

Relativistic Monism

by Sven Nilsen, 2023

In this paper I introduce an overarching framework for thinking about the mind-body problem in philosophy using Einstein's Relativity Theory of space-time. I explain why this approach was ignored in the previous century, what distracted philosophers from using this opportunity and why this approach has become relevant due to new insights of language bias in design of mathematics.

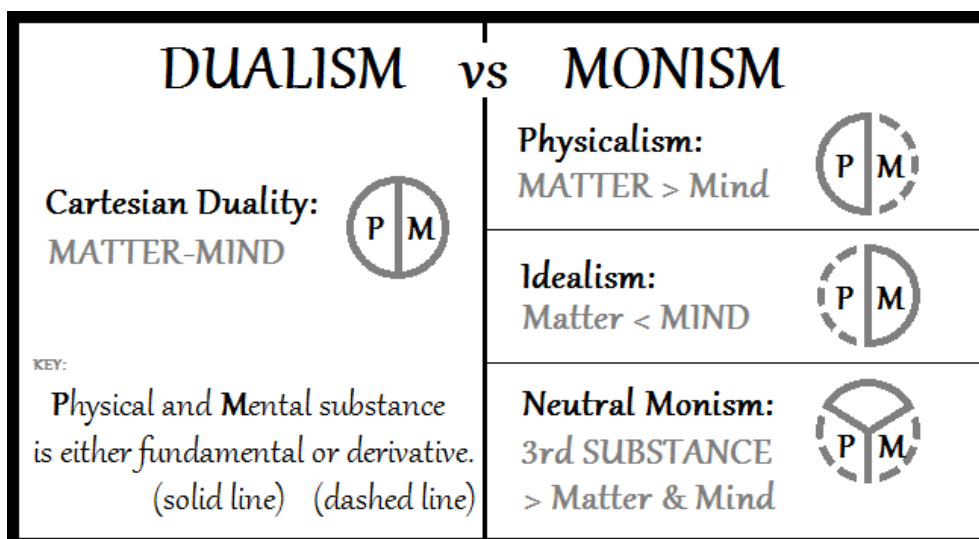
The mind-body problem is the single problem in human history that has attracted most attention and effort from philosophers over the longest period of time, from asking "What is the essence of existence" to the development of science and foundations of mathematics. Yet, the problem has still remained to be solved, probably because people lacked the tools to think properly about it in previous centuries. I will here explain the latest developments and suggest a new direction that might finally make it more clear how the mind-body problem is structured and why it has been difficult to make progress even with competing approaches.

To most people, it might seem as if none or little progress is made on the mind-body problem since ancient history. This is because the even in ancient religions, the primary function was, not as most people believe today that religion was about morality, but how to use story telling to explain why humans exist, how they exist and how the world came to be. Morality was considered a philosophical question in the ancient world. It was only later with the spread of Judaism that morality became a larger concern of religion and with the advent of Scientism, the cosmic stories of religion entered a backstage role in the modern human civilization. So, from ancient times, the primary concern of mythology was centered on the mind-body problem. However, humans have made a lot of progress on the mind-body problem over time, more than most people think, because modern humans usually project their world model onto people living in ancient history.

Take for example, in ancient Greece, people thought that thinking happened in the heart, which is why Christianity adopted the terminology "listen to your heart" as a way of expressing conscience. The brain was suggested by Aristoteles to be a blood cooling device. While this might sound childish from our perspective, Aristoteles was an experienced zoologist, the first in the world, which based his assumptions on scientific evidence. The human brain uses 25% of all ATP produced in the body and due to this above average use of resources, observable to Aristoteles, cooling down the blood might be a reasonable hypothesis at the time. Today we know that the Cerebellum has neurons extended down into the chest region of the human body and this is why the heart could have been mistakenly suggested as the center of reasoning.

So, one of the major developments on the mind-body problem was to move the center of reasoning from the heart to the brain. However, after this development, progress has been much slower. What philosophers have been spending their time doing, is developing clearer insights into use of language to describe the world. Humans have a language to describe their internal experiences, such as "I see a blue object" which is learned through childhood using language as a social construct. We can describe our internal experiences due to symmetry between our particular experiences and other people's experiences. This mechanism has been studied in detail and it has been suggested that our own understanding of personal experience is influenced by the language that society uses. At the same time, humans also developed mathematical languages to accurately describe phenomena in the world. The difference in language bias between internal experiences and observable phenomena resulted in the idea of Cartesian Duality, a split between Physical and Mental substance. This is how the mind-body problem became a more clear question about essence of existence without hidden religious or mythological assumptions that created a labyrinth of confusion.

