

Is the Panpsychist Better Off as an Idealist?

Some Leibnizian Remarks on Consciousness and Composition

ABSTRACT *Some philosophers of mind have argued for considering consciousness as a further fundamental feature of reality in addition to its physical properties. Hence most of them are property dualists. But some of them are panpsychists. In the present paper it will be argued that being a real property dualist essentially entails being a panpsychist. Even if panpsychism deals rather elegantly with certain problems of the puzzle of consciousness, there's no way around the composition problem. Adhering to the fundamentality claim of the mind, it will be shown that only a radical revision of metaphysics will allow the panpsychist to avoid these troubles, and hence that a panpsychist must adopt Leibnizian idealism.*

I. Why every real property dualist is essentially panpsychist

Property-dualism is typically taken to be the view that there are two fundamentally different kinds of properties to be found in the world: mental and physical properties. Both are irreducible to each other, which means that the ontology of physics is not enough to constitute subjective experiential phenomena. However, it is generally agreed that these two basic kinds of properties stand in a somewhat lawful relation to each other, even if these laws are distinct from the as-yet known natural laws of physics and would therefore expand our physical worldview (cf. Chalmers 1996). The attractiveness of this view derives of course from its compatibility with a widely accepted physical theory about the nature of reality, though it “adds” a further ingredient to the lawful composition of fundamental particles, fields and forces. Being a property dualist in fact entails *not being* an eliminative physicalist or reductive materialist, but rather an insistent defender of the idea that mentality in the sense of conscious experience is

something fundamental.¹ Fundamentality is understood in the sense of being essentially irreducible to something else.

In the following I distinguish between two groups of property dualists:

- * *Mere* property dualists: These are property dualists that hold that consciousness is restricted to systems with a certain complex functional organization, even if these functions are not identical to consciousness. In fact they think consciousness is an *emergent* phenomenon that depends on a certain degree of functionality of a system, and not on some intrinsic properties of its parts.²

- * *Real* property dualists: These are dualists who hold that consciousness is an intrinsic feature of everything that exists (even though everything that exists also instantiates physical properties). They reject the idea of emergence of consciousness and hence assume mental properties to be widespread. *Real* property dualists are mostly panpsychists.³

In the following it will be argued that there is a principle difficulty of limiting the scope of fundamental properties, and thus *mere* property dualism should be rejected in favor of *real* property dualism.

According to the fundamentality thesis of consciousness, all property dualists assume the following points, which set up the frame of discussion:

1. Physical properties are fundamental.
2. Phenomenal properties are fundamental.
3. Fundamental laws relate physical and phenomenal properties to each other.

All the major arguments against reductive materialism or physicalism generally lead to these assumptions. They constitute the pillars of property or “naturalistic” dualism. (Cf. Chalmers 1996, 123ff.) However, a further assumption must be considered:

4. Fundamental properties are ubiquitous.

This is of course a bitter pill to swallow for *mere* property dualists, and most of them are unwilling to do so because (4) pushes the dualist towards panpsychism, the classical position that claims that mind (*psyché*) is everywhere (*pan*). Yet I will argue in the following that this assumption is implied by assumptions (1)-(3).

It is widely agreed that physical properties are universal. Take for example gravitation: Gravitation is a universal physical property. And even if we cannot necessarily observe the impacts of gravitation on a microphysical level due to its weakness in such cases, it is nevertheless taken to be a ubiquitous physical property. Now, to restrict fundamental properties to a certain scope of reality, we would need to provide reasons and criteria for such a restriction. Yet it seems rather difficult to find such criteria to apply to *really* fundamental properties. And it seems even harder to find such criteria for consciousness since the concept of consciousness does not permit thinking of it in terms of degrees: either there is phenomenology or there is not. If we wish to restrict consciousness to a certain scope of experience, for instance, the scope of animal and human experience, as the *mere* property dualist does, we have to conceive of consciousness as an *emergent* phenomenon. Emergence is understood in this case as a sudden coming into existence of the phenomenology of a system due to a certain grade of internal functional complexity. The “brute-ness” of such emergence has to do with the aforementioned character of consciousness itself: phenomenology does not come into existence in degrees. But what are the reasons presupposing that something fundamental like consciousness appears initially and suddenly at a certain functional or organizational level, as e.g. Chalmers has argued (cf. Chalmers 1996, 213ff)? Actually, Chalmers set up the “principle of organizational

invariance” as a restrictive principle to the fundamentality claim of consciousness. It holds that two functionally identical systems will have the same phenomenology. However, it also claims that consciousness is *only* instantiated by *functionally* organized systems. And this is essential for defining the framework of naturalistic dualism and establishing a border to panpsychism. Concerning this claim of Chalmers’, William Seager notably pointed out that “[i]t is disturbing that consciousness can be an absolutely fundamental feature of nature while being dependent upon particular systems satisfying purely functional descriptions”. Furthermore, “[n]o other fundamental feature of the world has this character, or a character even remotely like it”. And, “this idea does seem to deepen rather than mitigate the mystery of the generation problem” (Seager 1995, 275) Of course, accepting the fundamentality of consciousness but rejecting sudden emergence and restriction concerning its distribution provides a sound argument for panpsychism.⁴

