Panpsychism and the Dual-Aspect Theory of matter

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Introduction

Phenomenal experience is probably one of the core topics in contemporary philosophy. The big questions are: “How does consciousness fit into our scientific worldview? How can the interaction between the physical and the mental be categorized, so that it is free from contradiction? Is the mental reducible on the physical?

Basically there are two possible views one can hold: On the one hand there is the position that consciousness is metaphysically indifferent from the physical. This notion is labeled and/or accompanied by positions as materialism, functionalism or reductionism. This approach might – if it is pursued rigorously – be equated with eliminativism: the view that conscious experience does not exist at all.

A quite related approach to reducing phenomenal consciousness is to claim that it is something that emerges from the complex interactions between non-phenomenal entities. Experience is understood as a new quality appearing solely on a macroscopic level. I will discuss this idea by explaining its weak and its strong (brute) form, dismissing both as not being promising for a theory of consciousness - the first for being insufficient when it comes to explaining conscious experience, the other due to its generally nonscientific nature and because it leaves many questions unanswered.

The other possible viewpoint takes conscious experience as existent and suggests its fundamentality due to its intangibleness by conventional scientific methods. Positions that subscribe to this idea of fundamentality of consciousness would be dualism (substance or property) and monism.\(^1\)

Much of the discussion depends on what one understands by the term “conscious experience”. In this paper I want to show why “conscious experience” is an existent phenomenon and why it is utterly distinct from physical phenomena. Therefore, I will go back to some of the strongest arguments against materialism like the “Knowledge Argument for Qualia”, the “Modal Argument” and the “Explanatory Gap Argument”. What these arguments have in common is that their goal is to show why the mental differs from the physical and therefore consciousness has to be considered to be fundamental.

Having dismissed reductive and emergentistic explanations, I am going to argue for a monistic position. Monism is the view that both the physical and the mental are ontologically equally parts of reality and that one cannot be reduced to the other. However, they are both properties of one neutral substance x, that is, neither physical nor mental. Strictly speaking

\(^1\) For a closer reading on the variety of possible position within this rough discrimination see Chalmers 2002a.
materialism can be understood as monism as well: Physicalists consider matter to be the only “stuff” that really exists and that everything (including consciousness, if it really exists) is derived from physical entities only. Since I am going to argue against this possibility, I will be concerned with a monistic position that goes by the name panpsychism in the following. This is the view that the mental occurs down to the lowest level of the physical world. Whatever the smallest physical parts (the “ultimates”) will turn out to be, the panpsychist will claim that it has next to its physical property (its spatiality and everything that comes with it) as well as mental properties. These characteristics cannot, however, be thought of as something equal to our experience of pain or our vivid experience of red. It seems ridiculous to assert that electrons, quarks or whatever can have an experience of pain, or a vivid red experience. This is why the panpsychists call their ultimates “proto-mental” or “proto-experiential”. Considering this theory we should not rule it out categorically because of its being counter-intuitive. I am going – referring to Thomas Nagel – to demonstrate why Panpsychism follows from four premises that are all more plausible than their negation. Furthermore I will argue for some form of panpsychism by a discussion of the “intrinsic nature”-argument, which basically claims that in order to have relational, extrinsic properties one has to assume something like intrinsic properties. In a first approximation it might be summarized as: No relations without relata. Since consciousness is the only intrinsic property we know of, it is the best candidate for the property we are looking for. The idea I will convey is best called a “dual-aspect theory of matter”. My attempt will be to show that as soon as we have concrete matter that is spatially extended, we have to assume intrinsic properties that are in analogy similar to what our perspectivity is. Finally I am going to outline one of the most severe problems panpsychism faces in the current discussion: the combination-problem. The apparent incoherence of how and why ultimates that are conceived to have mental or proto-mental properties merge into one higher perspective is strikingly speaking against panpsychism. Is there a conceivable mechanism that causes many subjects of experience to bind so that it becomes a higher perspective like ours? Falling back on the dual-aspect theory of matter I will try to give an answer to this question.
I. A Non-Reductive Theory