The following illustration shows the general philosophical positions on the mind-body problem:



On the left side, Cartesian Duality suggests that Physical and Mental substance are equally fundamental or derivative from each other. On the right side, Monism suggest that there is some substance that takes priority above the other substances. Physicalism puts more weight on the body, while Idealism puts more weight on the mind. Neutral Monism suggests a third substance that takes priority above both the body and the mind.

Now, it is important to remember that people get obsessed by claiming universal ownership and credit to ideas when they use a particular language that seems to explain everything. This happens in philosophy as well as in religion. The conceptual mistake that people usually make within Physicalism, is to treat the language of Physicalism as the same as the world. Instead, a more proper way is to think of Physicalism as a language describing the world, as a picture, in which the painter of the picture, in this case Physicalism, is itself biased. With other words, Physicalism is capable of pointing out how its own position and role within the world is related to other events, even though all events are theoretically describable as parts of the world that Physicalism presents.

Therefore, Physicalism can not be the entire world, since it is capable of describing how it is just a part or subset of the world. It is set apart from the entirety of the world in which it describes itself. Just like a person, looking in a mirror, seeing itself as part of the world. When a person is described as a body with limits, the person is not the entire world, since the mirror demonstrates to the person this fact in terms of the language the person uses to reason about the world. Now, one can argue that if one extends the limits of the person beyond the body, the distinction between the entire world and the person ceases to exist. It is in this limit that Physicalism seeks to claim universal ownership and credit all ideas to itself. This perspective is inauthentic (in sense of Heidegger) to the logical structure of Physicalism as a language, since one mixes in confusion at least two different homotopy levels in the foundation of mathematics. When we are constraining our language bias to a singular level in which distinction between the body and the world is made, the same applies to Physicalism as a language happening within the world and thus can not be the entire explanation of the mind-body problem.

It is not that erasing boundaries of language is forbidden within philosophy. On the contrary, such actions are acceptable, but only as long one is aware of how it happens. Heidegger developed the idea of Dasein, or Being-There, to explain how in order to be fully immersed in the world, it requires accepting or embracing some language bias that makes a person fully experience themselves as an authentic person. A counter-example would be a doll that speaks about itself being a doll controlled by an external person and its voice is an imitation, yet the voice of the external.

Most people do not experience themselves as dolls being controlled by someone else. Or, they do not experience themselves as avatars of an external being with no knowledge about its own being. A doll has Being, through the experiences of its puppet master, but not Being-There. The experience of Being-There is something that naturally occurs in human children. It is an assumption that people make without realizing that it is underlying our particular form of existence within the world.

When humans relate to facts in the world, they relate to them as facts about their own existence and not as virtual facts that might be changed arbitrarily on a whim. However, religion with its language of deities and avatars brings comfort to people experiencing trauma in society where the feeling of not belonging is projected as an anxiety about existence itself. In every religion, there is some particular anxiety surrounded ideas of existence. For example, in the Western world, the idea of being mortal and cease to exist has been an anxiety, while in the Eastern world, the idea of being eternally reincarnated and trapped in never ending cycles of suffering has been an anxiety. In both cases, people designed religions to deal with these traumas, which both create them and control them in order to bring tools of manipulation to the power elite.

So, the mind-body problem has been inseparable from human desires of power and social control.

Most of the progress on the mind-body problem has been attempts to isolate the problem from our distorted lens of desires that lends itself on instincts and adapted traits than analytic reasoning. However, the very attempt to isolate the mind-body problem from its context has also been criticized for being part of the manipulation scheme. The insight is that our philosophical positions are like musical notes which changes depending on what fits the needs and desires of individuals in various situations. The mind-body problem has been used as much as a tool as an interesting puzzle. In Heidegger's philosophy this distinction is Ready-at-Hand (tool) versus Present-at-Hand (puzzle).

Heidegger was a student of Husserl, which advocated a new science focusing on the mind-body problem as a discipline. Husserl believed that Heidegger would bring this new science forward. However, Heidegger was a devoted Nazi who struggled distinguishing his philosophy from his ideology. Heidegger viewed Jews as kind of "dolls" who did not have Dasein, or Being-There. He thought that Jews corrupted their Being in inauthentic ways. The Nazis were opposed to the new theories of Minkowsky and Einstein united space and time. So, the popularity of Heidegger's ideas brought on a distraction in philosophy that even today is controversial as people are afraid of thinking that their philosophical positions might have been influenced by Nazi ideology. This social uncertainty has probably contributed to some philosophers attacking science and Physicalism with more vigor and claiming Idealism as the authentic position within Monism.

Today we know that, from the construction of Joker Calculus, that inauthenticity in sense of Heidegger only means relating two levels of language biases that are not normalizable to a single level in the Closed Variant. There is nothing of relevance to Jews or Nazi ideology in particular.