This is the reason why I take every *real* property dualist – someone who considers consciousness to be a truly fundamental feature and therefore rejects sudden emergence – to be in her hearts of hearts a panpsychist. From this perspective, panpsychism is the view that conscious experience is a fundamental and equally ubiquitous characteristic of our universe, *equal to* physical properties like mass, charge and spin. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate in the following that the idea of *real* property dualism as panpsychism entails a serious problem, at least concerning the claim of coherently explaining the generation of consciousness.^{5,6}

II. A really hard problem for the panpsychist

The really hard problem for a panpsychist in the outlined sense is the *problem of composition*. To avoid the problem of sudden emergence, the *real* property dualist must assume panpsychism. However, to deal with the generation question (the fact that my perspective is, in the panpsychist’s theory, the result of a certain composition of fundamental entities, each capturing a single point of view), she has to assume that phenomenal wholes are results of a certain composition of phenomenal parts. As Philip Goff has convincingly laid out in several

publications, the problem of composition is the problem of intelligibly explaining consciousness in terms of adding single perspectives or experiences in order to gain a composite conscious whole: a full blown, human, experiential perspective (Cf. Goff 2006, 2009).⁷ The composition problem is a logical problem and it seems there is no solution currently available (and it is disputable whether there ever be a solution).

In the following passages I will show (1) that the idea of composition derives from certain assumptions of property dualism *as such*. Therefore I argue (2) for dispensing with the idea of dualism in favor of panpsychism. In section (3) I provide the reader with an alternative position that mainly follows Leibniz's ideas on mind and composition.

Ad 1: Property dualism is a position that, at least in its current form, derives from a rejection of materialism. While materialists argue that consciousness is something reducible to physical or functional states, the property dualist holds that consciousness is something fundamental *aside from* fundamental physical properties (See points 1-3 in section 1 above). The foundations of property dualism are a direct result of anti-materialist arguments.⁸ So it seems on first sight as if the enemy is making the rules that finally define the framework of argumentation and speculation. This framework is first and foremost established by the idea of an independently, objectively existing (whatever that may mean) world of things, well ordered by a set of fundamental natural laws. Thus, even if we cannot make sense of consciousness lawfully deriving from certain (dynamically organized) sets of such objectively existing things (again, whatever that may mean), we – or at least all those who accept this framework of discussion – nevertheless need to find a place for consciousness within this world.

Ad 2: If we are correct and real property dualism entails panpsychism, it must entail a variety of panpsychism compatible with the mentioned framework. And such a position is best labeled as “micropsychism” where experience is a feature of (certain) physical systems and of (certain) fundamental particles as well.^{9, 10} I take this idea of micropsychism to be the source of the “really hard problem” in question: Here, real property dualism culminates in the idea of “microsubjects” and their adding up to form “macrosubjects” like you and me. And from this

point of view it is hard to make sense of the mind as a composite whole constituted by minor subjective parts.

Hence, in order to save the fundamentality claim of consciousness as well as the intelligibility of panpsychism, it seems that the only way out of the dilemma is to omit the essential presupposition of the entire current discussion surrounding the question of the mind's place in nature: We must omit the idea of an independently, objectively existing (whatever that may mean) world of things and take it as in some way derivative from the mind as the really fundamental feature of our world.

III. Why the panpsychist is better off as a Leibnizian idealist

It is curious that one can find a similar evaluation of the various aforementioned positions in a short passage of Josiah Royce's "Mind and Reality" from 1882. According to him:

Mind-Stuff was a worse hypothesis, because, when you tried to express all its consequences, it became unintelligible. The ordinary uncritical Atomism is a worse hypothesis, because we never get from it the least notion of how this eternally existent matter may look and feel when nobody sees or feels it. The mystical "one substance with two faces" is worse, because that is no hypothesis, only a heap of words. (Royce 1882, p. 40)

As an alternative to these positions (micropsychism, materialism and property dualism), Royce saw the possibility of avoiding most of the aforementioned problems by embedding most of the positive aspects of them in an idealistic foundation (cf. Royce 1895). A strong idealist holds that the fundamental constituents of the world are mental and that our knowledge of natural phenomena as well as the true nature of these phenomena has their paths in an identical mental basis. Hence, she assumes that what really *is*, is *mental* and what *appears*, is *necessarily correlated* with a mind as well.

In the following passages, we will follow Royce's advice and try to preserve panpsychism by challenging the basic assumption of materialism – the assumption of a material world as such. We will do so by supposing that what is commonly understood as “matter” and “material objects” are phenomena grounded in fundamental mental processes. With the idealistic turn, it will be shown that by overcoming dualism, the emergence problem, as well as the combination problem, simply vanishes. Precisely such an attempt can be found in the philosophy of G. W. Leibniz. The subsequent discussion of idealism is therefore mainly centered on Leibniz's philosophy. However, I do not pretend to provide an exact historical reconstruction of Leibniz's complex metaphysics, but rather a conceptual interpretation of some of his basic ideas.

