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Things All the Way Down: How Mind-Object Identity Dissolves the Problem of Consciousness

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Aula L1.1 – Fisica – V. Campi, 213/A, Modena

Manzotti argues that consciousness is not instantiated inside the nervous system. The concept of consciousness emerged by reifying the belief that we are not identical with the things that exist, and thus must be a non-thing, labeled I, self, or consciousness. Such a misleading belief led to the pseudoproblem of consciousness that plagues neurosciences. In contrast, the Mind–Object Identity theory (MOI) rejects this assumption and reframes experience in terms of the relative existence of things. On this view, the subject is identical with the external physical object constituted through the appropriate causal and spatiotemporal relations. There are only things. Drawing on Galileo's relativity, Einsteins' special relativity, evidence from dreams and hallucinations, and the geometry of light in perception—together with vivid, real-world examples—MOI argues that consciousness is not an inner world. Experience is not inside us; it is the very world our bodies inhabit. We are neither our body nor inside them, we are the things that exist relative to our bodies.

Manzotti received his PhD from the University of Genova in 2001 and is currently full professor of theoretical philosophy at IULM University (Milan). He has been Fulbright Visiting Scholar at MIT (Boston). Manzotti originally specialized in robotics and AI where he started to wonder how can matter have experience of the surrounding world. Eventually he has been a psychologist from 2004 to 2015 and then he has become a full-time philosopher.

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