

Beyond Neuroscience Cognitivism: Criticism of Substance and Structural Dualisms

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Abstract— The Cartesian dualism of body and soul no longer finds resonance in the means of scientific research. Recent discovery in the brain functioning have rekindled the debate. Neuroscientists and philosophers propose to overcome the puzzle that represents the person, in the midst of a culture in which it is not allowed to omit or subject the body to any higher entity. However, it is only baseless belief that neurons respond by the appearance of the mental phenomenon. Abdicating the dualism of substance does not overcome this mystery. What is present is the continuation of typical polarization to dualisms. The classical model is replaced by the structural dualism of brain and mind, perpetuating a kind of Crypto-Cartesianism. The myself human becomes understood as being of a biological nature, following a deterministic pattern. In this reduction to a part, the dimension of the whole is lost. Brains do not think, feel and decide, only people. In this mereology, the requirement of logical reasoning is abducted. Cognitivists turn people into machines. But people always transcend and, shortening their meaning, does not guarantee that it preserves its importance while being ethically responsible. Person is unveiling and permanent covering-up. The Cartesian shadows need to be left behind by the indivisible personal entity. Soul people don't have, they are living soul. They are beings born in the flesh. The fact is that a new person image is not in progress, in spite of all possible and necessary corrections. Freedom is intelligence, so that the frontiers of what is possible to know must be respected, so that there is no confusion.

Keywords: *Cartesian dualism, structural dualism, person, mereology, cognitive reductionism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Cartesian dualism of body and soul, by means of which the mystery of the human was tried to elucidate, no longer finds echo among practically all of the contemporary thinkers. Discussed intensely among brain scientists and at the philosophy arena since the eighteenth century, the subject has been tightly revived since the late twentieth century as a result of more recent research and discoveries about the functioning of the small gray organ. Are there still arguments to defend the existence of a substance called the soul, which commands the body, while its extension? It is said that no. The effort that can be observed, especially in the neurosciences and in view of the publications that talk about the "problem mind and brain", is to overcome the enigma that characterizes the human presence in this world; the most sensitive frontier of knowledge [1].

Is it possible to restrict the understanding of being a person to a strictly biological naturalism? Would it not be appropriate to assume a gross error of mereological character, in which the brain is transferred to a part of the body, which can only be assimilated into the totality that makes of being a personal entity? Does the holism proposed in the discussions about the relation between mind and brain, in which it emerges from this, present no difficulties identical to those encountered by the Cartesian dualism of distinct substances, body and soul? The hypothesis, sustained by many thinkers of the present day, like the philosopher Peter M. S. Hacker and the neurologist Maxwell R. Bennett [2], is that only the *living being* should be considered in its distinct but indivisible characteristics of mind and body. Something similar to *being flesh*, second the perspective of the philosopher Michel Henry [3].

It is the objective of the present work to argue that the human soul cannot be denied as an expression of existence itself; something that *is*, however, *does not have*. In denying it, it is impossible to continue assigning meaning to the phenomenon of being person in this world [4]; impracticable is to argue in favor of freedom, since everything is determined by the principle of causal physics [5].

II. CRITICISM OF THE DUALISM OF SUBSTANCE AND STRUCTURE

There is agreement that the brain is central and fundamental organ of the human body, without which the conscious processes that characterize the person would not be possible, adding to them the memory, the perceptions, the emotions and the capacity for making decision. The use of an explanatory resource that omits or subjects the body to the soul, no longer finds resonance in the scientific community. The understanding of the relation soul and body according to Descartes no longer serves as theoretical basis for the encounter of answers to the endless doubts that arise when the place that the brain plays in the cognitive procedures of the human being is observed [6]. From Benjamin Libet's experiments in the 1980s, the perception that Cartesian dualism cannot be maintained as a rational hypothesis has become widespread [7].

A pattern of explanation about how the brain functions in combination with the whole of the physical body, which underlies the base belief that complex neural communication is responsible for the emergence of the mental phenomenon, has become standard. The current opinion is that there is a

continuum between brain and mind [8]. The ideology of classical Greek and Cartesian philosophy about the existence of the soul, as distinct entity that commands the body, is fought fiercely. And this, with the argument that it cannot be verified through the procedure that governs the empirical sciences, the law of cause and effect [9].