Starting with a sketch of Leibniz's critique on the Cartesian separation of mind and matter, we will continue by focusing on the concept of unity in Leibniz's philosophy, which is essential to the subsequent outlines on the concepts of mind, substance, and an inter-subjectively shared world. Even though I interpret Leibniz as an idealist¹¹, a certain ambivalence can be found in his writings. This ambivalence concerns the idea of “well founded”, actually existing phenomena. In short, everything that actually exists (and is not just a possibility) must in fact be seen from “two sides”: Following Leibniz, every *real* being is on the one hand a phenomenally present content of representational states, and on the other hand “well founded”, which means that the phenomenon objectively obtains in the actual world. Leibniz “harmonizes” this ambivalence with the parallelism found in his principle of pre-established harmony. The legitimacy of this principle will be evaluated with the background of the idea of “inference to the best explanation” of the phenomena in question at the end of this section.

Apparently, overcoming the problems of dualism – whether Cartesian dualism of substances or a Spinozan one of properties – was a motor driving idealistic approaches. According to Descartes, mind (*res cogitans*) – in contrast to material being (*res extensa*) – is simple and essentially indivisible. Furthermore, mind is something fundamental in the sense of not ontologically relating to anything other than itself.¹² Descartes considers both – mind and matter (crudely put) – to relate to oppositional metaphysical spheres. Of course, this view intuitively

suits our everyday concept of the mind's nature, in contrast to our concepts of material phenomena, even if we take them to (1) constantly interact with each other and, concerning the relationship of our own mind and body, to (2) perform only in pair-like manner. However, as is generally known, Cartesian dualism leads to problems relating precisely to these intuitions: (1) the interaction-problem – the problem of making intelligible causal interaction between two metaphysically distinct realms; and (2) the so-called “pairing problem” of today – the problem of why a particular mind relates to precisely one particular body (even if there may be additional candidates); and this problem can be extended to the question of why a certain mental state or mental substance is instantiated only by systems with a certain functional complexity – at least in the way Descartes suggested. (Foster 1991, 163ff.)¹³

G. W. Leibniz – one of the major critics of such dualisms – was a strict anti-materialist throughout his career. The point he stressed was in the main not the rejection of un-extended mental substance, but rather the rejection of extended material ones. He emphasized that properties of shape and size are relative to our perception of objects, and nothing instantiated by the things themselves. Nearly all of the things that surround us in everyday life are (1) divisible and (2) have no principled unity in themselves: they are simply compositional entities. However, Leibniz scholastically identifies being and unity: *being* always means being *one* (cf. e.g. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 394; G, V 214).¹⁴ But if the nature of the things that surround us in everyday life is *compositional*, then the unity of such compositions could be merely phenomenal. This means that a subject perceives them *as one*, as having a certain shape and quantity, even if their boundaries are vague.¹⁵ Hence, if there are no real unities to be found among experientially given objects, the idea of such a unity – unity in a strict sense of mathematical, numerical unity – cannot derive from experience, but must be given *a priori*. In the *Nouveaux Essais*, Leibniz states that the idea of such unity could be reflectively located within the subject's mind (cf. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 142; G, V 116f), originally in the unity of one's *self*, and hence in the identity of self-consciousness (cf. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 404-408; G, V 218-219). In fact, this is the only unity of which I can have clear, distinct and immediate

knowledge. Consequently, if *being* is identified with *being one* and *being one* furthermore implies – at least for compositional objects – *being for* a subject of experience, Leibniz advocates a transcendental kind of idealism.

Human beings have (in contrast to other beings) the capacity to intellectually access their apperceptive unity as such. Even if these subjects merely *appear to me* in the same way that compositional beings do, namely as corporeal phenomena, I take them to be essentially united: I infer that they have a principled unity of their own (cf. Leibniz 1704/2000b, 270-273; G, V 355; Rescher 1979, 81f.). Now, two urgent questions pose themselves in the framework of this position:

1. How can beings (other than human), which have no capacity of apperception (and hence no clear concept of unity), be real unities, namely real *objective* unities in themselves?
2. From my point of view, I cannot gain certain knowledge about the unity of others, but Leibniz nevertheless holds that, “Following from the fact that *I am*, it can be adequately understood that I am *not alone*” (Leibniz 1676b/1996, 20f). How does he argue this non-solipsistic position?

In the following, I implicitly answer these questions by delving somewhat deeper into Leibniz’s system and presenting some further important conceptual distinctions:

- * Minds
- * Bodies
- * “Well-founded” phenomena
- * Monads

I will provide some brief definitions of each concept, followed by a sketch of their dependences.