1. What kind of consciousness?

According to David Chalmers there is a significant difference in what the word “consciousness” can refer to. On the one hand we have the mere empirical understanding of information-processing and everything that comes with it. Examples for this reading of “consciousness” would be – according to Chalmers – concepts like “the ability to discriminate, categorize, and react to environmental stimuli”, the ability to integrate “information by a cognitive system” or to have the ability of “reportability of mental states” and so forth. What all these mechanisms share is that they can be dealt with in positive theories like neurosciences, behaviorism, cognitive psychology or computational accounts. Each of these phenomena have in common that there is a theory that gives good hints at solving the upcoming problems. Chalmers calls these problems the “easy problems of consciousness” due to their principal resolvability. It might be true that we are still quite far away from an all-embracing theory of human (or even animal) cognition but there is nothing that indicates a general impossibility of solving the problems ahead. If problems in these fields appear to be baffling, this is not due to their metaphysical character but the amazement simply arises out of technical underdevelopment. But the future is clear: positive, empirical methods will dissipate ignorance further and further until a well-elaborated theory of cognition can be enunciated. Being able to explain how a cognitive phenomenon works is to explain the phenomenon. “To explain access and reportability, for example, we need only specify the mechanisms by which information about internal states is retrieved and made available for verbal report. To explain the integration of information, we need only exhibit mechanisms by which information is brought together and exploited by later process.” The point is: It is sufficient for an explanation of all cognitive phenomena to say how its functioning is accomplished by a certain neurophysiological mechanism. The main feature of all the easy problems is that they are consistent with reductive-functional explanation.

In Chalmers’ terminology the counterpart to the “easy problems” is the “hard problem of consciousness”. The big question is why all these functions are not performed in the dark,

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2 Chalmers names four further mechanisms that are involved with this way of talking about consciousness. See Chalmers 1995, p. 200.
3 Chalmers 1995, p. 201.
4 A fertile terminology for future discussions also put forward by David Chalmers is to reserve the expression “consciousness” just for the hard problem and discuss the cognitive phenomena under the term “awareness”. See Chalmers 1995.
why it is somehow to be in these cognitive states\(^5\). Nothing in the explanation of vision (in neurophysiological terms) necessitates a qualitative experience of red. If we examine all physical parts and all their properties that contribute to the ability to see (neurons as well as certain distinguishable wavelengths reaching the eyeball) and then analyze their surely very complex interactions, there will still be nothing (neither in the separate particles nor in their interactions) that bears a qualitative similarity with my experience of the color red. So where does consciousness come in?

A concept often discussed in the context of consciousness is *qualia*. A quale is something that has the characteristics that it has to be experience in order to be existent. If you have the experience of red, it has a qualitative character to be experienced from a first-person point of view. Qualia are not properties of objects, they are properties of subjective experience. This is what makes them so utterly untraceable by common scientific methods. No matter how exact and surprising or complete our knowledge about the brain will turn out, the way one of these brain states will feel from the inside in its qualitative character will remain unexplained. “If the subjective character of experience is fully comprehensible only from one point of view, then any shift to greater objectivity – that is, less attachment to a specific viewpoint – does not take us nearer to the real nature of the phenomenon: it takes us farther away from it.”\(^6\) So objectivity and therefore reductive explanation in totally intersubjective terms can never capture what it is to have a certain qualitative, subjective experience. Everything that appears in consciousness has to have a certain qualitative character. As soon as experience is investigated with objective means, its real character, qualia, disappears.