However, it is not yet clear how mental realities simply emanate from neural "communications". There is a lofty aspiration when the goal is to define what constitutes the human, taking into account only the existing knowledge about the brain, its anatomy and physiology. The message propagated is that everything will come to be clarified, even that the will is relative reality [10]. It is estimated that abdicating the dualism of substances does not assert that the mystery surrounding being a person is overcome. It proceeds by arguing in a polarized fashion, which typifies dualisms. The mind comes as a result of neural processes, that is, as unique substances. However, the old framework is maintained: body and soul for brain and mind [11]. The criticism of naturalistic neuroscientists and philosophers is that they perpetrate Crypto-Cartesianism [12].

In what lies this difference between classical Cartesianism, of which it maintains its structure? Why does not the subtle alteration present a solution to the difficulty alluded in this opportunity to understand the person being? Naturalistic thinkers argue that in the face of neuroscientists' findings, it makes no sense to argue about the existence of a being apart and above his body. The *myself* that is made in the body, in its mental attributes, is fully biological. For them, in the accurate observation of the human being, in how the brain reacts to the stimuli of the environment, there is nothing to presume the existence of an immaterial "substance" that escapes the death of the body. They do not deny that humans have mental abilities, that they are adequate to form an image of the world and of themselves, yet they abdicate the idea that there are 'ourselves' that constitute the essence of these (A. Beckermann, 2008, pp. 85-86) [9].

This alternative, tries to accommodate to neural determinism and is supposed to be subject to the law of causality in the eagerness to understand the behavior of the human being (G. J. Fischer, 2013, pp. 74-75) [6], [5]. However, this is the criticism, it maintains in this frontier of thought a typically dualistic structure. It is inappropriate to reduce to only one part what can only be considered as whole being (G. J. Fischer, 2011, pp. 293-298) [1], (G. J. Fischer, 2013, pp. 76-85) [6]. Brains do not think, feel and decide, only people in their wholeness are fit for such a feat. It is a mereological mistake to do so, where the logical reasoning ended up being abducted (M. Bennett, P. Hacker, 2010) [11]. Contemporary cognitivism runs the risk of considering people machines, controlling and training them to change behaviors, not realizing that they transcend such attempts.

III. BEYOND NEUROSCIENCE COGNITIVISM

Shortening the judgment about being as a person does not cooperate for the conservation of its importance, a being who is responsible for its deliberations and actions. Is this Crypto-Cartesianism one of the contemporary expressions of

disenchantment with the Cartesian moral of duty, of the "dominion of the soul" over the body? This weighting is put in a field of recent knowledge, related to bioethics, nominated of neuroethics (G. J. Fischer, 2011, pp. 298-300) [1], (G. Fischer, 2013, pp. 85-87) [6], [13]. Once the mind is assimilated as a result of neural processes, it is not far from being able to manipulate it, either by behavioral conditioning or by means of drugs.

The person becomes a puzzle that cannot be completely decoded. He let be known, but a veil remains on it. Approaching it requires experience and knowledge. In words with symbolic meaning, it involves an intra and interpersonal relationship marked by a start, however, that never reaches an end. The understanding of the person, as an experience, that demands a concept of complementarity be associated, to known, of unveiling and permanent covering up. This in a given time and space of this it is possible to understand, in another return to the darkness [14].

The dualism that remains in the search to elucidate the one that is protagonist in the advance of the knowledge is criticized, although through the maintenance of its structure constituted by the poles of brain and mind. This binomial reduced to matter and to the principle of causality does not account for the mystery experienced in condition of being a person. Amid the dissensions that multiplies about the intentionality of the thinking being, philosopher John Searle admits that the theme generates intense disagreements (J. Searle, 2006, pp. 353-355) [15]. He asserts that one should not let oneself be led by existing methods, rather one has to let oneself be led by reflection. However, despite his willingness to dialogue, he contradictorily says that "brain processes cause consciousness in all its forms" (J. Searle, 2006, pp. 354) [15], assuming that "the brain is the only thing in there, and the brain causes consciousness..." (J. Searle, 2006, pp. 354) [15]. Structural support continues to be Cartesian. The polarized interaction between brain and mind in this way is nurtured, because the mind cannot be reduced, due to the intentional qualities of the human being [16].