Minds: Leibniz distinguishes perception from apperception, and hence human awareness from any other form of perceptual awareness (Cf. Leibniz 1714a/1996, 418f.; 1714b/1996, 444; G, VI 599f, 608f). Yet he also retains the principle of continuity: nothing occurs suddenly – there is smooth transition everywhere. Hence, there is also transition within the scope of different forms of awareness. From this perspective, a perception is to be understood as a qualitative representational state, a certain *point of view*, whereas apperception is to be understood as (reflective, distinct) awareness of this point of view. According to Leibniz, a mind is never without perception, even though it is often not explicitly aware of it in a reflective manner (Cf. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 222, 168, also 154; G, V 148, 127, 121). This is why he introduces his famous notion of “unconscious” mental states: In such states we have no “explicit”, and therefore no “distinct”, apperception of their contents. However, he explicitly states that the distinct concept of unity that derives from apperception is not necessary for perceptual unity as such, because – and this is an astonishing turn in Leibniz’s thought – perception is the “true nature” of unity itself (Leibniz 1704/2000b, 282; G, V 359). Hence, perceptions are points-of-view and unified representations – even if they are not explicitly known through reflection. The idea is that a slug may have a confused feel for its surrounding environment and represent it in a certain way, different to a dog who may have a more distinct feel and therefore a different representation of the same environment; and my own representation of the world is different yet again. But common to all these different states is the fact of their being accompanied by a certain feeling, the phenomenal quality of the state as such. Each and every perceptive state implies a certain kind of immediate qualitative presence of the state per se as the foundation of its own monadic unity. Such formulations are reminiscent of Thomas Nagel’s (1974) famous description of the character of such a perspective as “what-is-it-like-ness”. Surprisingly, one can find a similar concept in Leibniz’s definition of “*petites perceptions*” in the foreword to *Nouveaux Essais*. Here, Leibniz defines such “*petites perceptions*” as “this taste of something”, this “I-don’t-know-what” of “sensual quality”, which can constitute a distinct object in their resemblance, but which are rather confused when taken on their own (Leibniz 1704/2000a,

XXIV; G, V 48). “*Petite perceptions*“ are therefore the irreducible constituents of a qualitative point of view, of a genuine subjective perspective on the world. This notion of “*petites perceptions*” plays an essential role in the Leibnizian conception of consciousness since by using such a definition of a subjective perspective, he avoids having to postulate further reflexive awareness or self-consciousness of these points of view. It would be pure experiential presence in which the “the present becomes pregnant with the future” (ibid.).

If perception is the “true nature” of unity and if unity is the basic character of *what there is*, then perception must be the true character of *what there is*. Hence, if the true constituents of the world are true unities, their *intrinsic nature* must be mental – even if they lack a clear concept of their own unity due to a lack of apperception.

Bodies: Based on this concept of mind, Leibniz distinguishes between two kinds of things that can exist:

- * Mere aggregates, i.e. phenomena that have no point of view by themselves and whose unity is instantiated by a perceiving subject.
- * Real unities, i.e. phenomena that employ a single point of view.

Whereas the desk I am currently sitting at is an aggregate whose unity derives from my representational state, my colleague’s unity derives from his intrinsic nature via his embracing a particular point of view. This means that the unity of his corresponding body is related to the unity of the point-of-view he occupies. His “body” then has “two sides”, so to speak: an objective side as aggregate, present to him and others *as a phenomenon*; and a subjective side, present only to him as his *subjectively felt* body, sensationally bound to *his* point of view. Moreover, this body is, as a *phenomenon*, predominantly constituted by this point of view – albeit not by this particular point of view alone. (I come back to the question of constitution in my remarks on *actuality* and *intersubjectivity*.) Hence, *real* unities are on the one hand aggregates like desks, knives and chairs in their phenomenal, inter-subjective presence, but they

are *structured* aggregates since their bodies correspond to a higher organizing principle, i.e. the certain point-of-view existing in the inter-monadic community and therefore actively participating in the real world.

“Well-founded” phenomena: As just discussed, bodies are only phenomena to Leibniz, even if they are what he calls “well-founded” phenomena. In contrast to “mere” phenomena, i.e. phenomena present only to one’s own mind (e.g. dreams, hallucinations etc.), “well-founded” phenomena are phenomena that correspond to something *real*, i.e. something given in the *actual* world. A well-founded phenomenon is understood as an aggregate, being composed of *real* units, existing in the actual state of the world (cf. Leibniz 1714a/1996, 414ff.; 1714b/1996, 438ff.; G, VI 598f, 607f). Concerning the ambivalence of the concept of well-founded-ness in Leibniz’s system, Nicholas Rescher notes:

[A] phenomenon is a unit since it is an *ens mentalis* for its perceiver. [But] there is also an objective aspect in well founded phenomena: what is perceived is some feature of an actual aggregation of monads constituting a ground for perception because of certain similarities of state of its constituent monads. The well foundedness is thus the objective and the phenomenality the subjective side of the well founded phenomenon. (Rescher 1979, 82)

Following from what has been said about being, unity and perception, bodies are composed of the same *kind* of basic mental stuff that the mind consists of. This fundamental mental kind of stuff is the *monad*. Bodies are therefore to be understood as *monadic aggregates*.

Monads: Monads are the fundamental constituents of everything that *really* exists, and hence exists in the actual world. If what really exists must be *one*, and the nature of true unity is *perception*, then monads are essentially perceptive – they take a certain point of view. Accordingly, there is no view from nowhere in Leibniz’s system. Furthermore, if *real* means *well founded* and well-founded-ness means *existing in the actual world*, then monads are what exist in the actual world. Obviously, the concept of *reality* is strongly bound to the concept of

actuality in Leibniz's metaphysics. To fully understand the status of monads as both reciprocally constitutive points-of-view and constituted "well founded" phenomena, we must address Leibniz's concept of actuality and inter-monadic constitution (mirroring) before returning to the nature of monads.

