



Beyond the Physical: The Idealism vs. Realism Dimensions of Orthopedic Care

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As the ancient philosopher Juvenal once mused, "Mens sana in corpore sano" — a sound mind in a healthy body [1]. The perpetual interplay between our mental faculties and physical well-being lies at the heart of the mind-over-body dilemma. This age-old debate, akin to the philosophical wrestling match between idealism and realism, finds an unexpected arena in the field of orthopedics. It compels us to contemplate how these contrasting philosophical perspectives can cast fresh light on clinical practice and medical research within orthopedics.

Let's venture into the intriguing realm where the philosophical ideals of mind and matter intersect with the intricacies of musculoskeletal health.

Individuals possess two distinct modes of perceptual experience: one through their physical bodies, involving sensations like touch and sight, and another through their mental faculties, encompassing processes such as thinking and imagining. These modes are commonly referred to as "extension" and "thought." [2].

Conceptualizing these modes as metaphorical doors, one may envision them as gateways to distinct realms of experience. Behind these doors lie various entities referred to as "modes," encompassing ideas, physical objects, or relational constructs. These modes are distributed between the "extension" and "thought" domains.

Idealism is a philosophical viewpoint that underscores the significance of ideas and concepts over material objects or physical experiences when it comes to comprehending the world. While it encompasses various philosophical traditions, the essence of idealism suggests that the nature of reality is essentially mental or spiritual. It places the primacy of the mind and the realm of thoughts at the core of our understanding of the world. The origin of the more extreme perspective on idealism is often attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, forming a theory referred to as Platonic idealism. This viewpoint is not limited to Western philosophy alone; it also finds expression in certain Indian philo-

sophical traditions, particularly within Vedanta, one of the orthodox branches of Hindu philosophy, as well as in certain branches of Buddhism [3].

Realism can also represent a broader perspective on the nature of reality itself, asserting that reality has inherent properties and exists autonomously, irrespective of the influence of the human mind. In essence, this viewpoint posits that the external world possesses inherent characteristics and is not reliant on human cognition or perception for its existence or properties to be valid [4].

What constitutes the biological foundation of consciousness?

This inquiry is prompted in part by a substantial body of empirical findings that establish correlations between consciousness and brain activity. For instance, research has unveiled associations between damage to the cortical area V1 and the resultant loss of conscious visual perception [5]. Likewise, when V1 remains intact while certain extrastriate cortical regions incur damage, it similarly results in a deprivation of conscious visual perception [6].

The philosophical debate between idealism and realism can be applied in various ways within the field of orthopedics, both in terms of clinical practice and medical research. Here are some ways in which these philosophical perspectives can be relevant to orthopedics:

Treatment approach

- **Idealism:** From an idealistic perspective, the perception of pain and disability in orthopedic conditions can be influenced by a patient's beliefs, attitudes, and psychological state. This approach may emphasize the importance of holistic care, including psychological support, patient education, and addressing psychosocial factors alongside physical treatment.
- **Realism:** Realist thinking in orthopedics focuses on the objective aspects of the condition, such as the anatomical structure and physiological processes. It emphasizes evi-

dence-based treatments, surgical interventions, and therapies that directly address the underlying physical issues.

Rehabilitation

- Idealism: An idealistic approach to orthopedic rehabilitation recognizes the importance of patient motivation, belief in the recovery process, and mental well-being during the rehabilitation phase. Emphasizing patient-centered care and psychological support can enhance rehabilitation outcomes.
- Realism: Realist rehabilitation approaches emphasize the objective assessment of physical function, adherence to evidence-based rehabilitation protocols, and the use of modalities and exercises that are grounded in biomechanical principles.

Research and Innovation

- Idealism: Idealistic thinking can inspire research in orthopedics that explores the psychosocial aspects of musculoskeletal conditions, patient-reported outcomes, and the impact of patient beliefs and expectations on treatment success.
- Realism: Realism is often reflected in orthopedic research that seeks to understand the anatomical and physiological underpinnings of orthopedic conditions, such as studying the biomechanics of joints, tissues, and the development of surgical techniques and implants.

Shared decision-making

- Idealism: When involving patients in shared decision-making about their orthopedic treatment, idealistic principles may encourage open communication, empathy, and a patient's active role in choosing treatment options based on their values and preferences.
- Realism: Realist approaches to shared decision-making may prioritize providing patients with clear and objective information about the risks, benefits, and evidence supporting different treatment options, allowing them to make informed choices.

Orthopedic education

- Idealism: Idealistic teaching methods may stress the importance of understanding the patient's holistic experience, including their fears, expectations, and psychosocial challenges when teaching orthopedics to medical students and trainees.

- Realism: Realist teaching in orthopedics focuses on imparting anatomical knowledge, surgical techniques, and evidence-based practices, ensuring that medical professionals have a strong foundation in the objective aspects of the field.

In orthopedics, a balanced approach that incorporates both idealistic and realistic perspectives can lead to comprehensive patient care. Recognizing the interplay between the physical and psychological aspects of musculoskeletal conditions can enhance patient outcomes and the practice of orthopedic medicine.

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