2. Against a reduction of experience

2.1. Eliminativism

Unlike the version of materialism that tries to bridge the gap by giving functional explanations, there is a further position called eliminative materialism. The strategy of the eliminativist is to deny the existence of qualia in the first place. Arguments falling under this category claim that talking about qualia (as phenomenal atoms) is to talk about the mental in a pre-scientific way.\(^7\) The main intuition of this thesis is that one cannot discriminate between one’s experiences. The general lack of a vocabulary describing the similarity or difference

\(^5\) The phrase „What it is like to be“ was first used by Thomas Nagel 1974, p. 435.
\(^6\) Nagel 1974, p. 439.
\(^7\) See Dennett 1988 & Churchland 1996.
between - let’s say two - red experiences, leads to the claim that the subject doesn’t have a privileged point of view when it comes to its own experience. What are the criteria for being authorized to say that one has seen exactly this shade of red before? The main goal of this form of (eliminative) materialism is to point out the insufficiency of “folk-psychology” that underlies all talk about qualia and to suggest the possibility that eventually terms like “qualia” or “phenomenal” will give way to a truly scientific terminology, i.e. the terminology of neuro- and cognitive science. The root of denying something like qualia often lies in the questionable authority of the experiencing subject concerning qualia. Daniel Dennett is one of the strongest advocates of the idea that since we cannot distinguish between similar qualia with certainty, it is better to say that the subject has nothing to say whether it exists or not.

In my opinion Dennett is correct in observing that it is not possible for the experiencing subject to name all aspects of his qualia. It may be impossible for him or her to compare a momentary taste of raspberry with the taste of raspberry of three days ago and to name differences and similarities in an exact manner. Still, there is something that is just privately given to him or her; which is only there because it is experienced. I would agree in saying that the experiencing subject does not have the autonomy of describing his or her experience, but still there is something about it which is merely accessible in a unique way: it has to be experienced in order to even exist. The crucial point is that experience makes no difference between appearance and existence.

Dennett suggests that we would be better off if we eliminated all talk about qualia, because we do not have any clear nomenclature with which we can work out similarities and differences within the realm of the mental. I admit that the problem Dennett points out is indeed a severe one, but the conclusion he draws from it is a little bit too harsh. A missing or impossible nomenclature for qualia is not yet a proof of its nonexistence. It would take more to convince me that at this moment I do not have a sensation of the color of my desk. Of course there are complex recognition patterns working right now and yes, I cannot define to what extend my red experience today is different or similar from my red experience yesterday, but still the fact that I have a red experience at all seems to be enough to claim that I have qualia. Everything Dennett is able to point out is the apparent impossibility of a conceptual toolkit for categorizing qualia. However this does not show at all that they do not exist.8

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8 The misbelieve of the possibility of denying the existence of phenomenal consciousness is grounded on the misleading assumption that it is better not to talk about things that can’t be treated in an exact manner. Wittgenstein has burdened many modern philosophers with the view that all facts have to find representation in a scientific system in order to become declared facts in the first place. In my opinion it’s the duty of philosophy
Even though the authority of the subject is questionable and highly delicate, the other option, namely the authority of neuroscience concerning the experience of a color appears to me to be even more questionable. I, therefore, at least at the moment, have to assume that all talk about qualia, even if it is vague, is reasonable.

Accepting the existence of qualia I will in the following present three arguments against a materialistic analysis.

### 2.2. The Knowledge Argument:

One of the strongest arguments against reductive explanation was presented by Frank Jackson in his paper “Epiphenomenal Qualia” published in 1982. Its essential idea is that if we had a complete knowledge about all the physical facts in the world, we still would not be able to derive all the phenomenal facts from it. In his argument Jackson imagines a young neuroscientist – Mary – who is gifted in her field of research i.e. neurophysiology of vision. Despite being brilliant, Mary is also colorblind, which means that she can perceive the world just in shades of gray. Let us additionally assume, that Mary lives in a far remote future, where all possible knowledge that can be acquired in her field of research is already available. If Mary now examines an individual with normal vision who claims to have an experience of red she could not find out how it feels to have a red experience despite all her knowledge of all the physical facts. It is impossible to gain the knowledge of how the color red looks like except by experiencing it. Formalized the argument goes like this:

(1) Mary knows all the physical facts.
(2) Mary does not know all the facts

(3) The physical facts do not exhaust all the facts

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9 Chalmers 2002a, p. 250.
10 [Remark by the author]: Simply calling consciousness a fact feels somehow strange. Not because I think that it does not exist, but in the way that the concept of “fact” somehow involves some kind of intersubjectivity that is simply missing in the phenomenon of consciousness. Being a fact has these connotations of being observable from a third person point of view, of being actual physical. A suggestion for the conclusion would therefore be to claim that: (3)* There is something that is not a fact (in the physical sense).
Or more generally:

(1) There are truths about consciousness that are not deducible from physical truths

(2) If there are truths about consciousness that are not deducible from physical truths, then materialism is false

(3) Materialism is false

2.3. The Modal Argument

A different way of making this point is to refer to the notion of identity. Materialists often claim that a certain experience of pain is identifiable with a certain brain state (like a stimulation of c-fibers). The argument against this assumption goes like this:

(1) In order to call two concepts identical they have to be identical in all metaphysically possible worlds.

(2) It is conceivable that a pain-experience is not identical with the stimulation of c-fibers.

(3) Experience and brain-states are not identical.

One colorful version of this modal argument is the zombie-argument. It is conceivable that there is a possible world in which all the physical facts are the same as in our world, but still there is no consciousness. My Doppelganger would act in the same way as I do but in fact lacks all phenomenal contents that I have. The basic intuition is that if an identity is real, it not just has to be in our world but it has to be impossible to conceive of a world where the two notion expressed by the identity claim are not identical. Since a world is conceivable in which zombies exist, materialism (and/or functionalism) is false.

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12 The argument is pointed against materialists as well as against functionalists.
13 A zombie world may be conceivable, still it seems very implausible. Why should a creature (that is to be thought of as living by the way) have the ability to report its inner states (and we would have to admit that it would have this ability since reportability is one of the “easy” problems that are tangible by cognitive science) say the sentence: “I have a vivid red experience” when it sees an apple, that has the same properties than the apple in front of me. Would it be possible to name the exact process in the brain that is sufficient for my belief of having a red experience even if I would have no red experience? See also Strawson 2006, p.22, note 37.
“[N]o matter what functional account of cognition one gives, it seems logically possible that that account could be instantiated without any accompanying consciousness. […] [A]ny physical account of mental phenomena will be fundamentally incomplete.”  

“The subjective character of experience […] is not captured by any of the familiar, recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence.”

2.4. The Explanatory Gap Argument

Based on the modal argument, there is another version of the argument dealing with epistemic dimensions. This version has achieved under the name of “explanatory gap argument.”

There seems to be an “explanatory gap” if one seeks to explain first-person phenomenology by functional means. The elaboration of a function is almost sufficient in every explanation. It is easily understandable that we now want to apply this kind of explanation to conscious experience. Levine uses an example for an identity that is fully explanatory: “Heat is the motion of molecules.” It might be conceivable that there is the phenomenon of heat without the motion of molecules, but this contingency can be dismissed by clarifying what we understand by the word “heat”. Levine specifies heat as follows: “The phenomenon we experience through the sensation of warmth and cold, which is responsible for the expansion and contraction of mercury in thermostats, which causes some gases to rise and others to sink, etc., is the motion of molecules.”

To specify what heat is means nothing more than to go into detail concerning its functionality. This is what does not work for consciousness. Acknowledging that the subjective character of experience is not a function, therefore is to acknowledge an epistemic gap. Again a formalized version looks like this:

1. Physical accounts explain at most structure and function
2. Explaining structure and function does not suffice to explain consciousness
3. No physical account can explain consciousness

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16 See Levine 1983.
19 Chalmers 2002a, p. 248.
3. Emergence

Emergentistic positions concerning phenomenal consciousness can be held in a weak and a strong metaphysical conception.