Excursus on Actuality: Leibniz's modal metaphysics are strongly bound to the idea of God and the universe as His creation. According to Leibniz, God brings all that *actually* exists into existence as the best of all possible options. What only *possibly* exists, exists only in the mind of God and *could* have been brought into existence by Him *had He not been* that good (but goodness is in fact constitutive of his nature). A *possible* world then is a counterfactual world that *could* have been actual, but which in fact only exists as such a possibility in the mind of God. However, I will not follow the "best of all possible worlds" thesis on actuality for reasons I cannot discuss here. Rather I stick to Robert Adams' interpretation and hold that Leibniz has a kind of *indexical* concept of actuality (cf. Adams 1974, 214f.). This interpretation refers to David Lewis' concept of the indexical meaning of *actual*: the actual world is the world of my, and all other inhabitants', shared experiences (cf. Lewis 1986, 92ff.). However, contrary to Lewis, I follow a suggestion of Philipp Bricker and assume the actuality *of the world* to be derivative from the actuality *of the experiencing point of view* (a move that merges the relativity of actuality introduced by the concept of indexicality with the absoluteness of actuality of the experiencing point of view itself) (cf. Bricker 2008). Coming back to Leibniz, according to him a world is something that consists of individual things and a certain set of laws of nature (Leibniz 1697/1995, 35; G, VII 302f). The *actual* world is the world shared (or better: *expressed*) by *actually experiencing individuals*. As Leibniz writes in *De existencia*: "We have no other idea of existence than the one where we understand that things are perceived. [...] Nothing would exist without perceivers" (Leibniz 1676a/1996, 18). In the framework of the previous interpretation of Leibnizian actuality, the actual world is *instantiated* by the set of experiencing points-of-view, even if they represent it (according to the point-of-view they occupy) in varying degrees of perfection. A merely *possible* world is therefore nothing we can

inter-subjectively experience, but rather a theoretical model with which to think about the actual world and evaluate certain propositions.

According to what has been said, something is *well-founded* if it exists within this universe, experienced from different points-of-view, and there is no objectivity beyond the one reciprocally represented within it. This brings me back to Leibniz's concept of the monad as a "mirror of the universe" (cf. Leibniz 1714a/1996, 416; 1714b/1996, 464; G, VI 599, 616) and its implications for inter-subjectivity (or: inter-monadicity) and objectivity.

A monad is a mirror, because it expresses *what there is* in the universe from a certain point of view. And *what there is*, are other monads – at least in the actual world. Therefore (in principle) a monad represents within its perceptive states all the other monads and hence all the other points-of-view, from a certain point of view. And vice versa. Each point of view is something strictly individual, standing in internal difference to any other individual point of view in the universe. This individuality can be interpreted as in some sense dependent on the individuality of the other points of view it opposes. Moreover, the objectivity of an experienced phenomenon and hence its well founded-ness is essentially related to the dependent on the individuality of the other points of view it opposes. Moreover, the objectivity of an experienced phenomenon, and hence its well founded-ness, is essentially related to the possible experiences of the *same phenomenon* from different, other points of view (of the remaining system of monads principally entailed by my own point of view). Only when I can principally assume that a phenomenon is possibly experienced from points of view other than my own, can I coherently assume (in principle) that it is something that exists in the objective, and hence actual world, and is not merely an appearance.¹⁶ Perhaps for these reasons, Leibniz thinks, "Following from the fact that *I am* [i.e. occupy a certain individual point of view], it can be adequately [a priori] understood that I am *not alone* [and hence necessarily stand in relation to other points of view]." (Leibniz 1676b/1996, 20) So *what there really is*, according to Leibniz, is a system of points of view that reciprocally, constitutively represent each other – each from a respective, particular point of view.

At this point, we must pause again and ask: How does Leibniz cope with the obvious fact that my monadic point of view on the world is somehow quite different from the one of a monad that is a component of an aggregation e.g. of a stone?

To explain this fact, Leibniz adopts the idea of hierarchical structure within the monadic universe. From the bottom up, there exist bare monads in contrast to the higher souls in contrast to superior spirits. In this hierarchy, normal animals – contrary to human animals – have perception, but not apperception; a bare monad has only *petite* perceptions and not perceptions in the same way animals do, who additionally possess the capacity of memory. This means that even if monads are *what really exist*, there sometimes also exist aggregates of monads that have distinct points-of-view of their own – such as the aggregate of my colleagues body, his dog’s body, and my own. These bodies are like the things around me, aggregates of simpler units, but with the difference that they form organic unities in relation to their perceptive unities. Leibniz calls this unity (as the structuring principle) “dominant monad” (Cf. Leibniz 1714b/1996, 470; G, VI 619 and Rescher 1979, 110ff.). My corporeal unity is a unity in itself insofar as it is subsumed under the organizing principle of the unity of my mind. However, even if a dominant monad resembles a phenomenal unity of an organically structured body under itself, this unity is “only phenomenal” since the monad’s perceptive unity determines its identity over time. Due to the fact that every monad resembles in its perceptive, representational states the universe of points-of-view as a whole, Leibniz takes them to differ in the quality of internal states, and not in terms of *what* they represent. However, even if Leibniz introduces these differences as internal ones, they could not be taken as differences in respect to the concept of perception. The reason is that we perceive the universe with a certain quality, there is *something it is like* to do so, which unifies a certain perceptive state as the presence of something. And this is true of all monads. There are no degrees of perception in the minimal sense of the “what-it-is-like-ness” of the *petites perceptions*. Therefore, the hierarchical differences between bare monads, souls, and spirits were interpreted with respect to cognitive differences, which affect the representational content and not the *presence* of perceptual feel as such. Of course, according to Leibniz’s idea

that the same universe is represented differently by each monad, these differences can only affect e.g. the distinctiveness of representational content, the attentiveness concerning certain representational contents, or the apperceptive awareness of these contents. But it cannot affect the presence of experience itself.

