Mind as Process
Hi, I'm Mark Bickhard, and I'm here to explain mind as a process, not a thing.

There are all sorts of problems and inconsistencies if you think of mind as a thing.

Yeah, like what?
As one example, lack of change, or inertness, is the explanatory default.

So what's the big deal? So inertness is the explanatory default - big whoop!

Many phenomenon are rendered unintelligible, or at least not wholly intelligible, by this de facto inertness - like genuine emergence.

More specific examples would include learning and psychopathology.

I believe that explaining the mind in this "inert", substance manner is conceptually impossible.

Interesting... do you advocate this process approach further than just the mind?
Absolutely.
Actually, the process approach has already been adopted in almost all other fields - the study of the mind is one of the few fields in which a substance metaphysics and framework is still used.

So you are advocating a 'catching up' of the study of the mind.

Correct. The substance metaphysics that is assumed in most theories of mind necessarily cut off the physical realm of 'cause and effect' from the mental realm of intentionality, normativity, and modality.

This thinking of the mental and material as separate realms forces us to figure out how the two interact, or else explain all the phenomenon using either 'mental' or 'material'.

Couldn't you just say that the mental emerged out of the physical? That the normativity and intentionality of the mind somehow emerges out of the material?
Actually, emergence is precluded by substance/particle metaphysics. The integration of the mental and physical via emergence is conceptually impossible on these accounts.

Yes, it appears to make it extraordinarily difficult, even impossible.

But why should we think that process is the way to go? Why reject substance? How do we know the problem isn't just beyond our capacity? What's the proof?

Hm... so substance makes the mind-body problem hard to address?

Because everything is particulate, they can be mixed together, but nothing genuinely new comes from it— it is only a mix of what already exists. You can rearrange the existing matter (particles).
PROCESS APPROACHES ARE ACTUALLY FAVORED IN MANY FIELDS AND ARE GAINING IN USE AND ACCEPTANCE.

THE BEST CONTEMPORARY PHYSICS TELLS US THAT THERE ARE NO PARTICLES IN THE UNIVERSE AT ALL, JUST QUANTUM FIELDS - WHICH ARE INHERENTLY PROCESSES.

ALSO, THE OLD SUBSTANCE EXPLANATION OF HEAT (CALORIC), COMBUSTION (PHLOGISTON), AND OTHER PHENOMENA HAVE BEEN STEADILY REPLACED WITH PROCESSUAL EXPLANATIONS.

ALSO, EMERGENCE HAS OCCURRED - LOOK AT LIFE, OR THE MIND - AND WE CAN ONLY ACCOUNT FOR THESE PHENOMENA BY TAKING EMERGENCE SERIOUSLY, WHICH MEANS TAKING PROCESS SERIOUSLY.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND US - TABLES, CHAIRS, PEOPLE, ROCKS - THESE THINGS ARE SURELY PARTICLES, THEY ARE SOLID!
If I understand you correctly, you are saying that "process" is a much better and more consistent way to look at the world as a whole. What things are, are processes of various kinds.

Actually, there are distinct processes which can have a "solidity" to them and remain stable under a wide array of circumstances. The details are a bit too complicated to explain now, but process frameworks have ways of incorporating our common views of the world.

Yes, things are constituted by processes. If you consider exactly what generally refer to as 'things', you will find that the definition will extend further than you thought, perhaps including things you'd normally consider separate...
FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN YOU EXAMINE A TREE, YOU CANNOT SEPARATE IT FROM ITS PROCESSES.

A LEAF IS NOT A LEAF UNLESS IT UNDERGOES THE PROCESSES WE ASSOCIATE WITH 'LEAF.'

WHA...

THAT MAKES NO SENSE.

I BELIEVE WHAT MARK MEANS IS THAT THE NATURAL PHENOMENA WE NAME ARE MERELY PHASES IN LARGER PROCESSES — PERHAPS THEY ARE A RELATIVELY SELF-CONTAINED SUB-PROCESS, PERHAPS NOT.

IF I MAY INTERPRET WHAT YOU HAVE SAID, MARK, YOU BELIEVE THE CONFUSION WE HAVE ABOUT PROCESSES STEMS, IN PART, FROM THE FALLACY OF REIFICATION — THAT WE ATTRIBUTE 'THINGSNESS' OR 'SUBSTANCE' TO SOMETHING BECAUSE IT HAS A NAME.
Precisely.

But what does this have to do with the mind?

We have made just such a mistake about the mind. We think of it and treat it as a thing—a substance—when it is really a process, or, rather, many processes.

Because many people make such a category error, the study of the mind begins on the wrong track and will never adequately describe the mind.

Viewing mind as process will allow many conceptual tools necessary for understanding the mind that are precluded by outdated substance approaches.
MY POINT IS THIS -

THE STUDY OF THE MIND IS BEING HELD BACK BY SUBSTANCE/PARTICLE ASSUMPTIONS, MANY OF WHICH ARE MADE WITHOUT REFLECTION. THERE ARE SERIOUS CONCEPTUAL FLAWS IN SUBSTANCE METAPHYSICS, FLAWS THAT MAKE THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM IMPOSSIBLE TO SOLVE FROM WITHIN THAT FRAMEWORK. MANY FIELDS HAVE SEEN THE WISDOM AND ADVANTAGE IN ADOPTING A PROCESS APPROACH, AND THE STUDY OF MIND WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY FROM A SWITCH TO A PROCESS METAPHYSICS. THE STUDY OF MIND IS BEHIND THE CURVE IN TERMS OF A SWITCH TO PROCESS.
Thanks for looking at this graphic essay! It was created by me, Alex Haimos, and is a representation of my interpretation of Prof. Mark Bickhard's reasons for adopting process in his interactivist model.

If you want to know more, I suppose you could read some of Prof. Bickhard's work. It can be found online - just type in "Mark Bickhard" into Google and the first hit will be his homepage.