The weak version is principally strongly related to the idea of reductive explanation. Every reductive explanation involves *weak* emergence and vice versa. The result of weak emergence could be labeled “surprising” or “unexpected” when one looks on one level (micro or macro-level) only. It might be true that something like a new property or “quality” arises out of an organization on a lower level but yet this new property or “quality” can be explained by indicating how certain properties of lower level particles have to be organized in order to get the emergent phenomenon on the higher level.

This is what happens in the scientific explanation of e.g. the liquidity of water. Although liquidity is a property that emerges from the interaction of wholly non-liquid parts: the question why water is liquid can still be answered scientifically. In order to tell why water is liquid, it is sufficient to describe the interaction of grouping hydrogen and oxygen molecules and how the chemical natural physical forces (in our case the van de Waals molecular interaction laws) determine them. Liquidity of water may have seemed surprising before the discovery of the respective laws, but once they were worked out everything that had been mysterious about them disappeared. Another colorful example is the emergence of a football team out of eleven players that are themselves not a football team. Even though there is a new property on the (higher) level of the team, this yet very new property can be explained by looking at the interaction between eleven individuals that follow simple rules: they share the intention of scoring a goal, they consider each other as allied, they have the same opponents and so on. Due to these few simple rules, eleven individuals are able to form a football team on a higher level. It is sufficient for weak emergent properties to emerge out of simple rule-based interaction of particles that do not need to have the certain property in question: “You can get liquidity from non-liquid molecules as easily as you can get a cricket team from eleven things that are not cricket teams.”  

Now, why is this concept of emergence out of question when it comes to explaining consciousness? The reason seems to be the same that it was before when discussed in the context of reductive explanation. After close examination a weakly emergent phenomenon can be derived from its microstructure and, therefore, is compatible with reductive explanation, which considering the former arguments is enough to dismiss it: “If all the

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20 Strawson 2006, p. 15.
physical facts about [...] a system over time are given, then the fact that self-organization is occurring will be straightforwardly derivable. This is just what we would expect, as properties such as self-organization [...] are straightforwardly functional and structural.”

The strong (often called brute) concept of emergence, however, seems to be exclusively restricted to consciousness: “In short, with exception of consciousness, it appears that all other phenomena are weakly emergent or are derived from the strongly emergent phenomenon of consciousness.”

It is exactly the notion that something emerges in a way that generally cannot be derived from physical interaction. Brute emergence claims that certain properties of systems cannot be traced back to their physical micro level. According to the emergentist theory about consciousness “phenomenal properties are ontologically novel properties of physical systems (not deducible from microphysical properties alone), and have novel effects on microphysical properties (not deducible from microphysical properties alone).”

Ultimates have no experiential properties and still give rise to conscious experience as soon as they become organized in a specific way. There is a radical difference to the concept of (scientifically valid) emergence I discussed above. The idea of brute emergence is that consciousness is principally unpredictable from examination of the lower level processes.

Arguments about emergence are often accompanied by the assumption of “Laplace’s Demon” that has all possible knowledge about every last atom in the universe as well as all the knowledge about the rules of interaction between particles. He would be able to predict every phenomenon that is weakly emergent, because there is nothing fundamentally new involved. Still he would not be able to forecast a phenomenon that falls in the category of brute emergence. Let me put it like this: Supposing that consciousness is emerging in a strong way is to say that we are unable – not just for now, but for all future generations of scientists – to explain what consciousness is and how it is connected with the physical world. To claim that consciousness is emergent in that way is to claim that it is a miracle and there is nothing more about it to say. I even doubt that the concept of brute emergence itself makes sense after all.

“If it really is true that Y is emergent from X then it must be the case that Y is in some sense wholly dependent on X and X alone, so that all features of Y trace intelligibly back to x (where ‘intelligible’ is a metaphysical rather than an epistemic notion). Emergence can’t be brute. It is built into the

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22 Chalmers 2002b, p.5 (online). For another, yet voluntarily misleading example for a brute emergence phenomenon see Strawson 2006, p. 15ff
heart of the notion of emergence that emergence cannot be brute in the sense of there being absolutely no reason in the nature of things why the emerging thing is as it is (so that it is unintelligible even to God).”