Now, returning to the idea of the monad as a “mirror”, it can be said that it is essential to Leibniz’s modal metaphysics because it is essential to the process of gaining “objectivity” and “well-founded-ness”: In contrast to mere subjective phenomena, like those that appear in dreams and hallucinations and which do not correspond to anything inter-subjectively “discernible”, a phenomenon is to be taken *as real* – “well-founded” – if it exists in the *actual* world. And the actual world is the world represented in the system of reciprocally mirroring monads (Cf. Rescher 1979, 76).

If all that exists are different reciprocal perceptions that follow each other continuously (apetition) in each monad, then some principle of consistency throughout all these different perceptive states of the monadic universe must be established. This obviously cannot be an objective world since this world is itself only the system of a plurality of perceptive states. Moreover, there is a need to secure the objectivity of laws of nature that exist in the actual world. Leibniz copes with these problems with the idea of predetermination and inter-monadic *harmony*:

- * Every monad is predetermined in the succession of perceptions (apetition)
- * Every monad’s perception remains in pre-established harmony with the states of the remaining system of monads (as the system of the actual world) because there is no *causal* (mechanical) interaction between the monads, even if monads perceptively take the phenomena as *if they would* causally interact.¹⁷

In my interpretation, I do not take these principles literally, but rather as an expression of the difficulty of the subject matter. Consider, as a prime example, the relationship of mind and

body: We would normally say that a particular mental experience is caused by certain complex synaptic interaction in our brain. The interaction is the cause; the experiential state is the effect. It seems rather counterintuitive to provide any other explanation for such a relationship. However, Leibniz would explain the given example as follows: There is a correlation between a monad's perceptive state and a state of a body existing in the actual world (what he calls a well-founded phenomenon); the one appears when the other does, and vice versa, and it seems *as if* the one causes the other. In fact, what really happens, *what there really is*, is that the two sides of a well-founded phenomenon, i.e. the subjective experience and its appearance in the actual world, coincide perfectly. However, one has to bear in mind that the *well-founded-ness* of a phenomenon is itself a result of reciprocal mirroring. Hence, in the example given above, the causal identity between the subjective experience and an alleged objective, material process is truly a *harmony* between *my* experience and that which is *inter-monadically* constituted as the "objective side" of this experience – which is itself the result of a multitude of subjective views. Leibniz's explanation of this fact of correspondence throughout all monadic representations is the assertion that God pre-established (instantiated) this harmony from the beginning (as existing in the best of all possible worlds). It is not further explicable as an *original truth of facts*.¹⁸ However, as mentioned previously, an interpretative option would be to take the term "actuality" in an indexical sense and interpret the "harmony principle" not literally, but as an expression of (transcendental) inter-subjective constitution.

If we now return to Royce's assessment provided in the quotation at the beginning of this section, we have to ask ourselves: Why should we opt for Leibniz's view as a better explanation of the phenomena in question? Indeed, Leibniz himself views his system with all its principles as an *inference to the best explanation* (cf. Leibniz, 1695/1996, 222f.; G, IV 485)¹⁹ for two main reasons:

1. Materialism is false. (Leibniz considered mechanical or physical explanations of the mind to be impossible.)

2. Dualism is problematic. (For various reasons, Leibniz had doubts about the intelligibility of dualistic positions, because of their incompatibility with either actual laws of nature or with the concept of mind.)

Leibniz's own positions can be best understood as a kind of pluralistic idealism, because it takes monads, i.e. minds, both to objectively be the "ingredients" of facts or things that exist in the actual world and to subjectively be points-of-view to whom the phenomena are present. Moreover, they inter-subjectively express the actual world as such. The core basis of reality is subjective in the sense that it is accessible only from certain points-of-view, which are monads. However, the objectivity of the actual world is constituted by the multiplicity of points-of-view, which reciprocally resemble a multitude of other points-of-view. Hence, if objective reality is the actual inter-monadically shared universe, then all that exists are either minds themselves, or something derivative from them. According to Leibniz, all this inter-monadic "mirroring" is harmonized in a way that enables all of the monads to share one and the same universe. Concerning the problem of composition, we can say: If all that exists are points-of-view, whose nature is *perception* and hence *unity*, no such point of view can be taken as the result of a certain composition, because this would undermine its true nature. Rather, each point of view is something unique, regardless of whether it is part of an aggregation phenomenally present to others, or the principle (and hence constitutive) of a certain aggregation itself (whether this be the own body or some other well-founded phenomenon). All this is only "phenomenally" stated. The talk of objectively existing facts is grounded in the actual world, which itself is a product of inter-monadic mirroring. However, I take the term "inter-monadic" only as a metaphor for speaking of a certain relation between monads, although one has to be perfectly aware that this relationship must not be taken as a *causal* one – simply because Leibniz denies inter-substantial causality as such.

