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## Book Review: *Blindness of Modern Science*

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A Review of *Blindness of Modern Science* by Undo Uus. Tartu, Estonia 1994. ISBN 9985-60-064-9. No price. 508pp.

This is not a book about parapsychology. However, many parapsychologists will sympathise with its author who, though himself a scientist, indeed an astronomer, has become so exasperated by the refusal of orthodox scientists to acknowledge what he calls mental, as opposed to physical, reality that he has produced this lengthy diatribe and in a language, English, that is not his own.

The author told me that he could have included references to the paranormal as a further example of the blindness of his colleagues but, wisely, I consider, in the circumstances, decided to concentrate on those aspects of the mind that are less contentious. His plan is to consider certain universally recognised features of mind and then to argue that these are irreconcilable with a physicalist analysis. He then seeks to show that modern science either ignores their existence or, in the case of cognitive psychology or Artificial Intelligence research, offer a spurious account of them.

What, then, are these mental phenomena that, the author claims, defy any possible physicalistic or behaviouristic analysis? As an avowed dualist-interactionist of a strong persuasion his list is formidable. For starters, he asks us to consider the subjective-qualitative content of consciousness or what philosophers have called the 'qualia'. More boldly he then invokes volitional experiences and argues that free-will is no less a datum of experience than the qualia themselves. From there he moves on to personal identity and what it is that makes us one and the same self through all the varied changes

of our bodily existence. He concludes that 'intrinsic diachronic personal identity cannot be reduced to bodily and psychological continuities'. In short, each of us, in the final analysis, is an immaterial soul. This immaterial soul cannot be equated with the brain and there is no reason why it must necessarily cease to exist with the dissolution of the brain and body at death.

Why then, if such facts are as transparently clear as the author believes, has the modern materialistic scientific world view taken hold of us to such an extent as to monopolise the prevailing outlook? The penultimate chapter addresses this question and various answers are suggested. There is, first, the contrast between the well defined concepts that science offers and the 'intersubjective incommunicability' that pertain to our private mental life. Then we must reckon with the human desire for firmly based knowledge and absolute truths that the hard sciences purport to offer. Nor should we forget the huge technological advances that science has made possible. Nevertheless, we should, pleads the author, refuse to be seduced by these new high-priests of modern civilisation and instead look inward for the clues to our own intrinsic nature and identity.

As a fellow-dualist, this reviewer cannot but applaud the stance that the author has taken even if I would be far more tentative about the claims that I would be prepared to defend. It is, after all, not just the scientists who propagate a physicalist metaphysic; there is, as the author is well aware, a formidable battery of philosophers to give them conceptual backing. It is, however, encouraging to have a scientist

such as the author to disabuse us of the prevailing scientific orthodoxy. Whether his campaign will succeed in denting the self-assurance of the scientific establishment is another matter. The prevailing ethos, as he makes clear, is to regard the brain as everything, the mind as, at best, an epiphenomenon.

And this brings me back to the question of the paranormal. Parapsychology tries, in effect, to beat orthodoxy at its own game. That is to say, it seeks to demonstrate objectively facts that defy an orthodox analysis. If progress is sustained, it is a challenge that orthodox science may no longer be able to evade.

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