II. Taking the mental as fundamental

4. What is Panpsychism

It follows from the preceding chapters that if one wants to have a proper theory about consciousness one has to assume that there are mental properties that are not solely derivable from common physical properties. Since we accepted that something like consciousness exists we now are searching for a way to grasp it – but – we are now aware that it won’t work by physical means alone. In some way we are looking for a theory that allows us to explain consciousness without the help of reductionism and the above discussed forms of emergence but still the phenomenon should be grounded in the “real” world (whatever that is). We do not want to rule out the possibility that consciousness has anything to do with matter; we just acknowledge that it cannot be physical properties of matter alone that bring consciousness into existence. I take it to be absurd to think that there can be some kind of (proto)-consciousness where there is no matter. One goal of this following chapter, therefore, is to avoid the assumption that there is a second basic ontological property – experience – that can exist without the physical. I will try to show that matter itself has mental properties that are not inferable from the physical properties but in some way can not exist without them.

In the following I will be concerned with the view referred to by the ambiguous term “panpsychism”. It is certainly a view that might be rejected when first heard, due to its apparent counterintuitivity. But we do not want to get ahead of ourselves. The plain idea I am about to present is that all matter has mental properties, that something-like-consciousness is ubiquitous. If considered more closely, it might turn out to be a viable way to go for an upcoming theory of consciousness. At least it is worth consideration.

As Thomas Nagel has pointed out, panpsychism is inferred by the four following premises, two of which we are already familiar with:

(1) the assumption of material composition
(2) the assumption of realism
(3) the negation of reductive explanation and
(4) the negation of emergence

Premise (1) is the observation that every organism is composed of matter and that organization and maintenance can be achieved by an entirely different variety of matter. Nagel asserts that the brain of a baby is composed of matter that was primarily floating around in the galaxy or was part of the sun before it eventually ended up as being a part of our brain. Premise (2) is the simple idea that mental states are neither properties of a soul nor are they properties of nothing, but that they are properties of organisms consisting of matter. As for the premise (3) I want to repeat that although consciousness is a property of material organisms, it is not sufficient to explain mental properties by physical means only. Premise (4), namely nonemergence, has also been discussed at length before. Brute emergence is not a real scientific concept, weak emergence is wrong if reductionism is wrong. So, according to Nagel, in consideration of these four premises, which are all more plausible than their negation, panpsychism concludes that every ultimate – or whatever turns out to be the smallest part of the world – has mental properties besides their physical properties. If reductionism and brute emergence fail and the claim for fundamentality of the mental is taken seriously, panpsychism appears to be an option. Accepting that consciousness is not identical with physical states of the brain and that we are still composed of matter, is to accept some form of panpsychism.

One very strange feature of panpsychism is that it claims that the mental is ubiquitous. Ubiquity should not be understood in the way that objects like stones have mental states. There is no consciousness in stones, but in every constituent of the stone, as there is in all the smallest parts of the world. There might be something-like-consciousness in a stone, but not in form of one unified perspective. A stone is not conscious, its parts, according to the panpsychist, however, are. Contrary to the opinion that not all of matter must have these mental properties, because it would be enough to assume just some particles with mental characteristics that make up thoughts or feelings in otherwise physically-only constructed bodies, Nagel on the basis of his premise of material composition that our brain can be realized by basically any matter. Therefore any kind of matter has to have mental properties.
Although it seems so counterintuitive, panpsychism has several benefits. First, there is the fact that it embraces the fundamentality of the mental despite the acceptance of the physical. Panpsychism does not have a problem to explain why there is no beginning or no sudden appearance of consciousness in its evolution, no point where it arose the first time, no clear discrimination between which animal has it and which one does not, no sudden jump from non-experiential to experiential being: “While it is not hard to see how neural activity could possibly underlie all sorts of complex behavior, we have no clue how it could be that certain patterns of neural activity could constitute phenomenal consciousness. One of the nice features of panpsychism is how it evades this problem by being able to assert that the patterns of neural activity have consciousness already built in to them.”