Using these principles to examine the relationship between mind and body, we can briefly sketch out the following points:

- * It appears *as if* there is such a relationship, when *in fact* there is none (Cf. Leibniz 1714b/1996, 476; G, VI 621). Here, Leibniz’s strict rejection of dualism must be kept in mind: There is only an agreement of my representations with those of the remaining system of monads, an agreement that exists throughout the whole system and constitutes the actual world. Leibniz calls this agreement *harmony*.
- * The body is itself first and foremost a phenomenon, even though certain bodies stand nearer to certain monads than others.
- * The harmonized relationship between a dominant monad and a certain structured aggregate called her body could be read as a kind of *supervenience* relation (cf. Seager 1991, 85f.). This relationship affects the relation between a single monad’s perspective in respect to the remaining system of monads.

In consequence, there is obviously no longer a mind-body problem in the sense introduced in the beginning of this paper: Within the scope of Leibnizian idealism, there is no longer a question concerning the mind’s place in an alleged fundamental physical framework because mentality (or perception) is itself the true nature of *what there is*. The physical or material realm is no longer fundamental in the same sense as the realm of the mind. Of course such a position could also be interpreted as panpsychistic.²⁰ And, furthermore, within this scope of pluralistic idealism, the composition problem – taken as the “really hard problem of panpsychism” - vanishes into thin air, because mental unities must not be viewed as the result of aggregation, but rather as the presupposed principle of unity of such aggregations. All these unified points-of-view constitute – by reciprocally mirroring each other – the reality of the actual world.

IV. Questions and objections

For clarification of the position I have presented in section (3), I will discuss in the following three questions/objections mainly regarding the concept of composition and the Leibnizian idea that some well-founded phenomena are able to have their own single points-of-view.²¹

1. Is avoidance of composition a better solution to the problems in question (intelligibility of emergence, the reciprocal inter-dependence of mental and physical phenomena, etc.)?

Reply: Actually, the idealistic position outlined above does not *avoid* composition and related problems, because this would imply that such problems *exist at all* – but my point is precisely that they do not. I have argued in section (2) that the problem of composition (and emergence) arises only from the background of certain metaphysical assumptions, namely that there is an independently existing material world with physical properties *besides* the additional fact that there is conscious experience as well. Furthermore, in the last section I have tried to show that by abandoning this presupposition and taking an idealistic position, these problems vanish. This position is essentially bound to the assumption that there is no “objective” or “material” world behind or besides a community of founding subjective points-of-view. On the one hand, this was argued phenomenologically, by showing that phenomena are necessarily bound to a certain point of view and, on the other hand, by showing that the concept of objectivity is essentially bound to the concept of actuality, which depends on the community of points-of-view that instantiate it. So if the objective world is to be considered a well-founded *phenomenon* depending on a community of points-of-view, then it seems to me somehow wrong to further ask how the constituted (the objective world) constitutes the constitutive (the subjective points-of-view) – at least in the context presented.

2. The outlined position postulates that points-of-view simply exist; they are brute facts, so to speak. Does this postulation provide a better explanation of mind-body dependence than a theory of emergence?

Reply: Indeed, it has been claimed that subjectivity, understood as an individual point of view, is the *only* fundamental fact. All other facts belong in some way *to* or *are derivative* of this fact. This is the reason it has been argued that this fact can never be taken as the result of “composition” or “emergence” etc. The reason given is that these concepts could only be applied to already constituted (objective) facts. I am actually doubtful that even physicists can coherently explain *why* the physical world exists – the physical world is taken as a brute fact, and consciousness is a derivative phenomenon. I cannot see why this mere postulate should be any better than the postulation of the brute fact of subjectivity. Arguments are all that count, and I have presented several in order to defend my assumptions against the assumptions of materialists or dualists. In the framework outlined above, at least all of the discussed problems (emergence, composition, making sense of the fundamentality of the mind) disappeared.

3. It has been said that my point of view (my I) is bound to a certain aggregation of other points-of-view (my body), even though it does not (causally) depend on it; there is only *harmonic* correlation. Does this interpretation of the mind-body division have any further explanatory relevance?

Reply: Leibniz’s argumentation is rather opaque on this point, but it obviously has further explanatory relevance. On the one hand, he strictly rejects dualism by advocating an idealistic interpretation of “bodies” as well-founded *phenomena*. This means that they are dependent on a community of points-of-view that “expresses”, i.e. instantiates them. On the other hand, he quite often speaks of a *harmony* between bodily and mental phenomena as if they belong to separate realms. He does this especially in the case of mind-body dependence by introducing metaphors

such as the famous two synchronically ticking clocks. Both positions, the rejection of dualism and the postulation of harmony, exclude each other. I have therefore tried to provide an interpretation of *pre-established harmony* as a rather awkward concept, postulated by Leibniz in order to avoid causal explanations of relations between objective and subjective phenomena. Leibniz obviously accepts that mind-instances and body-instances are (albeit anomalously) correlated. But he nevertheless believes that the explanation of this correlation in terms of *harmony* is better than in terms of *causality*. I hold that he has the following reasons for assuming harmony rather than causality: i) the acknowledgement of subjectivity as a truly fundamental principle can be secured only by ii) explaining the mind-body relation as founded in constituting subjectivity. As a matter of fact, in such a constitutional relationship, the (physical) concept of causality can no longer be employed. I have therefore, along with William Seager, suggested treating this harmony as a kind of supervenience relation – albeit supervenience between well-founded phenomena and subjective points-of-view and not between two ontologically separated realms. However, one shortcoming of this paper could be in not providing the reader with an in-depth analysis of the constitutional dynamics between myself as point of view (the structuring principle of the aggregate I inhabit), and my body as objective “incarnation”, existing in the inter-subjective instantiated actual world.