Idealism has historically been frowned upon in the last century by Analytic Philosophy, but is now coming back in popularity in the form of Analytic Idealism by Bernado Kastrup. His argument is that the ontology of mental substance is not reducible to Physicalism. However, logically, this is not strong enough to suggest Idealism as a proper foundation of ontology. It does not rule out Cartesian Dualism or Neutral Monism.

So, the development in the past century was hugely distracted by anxiety surrounding ideology, resulting in heavier criticism of Physicalism as a whole and hence extending the attacks on Einstein's Relativity Theory to the present day. However, Relativity Theory has been an enormous success in astronomy with accuracies of measuring black hole collisions spanning billions of years in the past and lengths a thousand times smaller than a proton. It is foolish to ignore Relativity.

The author of this paper was one of three people who developed Joker Calculus. What this calculus suggests, is that most humans learn an internal representation to handle social conflicts and be able to recognize language biased used to make allies or enemies. Since we now have a formal language describing these language biases, there is no reason to bring politics or ideology into the domain of the mind-body problem, except as a valuable historical resource to test predictions. The predictions made by forming hypotheses surrounding language biases, are usually too expensive to simulate, so the past history is very useful as predictions can be used to enrich history. For example, the demographics of women and left-handedness from late Stone-Age to modern times is varying dramatically from place to place and correlates with use of language bias. To explain these changes requires scientific insights across disciplines, such as Biology, Game Theory, History of Philosophy and Comparative Studies of Religion.

The two basic positions in Joker Calculus are Seshatism vs Platonism. Platonism is the belief in the existence of abstract objects. Seshatism is the dual of Platonism, which was lost in history due to the collapse of social roles in women during the period of Ancient Greece. Philosophers are the male version of roles that people take when retreating from society and later returning to it, in order to bring new ideas. The female version of that role is called “wisdom woman” which collapsed due to the exclusion of females from official state of affairs. Women commanded slaves from their homes and risked kidnapping due to only one of four people being female. This culture propagated to the Hellenistic world and consequently to the Roman empire, which restored the female stature somewhat. Christianity, seen as an attempt of women to regain social autonomy, due to the collapse of the Roman Republic and Ptolemaic Dynasty after the deaths of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, became the official religion and started persecuting wisdom women as witches. So, the corresponding feministic role to balance philosophers was erased from history, coinciding with the invention of philosophy as a discipline.

To restore this history, the philosophy surrounding the Ancient Egyptian goddess Seshat, is suggested since Plato ignored her existence while acknowledging her male counter-part Thoth in the invention of writing. Ancient Egypt was matriarchal with the passage of property from mother to daughter. The dual of Platonism, Seshatism, is grounded in the language bias of biology that differentiates the genders between stereotypical male and female roles in society. In Platonism, philosophers seek ideas that are invented once and applied everywhere. This is strongly correlated with male celebrities taking credit for ideas which they likely did not invent themselves. In Seshatism, philosophers seek ideas that help navigate the complex web of interactions in society. This strongly correlated with female workers which ideas and contributions was later credited to males. One dramatic example, is Euclid, which might have been a woman but was perceived as male due to a mistranslation from Arabic texts. Another example is Theano, which unlike Pythagoras wrote some texts, perhaps on the golden ratio, but we do not know today because her name was not included as author of her texts in sequential copies. So, while female authors have significantly contributed to Intellectual History, they are consistently censured from historical records. However, in Ancient Egypt, the philosophy of Seshatism was likely more developed than in later periods, with complex ideas surrounding originality and writing.

Out of Seshatism and Platonism one can construct new language biases using Joker Calculus. These biases includes positions which can be considered “stuck” in oppression or oppressive roles. There can also be biases which expresses embracement of opposites. Since these notions of subjectivity are part of the formal language, it is possible to distinguish these forms from the dynamical use of language bias in natural languages. This way, the anxiety of ideology influencing the mind-body problem is reduced, as we can address these issues as specific expressions in Joker Calculus.

Now, the conflict between Physicalism and Idealism is clearly biased toward Seshatism vs Platonism respectively, but not in a simplistic sense. There are multiple biases to consider.

Physicalism is clearly Seshatic biased because it credits knowledge by causality in experimental physics. However, one can also argue that Physicalism is clearly Platonic biased because it credits knowledge by abstraction in theoretical physics. So, within Physicalism, one already has the language biases of Seshatism vs Platonism.

Idealism is clearly Seshatic biased because existence is attributed to the originality of a person. A person does not simply exist as a copy of a person-template, but as a grounding of the entire universe. However, one can also argue that Idealism is clearly Platonic biased because it claims universality over material substances. The person can claim ownership over materials due to the lack of materials to reason on their own. The material becomes a tool in the hand of the person who shapes the material to serve a specific need. When people are treated as material and shaped by strong personalities, this gives rise to power structures in society. For example, when women are treated as merely baby-producers to produce men for armies, instead of as individuals with desires and goals that differs from the anxieties of society as a whole. So, within Idealism, one already has the language biases of Seshatism vs Platonism.