Another advantage is that it “avoids the difficulties of emergentism [...]. Not only is there a problem simply in accounting for the emergence of something so distinctive as consciousness from mere matter, it is surprisingly difficult to articulate a form of emergentism that does not threaten to make the emergent features causally impotent or epiphenomenal.” If we assume consciousness to be bound to matter on the deepest level of the world, an emergentistic approach seems possible again. Emergence is not brute anymore if we consider that consciousness arises from matter that in itself is something that possesses mental properties at its deepest (intrinsic) level.

Furthermore, panpsychism allows for “necessary causal connexions in either direction, between mental and physical phenomena.” When neither the physical nor the psychical are derivable from one another, but both are ontological equal properties of a neutral stuff, there is room for causal connections: “It would [...] make less problematic the possibility that a single event like a bodily movement could have both a mental cause and a complete physical explanation. The mental cause, sufficiently analyzed, could be part of the physical cause, sufficiently analyzed. But if this were so, the common reducing properties would not be physical. They could not be reached by a chain of explanatory inference from physical phenomena alone, for physical data alone would provide no grounds for postulating explanatory theories that also had mentalistic consequences.”

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25 A problem of the assumption that it is not possible for ultimates to have mental or proto-mental properties, is that of course they are not observable, since they are intrinsic. It is actually quite intuitive to note that if these properties would exist, it would have to be impossible for us to take notice of them - how should we, except by assuming them in order to explain our own intrinsic perspective.

26 At least not problems that are metaphysically severe like those of the materialist.

27 Seager 2006, p. 134


29 Nagel 1979, p. 184.

30 Nagel 1979, p. 184.
Panpsychism is often associated with a view called “neutral monism”. Monism is the view that the world is derivable from just one ontological base only. Neutral monists can recognize the physical as well as the mental. The two properties stand next to each other, none being more fundamental than the other. Typically, they are both not to be considered at the bottom of the ontological chain. It is often claimed that there is still a deeper level, a neutral base, that is to be considered more ontologically fundamental than both of them. This base is neither mental nor physical but constitutes both properties.

My understanding of panpsychism is that the physical and the mental are not grounded in a neutral third ontological category but that they are inextricably linked with each other. The physical is the extrinsic, the mental the intrinsic and neither of them can exist without the other. This position within the realm of monism is traditionally called “dual aspect-theory”. A strong argument for panpsychism that I am about to present in the following chapter might especially be read in favor of this claim.

5. Intrinsic Natures and the Dual Aspect-Theory of Matter

I am going to take the term “intrinsic” to refer to a property by that an entity or an ultimate can have a relational character after all. To describe an atom in purely physical terms is to describe it in terms of relations only. But in order to describe anything by relations and by nothing else is to deny that there are relata on which a relation can be built. Without intrinsic properties extrinsic properties would be empty: “Intrinsic properties can’t be dissolved conceptually into a network of relational properties.”

The opposite of the view that there are intrinsic properties might be called “relationalism”. This view is modeled on the mathematical ideal of treating things as pure relations. Like in a graph, every single object is regarded as a point that has no intrinsic properties, but is solely defined by its relation to other points. The claim is that all that it is to be a thing or a property is to have a fixed place within a system of reference. Everything is defined by the place it

31 This view can be held in three possible forms: materialistic, idealistic and neutral monism. For an overview of all the different varieties see Studenberg 2010 (online).
32 A contemporary version of dual aspect theory concerning information can be found in Chalmers 1995. Other advocates would e.g. be Baruch Spinoza, Gustav Theodor Fechner, Arthur Schopenhauer, William James & Ernst Mach.
33 Metzinger 2006, p. 59 [translated by S.L.]
34 The term ‘relationalism’ is connected with mathematics, the term ‘structural realism’ is ‘relationalism’ applied to the concrete world. It is an absurd idea as I think.
takes in the structure as a whole. Instead of assuming intrinsic properties, the relationalist describes all things by using properties that are dependent on the existence of other things, which are themselves again dependent on other things.\textsuperscript{35} In graph theory\textsuperscript{36}, points are thought of as having no real extension within the graph but are merely considered to be points from where lines can be drawn to other points. This mathematically possible world lacks all intrinsic properties, they are simply not needed there. This is due to their assumed inspatiality.\textsuperscript{37} However this view does not hold in the real, concrete world. As soon as we have matter we have extension. And as soon as we have extension we can never get to nonextension, for it would be absurd to assume that extension emerges from a microlevel that is itself unextended.\textsuperscript{38}