V. Conclusion: “Wild and airy indeed! But why so?”²²

Now, to ask along with Royce, can this explanation be taken to be the very best possible? I think so – at least for those who wish to treat the mind not merely as a side effect of physical systems, but as a truly fundamental principle of *what really is*.²³

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Notes

¹ A comprehensive overview of the major arguments against materialism / physicalism can be found in Chalmers (1996) and Chalmers (2002). Others can be found in Foster (1991) and Searle (1992).

² *Mere* property dualists are e.g. Chalmers 1996 and Hasker 1999.

³ *Real* property dualists are e.g. Griffin 1998, Rosenberg 2004 and Strawson 2006.

⁴ Cf. e.g. the outlines of Nagel 1979, Seager 1995 and Strawson 2006.

⁵ We have assumed panpsychism to be a more coherent position than property dualism due to the argument from the intelligibility of sudden emergence. It should of course be noted that property dualism faces additional, and no less severe, problems, an issue I do not discuss here. For a discussion of some of the problems of property dualism, see the excellent paper of Zimmerman (2010).

⁶ A comprehensive overview of the problems of panpsychism can be found in Seager (1999, 216-252) and Seager / Allen-Hermanson (2005).

⁷ A previous outline of this problem can be found in James (1890/1998, 158ff.) and Seager (1999, 242).

⁸ E.g. on the knowledge-argument see Jackson (1982); on the explanatory-gap-argument, Levine (1983); on the argument from inverted spectra, Block (1978), or on the zombie-argument, Chalmers (1996).

⁹ For terminological details about “micropsychism” cf. Strawson (2006, 24ff.) and Goff (2009, 293ff.).

¹⁰ Dean Zimmermann (2006, 115) referred precisely to such a kind of “micropsychism” as a rather “bizarre theory”, which nevertheless “qualifies as compositional dualism”, even if it seems “to be a kind of materialism”.

¹¹ The issue of whether or not Leibniz is to be considered an idealist has indeed been a controversial one. Cf. Loftson (1999) and Shim (2005).

¹² In the Sixth Meditation of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes developed two modal arguments for the distinctiveness of mind and body, which – at least in spirit and in a derivative form – persist today. (Cf. Descartes 1641/1986, 50ff.)

¹³ This problem is of course very similar to the previously outlined problem of making sense of emergence of consciousness from non-conscious processes.

¹⁴ I refer to Leibniz’s works by year and page of the *Philosophische Schriften*, Vols. 1-4 (French, Latin, and German; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1996/2000). Furthermore, if the texts are part of *Die philosophischen*

Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (ed. C. I. Gerhardt, Berlin 1875-90), I refer to them by abbreviation (G), volume and page. The English translations are my own.

¹⁵ A classical example for such a compositional being is a cloud: an unstructured set of water drops without strict boundaries. But this notion also applies to artificial things like computers, tables or knives. Such things “purchase” their phenomenal, dependent unity from the unity of a subject’s representational state of them (Cf. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 382-385; G, V 210). Leibniz also refutes the idea that relations are something real: Relations are no properties of things-in-themselves, but rather properties attributed by a subject of experience and hence dependent on the mind (although in final consequence, dependent on an absolute mind) (Cf. Leibniz 1704/2000a, 476; G, V 246).

¹⁶ Most of the idealists after Leibniz draw their concept of objectivity from inter-subjective exchange between finite subjects. For example, take Royce’s definition: “[A] reality, external to my finite Ego, means a world of other experience with which my experience is contrasted. This world is concretely defined, in the first place, as the world of other [...] experiences than my own.” (Royce 1895, 577)

¹⁷ The reason for this is, according to William Seager, that to Leibniz, “even perfect correlation does not entail the kind of constitutive relation between matter and mind that the methodology of physical resolution requires” (Seager, 1991, 85).

¹⁸ E.g. the fact that “I” and “existence” are linked to each other (Cf. Leibniz 1704/2000b, 366; G, V 391).

¹⁹ William Seager (1991, 90) makes a similar point concerning Leibniz principle of pre-established harmony.

²⁰ Cf. Seager/Allen-Hermanson (2005), who labeled both Leibniz and Berkeley panpsychistic idealists. But of course e.g. Schelling’s System (as representative of German Idealism) is to be interpreted as panpsychistic idealism as well (cf. Blamauer 2006).

²¹ In the context of this discussion I am indebted to Wolfgang Fasching for his comments on previous drafts of this paper.

²² Royce (1882, p. 35).

²³ This study has been financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) within the project P21476 “Taking the Hard Problem of Consciousness Seriously – Naturalistic Dualism and the Consequence of Panpsychism”.