Methodological Note: Bio-Psycho-Social Being, What Does it Mean?

Whenever any science takes the human being as an object of investigation, so daring (indeed tautologically) to focus upon the agent itself of all possible knowledge, two different observation methods get necessarily imposed on the observer thus giving rise to quite heterogeneous sets of observational data, namely:

1st) The so-called biological phenomena, in strict sense, which come to our grasp as tangible sets of empirical data, directly available to our sense perception, or by inference procedures. Such data sets build up our concept of the human body.

2nd) The mental phenomena, which let themselves be grasped through verbal and corporal language, but also through observed behaviors and/or human social interactions.

Such a split, which has since always imposed itself on the human ability of studying our own species, brings upon an overly complex and singular challenge, having resulted in:

A) The biological sciences of the human body;

B) The psychological sciences.

Besides that, it also has given rise to two metaphysical perspectives about the human essence, which may be grouped according to their main core assumptions in:

I) Dualistic Approach: according to which human lives are the result from two interacting key components, namely,

1. An anatomical body, and

2. An immaterial soul (or mind, or spirit).

René Descartes's philosophy, as is well known, attributed to the pineal gland the site of the soul, from which the latter was taken as commanding our bodies.

II) Monistic Approach: according to which, a human individual is just one sole being, and therefore there must not be two different substances such as a body in opposition to an immaterial mind (soul or spirit).

Immanuel Kant in his 'Critique of Pure Reason'(1782) proved certain kind of questions have no answer within the limits of reason. And this is surely the case when having to choose between dualistic and monistic approaches to study our own species.

Aware of this Kantian evidence, I must stress that since the beginning my psychiatric practice has led me to choose Instrumental Monism as the most coherent interpretation of the clinical facts I see. Of course, this must be regarded as a metaphysical choice, my opening door to better insights into patients' lives and troubles. This explains why it has been an instrumental choice.

WARNING: The reader must not be tempted to see here a validation of any kind of reductionist etiology, be it psychological or organically oriented, in psychiatric descriptions! Let it be clear that neither one nor the other approach have but less severe limitations, something that surely explains their so constant and so harsh, despite so unavoidable, disputes.