The recommendation of Bennett and Hacker is that neuroscientists and philosophers abandon the "Cartesian shadow" (M. Bennett, P. Hacker, 2010, pp. 230) [11]. His perspective is that which affirms being as a personal entity, has no soul, is a living soul / entity. They refer to the philosophy of Aristotle, in which the body appears with matter and life to its form (G. J. Fischer, 2011, pp. 301) [1]. I "... am all this that presents itself as an inseparable reality" (G. J. Fischer, 2013, pp. 79) [6]. The following paradoxical statement is sensible: "the mind is ... not a substance different from the brain, yet with the brain identical." [17].

Neurobiologists and philosophers, like Searle and Dennett, do not accept to such conformation, arguing that it involves a gullible way of reflecting on being a person, since it assumes it without explanation [18]. However, this is precisely what is asserted, that is, a mystery to be "embraced"; experience and understanding, complementarity in the limits of the enigma and the unveiling.

The recognition is that the human, brain and mind, body and soul, appear as inseparable phenomena, paradoxically

distinct, but not dualized. The person is always greater than the sum of its parts. It is an affirmation that takes on the mystery, not completely rational, because it is based on the experience of being a person. It is a being born in flesh.

For our flesh is nothing other than this, which, by experiencing and enduring itself, and thus by enjoying itself according to ever-renewed impressions, is, for that very reason, susceptible of feeling the body that is outside it, of touching as well as being touched by it - that the outer body, the inert body of the material universe, is in principle incapable. (M. Henry, 2014, pp. 12-13) [3].

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The learning that has been done around the subject in dispute does not allow to support a cooled monism and, as an option to the criticism made to the Cartesian dualism. There is no support for the idea that a new image of the person is in progress, despite the errors of logical reasoning that can be observed in the interpretive patterns used by cognitivists of naturalistic tendencies. What needs to have are corrective efforts for a problem that has been following humanity's history for millennia. Questions must remain open as knowledge about the mind and brain relationship develops.

In the final considerations it is signalized the importance of adopting the mystery in permanent unveiling that involves the being person. It is the dignity of the human being as a value that transcends that is in litigation. Keeping your unity, without reducing it to one of its parts, arises as an ethical requirement. The disenchantment with modern austerity, arising from classical Cartesianism, does not justify the denial of the person in these times of relativization of being minimized to his external corporeal nature. The question remains whether, in expressive measure, the models used to analyze human behavior in direct relation to what is developed in the anatomical and physiological basis of his brain, do not reproduce the cultural moment that is experienced in large parts of the world.

In the fields of ethics, bioethics and neuroethics, there is a pressing need to debate the possibilities and limits of experiments, knowledge and approaches that involve humans. Paradoxically, this person who does not want to be treated in part, insists on polarizing in a dualized way. Protecting their rights and duties appears as a requirement that overcomes the questions that arise in the natural sciences.

It is no longer possible to pursue a meaningless world view, as exemplified by modern scientism. Nature, in general, animals, and especially humans, disseminate meaning, even when the last ones deny it. The simple condition of being a person reveals this incessant search for meaning, even in its most abject form: profit for profit (T. Nagel, 2013) [4], [19].

The person is embodied living soul, or rather, it is being that is born flesh. Is it not permissible to consider all objects of research, especially when it comes to the effort to understand the enigma of the human from an open causality perspective? After all, they are people who perceive, think, remember, get emotional, motivate themselves, decide and act, not their brains. Neurobiological cognitivism is therefore incomprehensible. The reduction to the law of cause and effect imposes a structure of mind and brain of biological character and it resolves to

consider the mental as a relative cultural expression. This is the tendency, it seems, to be found today in the most varied relations that take place in society.

The physicist Barbara Drossel finds that when the human being thinks, moves and deliberates, a lot of electrical activity develops in the cerebral cells. And there is no reason to understand that when this occurs, some law of nature is being annihilated. However, if this brain activity were entirely determined, there would be no freedom, leaving only one definition of the person being through the brain states and the material world. The will is a presupposition of the existence of intelligence (B. Drossel, 2013, pp. 29-30, 33) [5]. In addition to the question of *how* natural processes are concerned, there are also questions about *who* and *why*, which involve understandings of another order, namely personal. Overcoming the frontiers between knowledge leads to confusion.

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