

# Eliminativist Undercurrents in the New Wave Model of Psychoneural Reduction

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## Abstract

"New wave" reductionism aims at advancing a kind of reduction that is stronger than unilateral dependency of the mental on the physical. It revolves around the idea that reduction between theoretical levels is a matter of degree, and can be laid out on a continuum between a "smooth" pole (theoretical identity) and a "bumpy" pole (extremely revisionary). It also entails that both higher and lower levels of the reductive relationship sustain some degree of explanatory autonomy. The new wave predicts that reductions of folk psychology to neuroscience will be located in the middle of this continuum; as neuroscientific evidence about mental states checks in, theoretical folk psychology will therefore be moderately revised. However, the model has conceptual problems which preclude its success in reviving reductionism, and its commitment to a syntactic approach wrecks its attempt to rescue folk psychology. Moreover, the architecture of the continuum operates on a category mistake that sneaks in an eliminativist conclusion. I argue that new wave reductionism therefore tends to be eliminativism in disguise.

**Keywords:** Reductionism, Eliminativism, Folk Psychology, Theories

**Subjects:** [General Issues: Reductionism/Holism](#)  
[General Issues: Structure of Theories](#)  
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