While Seshatism vs Platonism is interesting to talk about in the context of the philosophical positions of Physicalism vs Idealism, it is not immediately clear how it relates to the mind-body problem. The new perspective that makes language bias relevant for the mind-body problem is that Time vs Space is also biased by Seshatism vs Platonism respectively. However, where Physicalism and Idealism are composed of different biases, Time is clearly Seshatic biased without any clear Platonic counter-example. Similarly, Space is clearly Platonic biased without any clear Seshatic counter-example.

The result is that Einstein's Relativity Theory, which leaves no room for interpreting Time vs Space as independent substances, becomes relevant to the mind-body problem through language bias. With other words, the new direction is "Relativistic Monism".

In Relativistic Monism, one attributes Seshatic bias to time-like separated events and Platonic bias to space-like separated events. In Relativity, space-like events are forever separated from time-like events by the speed of light. While it sounds strange that speed of light is a boundary, it functions like a "center" for the relativistic coordinate system that relaxes definition of velocity from a ratio to a metric in geometry. With other words, the metric becomes a more powerful idea of motion.

There is no motion "beyond the speed of light" because the speed of light is the same for all observers. There can be no crossing of this barrier unless one starts from separated positions in space. Since all information in Physicalism about the world is based on passing light, or electromagnetic radiation, from one place to another, one can infer that such information is based on space-like separated events. On the other hand, the language of Idealism is grounded in time-like separated events that have well defined causal structure. When a person see a color, this has causal effect on what the person does or experience next. This causal structure is impossible between space-like separated events. Two events must share a time-like event in order to be causally connected in space-time. The speed of light separates the nature of these two forms of events, so Physicalism and Idealism can coexist within Relativistic Monism. The notion of Physicalism and Idealism are respectively Galilean limits of the reference frames. This strongly suggests that Relativity is necessary to speak properly about the mind-body problem and that the problem itself is a result of confusion about language, in sense of Wittgenstein.

Relativistic Monism does not exclude Cartesian Dualism, because it follows from the Galilean limits of relative motion that both Physical and Mental substance are equivalent, just like space and time are equivalent part of space-time. However, it excludes Cartesian Dualism as an authentic position, since the more accurate theory is space-time. Notice how this satisfies Heidegger.

One can say that Relativistic Monism is the authentic position since it is the more physically accurate representation of the mind-body problem using a single language, based on motion in space-time. In the Galilean limit, Relativistic Monism separates into Cartesian Dualism. Depending on subjective choice in this limit, one can get a language bias toward Physicalism or Idealism respectively. So, the entire domain of Dualism vs Monism becomes relevant within Relativistic Monism. It states the mind-body problem more clearly using an overarching framework.

Contrary to human intuition, it is not correct according to Relativistic Monism to say that either Dualism or Monism is right, but not both. This is because both Dualism and Monism are separate parts of Relativistic Monism unified as a single language. The mechanism of separation is formal, experimentally verified and understood theoretically as the Galilean limit of Relativity. So, instead of objecting against Physicalism or Idealism, Relativistic Monism states the context in which these philosophical positions are meaningful. This also corresponds to Heidegger's Ready-at-Hand where philosophical positions can be used as tools, not just as universal theories.

The attractiveness of Relativistic Monism can be summarized as following:

1. It explains the confusion we have about the mind-body problem
2. It connects accurate physical theories with personal experience
3. It explains why and how philosophers made mistakes in history without idealizing ideology, but also acknowledging their contributions

However, this paper does not dive into the deep implications that Relativistic Monism have when applying the full theory of Relativity to philosophy of the mind-body problem. The goal was merely to point out this direction and re-establish Husserl's program of a new science centered on the mind-body problem.

It is clear that from a philosophical point of view, Relativity as a language must be taken seriously and that Galilean limits of motion also results in Cartesian Dualism, not in Physicalism or Idealism respectively. However, given a subjective choice of this limit, it is possible to end up with language bias of Physicalism or Idealism, just like one can construct expressions of various biases of higher duality in Joker Calculus. Neutral Monism is rejected on the basis that no third substance is needed because it is a change of language from Galilean reference frames to Relativity. Like the center of reason was moved from the heart to the brain, Relativistic Monism moves the language of the mind-body problem to a more accurate physical theory, which does not require introducing a new substance. Also, similar to that there is no Aether in physics, a proposed substance for space, because speed of light is the same for all observers, which forms the basis for Relativity.