaphysics--that is at once more consistent with quantum physics and string theory, with complementary and alternative healthcare, with noetic science and parapsychology, and with near-death and spiritually-transformative experiences.

As historian of science Thomas Kuhn had famously pointed out in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2], what in any particular era is considered to be 'scientifically true' is based on consensus. As such, it changes over time, as the prevailing dominant paradigm of conventional, orthodox 'normal science' (including medical science) accumulates more and more

'anomalies' in its explanations of natural phenomena. Eventually, the sheer weight of those unexplained anomalies gives way to an alternative paradigm, that more credibly and elegantly explains how the world (including the human body) works.

Thus for example in the era of Copernicus, the scientific establishment of the day was forced to abandon its Earth-centric view, in favor of one in which the Earth orbits around the Sun--in the process radically transforming how we view our place in the cosmos. But to convincingly make this shift from a widely-believed, orthodox paradigm of scientific 'truth', to an alternative one, typically requires a new metaphysics (theory of the fundamental nature of reality) and often also a new epistemology (theory of how we know what we know). Although a number of attempts have been made to do this with the currently-dominant Newtonian materialistic worldview in recent decades (including within medical science), Kastrup's book is perhaps the most convincing philosophical attempt yet to articulate and integrate such an alternative paradigm and he accomplishes this in a compelling, accessible way.

As Kastrup points out, advances in quantum mechanics, relativity and string theory have all made it abundantly clear that a shift in our view of the world is overdue. The preponderance of accumulated evidence in these fields within the last hundred years points in the direction of energy being the basic force, and matter being merely temporary illusory 'knots' in a universal sea of energy. There are no 'smallest particles'. Moreover, since the double-slit experiment we have known that consciousness and intention can tangibly affect material outcomes. Yet Western medical science has stubbornly insisted on ignoring the implications of this. Works like Capra's *The Tao of Physics* [3], Lanza's *Biocentrism* [4], Goswami's *Self-Aware Universe* [5], Cohen's *Way of Qigong* [6], McTaggart's *The Field* [7] and Sheldrake's *The Science Delusion* [8] certainly helped popularize and map the territory for a Kuhnian paradigm shift--pointing out the shallowness and explanatory vacuousness of orthodox Western science, and speculating where to 'go next' with a viable post-materialist worldview. But the solid philosophical foundation for such a new paradigm--in terms of metaphysics and epistemology--was only implied in those works.

Kastrup's *Why Materialism is Baloney* finally rolls up its sleeves and tackles this hard problem (including the 'hard problem of consciousness'), developing a *mind/energy/quantum-field/consciousness based*, rather than a Newtonian matter based, metaphysics of how the physical world--including the human body and brain -actually works, and how we can better understand it, with many implications for integrating the diverse strands of complementary and alternative therapeutic practice.

Across the eight chapters of his book, Kastrup carefully lays out a sophisticated metaphysics of 'mind' (universal creative energy) as being a more fundamental force than the persistent modern superstition of 'matter'. To do this, he uses the analogy of 'whirlpools' (temporary patterns of localized, individuated conscious energy--the self) that are located within a much larger 'ocean' of mind/energy/being that is the universe. He also employs 'mirror', 'oscillating membrane' and 'mercury pool'

analogies to help us more easily conceive of our self-reflective, survival-oriented feedback loops of individual, localized consciousness within this larger 'ocean'.

This is therefore essential reading for anyone wishing to better understand the overall context of alternative, complementary and holistic practices within medicine--in a more integrated, well-grounded way--and how the underlying philosophical assumptions differ from those of the materialistic model. Ironically, Kastrup applies 'true skepticism' to the materialist scientific orthodoxy itself, concluding that the metaphysical assumptions underlying the 'solid-matter'-based model fail the falsifiability and Occam's razor tests, and have therefore never been truly scientific. As such, that model is not very realistic as a root foundation for understanding physical medicine, since 'matter' is ultimately reducible to configurations of energy vibration, interacting with consciousness.

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