Considering an opposite account, William Seager’s “Principle of the Reducibility of Relations”\textsuperscript{39} – the view that “[t]he fundamental features of matter are the intrinsic properties [and] [t]he non-fundamental features are determined by them”\textsuperscript{40} – I would like to bring forth a slightly different account that is more suitable with the dual-aspect theory recently mentioned above. In my opinion the intrinsic nature cannot be separated from its extrinsic characteristics. As an analogy I would like you to picture yourself spinning around your own axis. When you do so you get the effect that you can either say that you are spinning or – and that is what is important – you can say: “From my perspective it is not me who is spinning, from my perspective the world is spinning around me. I stay as I am – looking straight – and the world changes”. The difference between the two possible perspectives is that in the first one you describe yourself from an extrinsic point of view, in the latter from an intrinsic position, which is unique. They way you are spinning is accessible from a lot of different positions, however, the way the world is spinning around you is accessible just from your singular perspective.

Something similar goes for the small parts. Although it is very unlikely that it perceives the world in the way I do, it stays the same despite all its relations. In a way it needs the whole world to spin around it, to be this single particle. I am aware that asserting that, I concede that

\textsuperscript{35} Still he cannot assert that the entities do not exist. Structural Realism seems more than a way to describe entities in a different way – not from an intrinsic but from an extrinsic point of view. That, however, is ok with my argument.


\textsuperscript{37} Galen Strawson has pointed out in a slightly different context that spatiality cannot emerge from underlying non-spatial entities. The argument can here be instantiated for an argument of the intrinsic nature as well. See Strawson 2006, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{38} If one have agreed before to what I said about the impossibility of emergence concerning consciousness, one most likely will also agree in this point.

\textsuperscript{39} A view Seager claims was held by Leibnitz.

\textsuperscript{40} Seager 2006, p. 137.
relationalism is right to some extent. My point is only that although every last particle is as well defined by all other particles, it is still a relatum on which a relation can be built. So the two aspects are that:

(1) the relations make the intrinsic nature what it is,
but the other way round:
(2) the intrinsic nature constitutes the relations.

One possible objection is that it would be enough to assume that just (1). But (1) is valid just for half of the story. The relations have necessarily the consequence of intrinsic properties. They could not exist without constituting the intrinsic. For a particle to be in relation, is to have a unique intrinsic nature. Since everything is always in relation, everything has intrinsic properties. One definition often given for the intrinsic nature is that:

“intrinsic properties are those which X would persist in exemplifying were it absolutely alone in the universe.”

I would like to slightly transform this argument into:

Intrinsic properties are those which X has in whatever relation it finds itself.

That way we can avoid the absurd assumption of anything being alone in the universe (being without relation) and still stick to what I think is the point of the definition. The analogy offered before is in a way misleading. Ultimates cannot be thought of as being conscious of their surroundings in the way I am. This is why the intrinsic properties are often called “proto-mental” instead of actually mental. The ultimately smallest parts of matter may not be conscious, but their intrinsic condition may be enough for constituting something like experience of a higher perspective: “If you take the word ‘proto-experiential’ to mean ‘not actually experiential, but just what is needed for experience’, then the gap is unbridged. If you take it to mean ‘already intrinsically (occurrently) experiential, although very different, qualitatively, from the experience whose realizing ground we are supposing it be’, you have conceded the fundamental point.”

Being conscious is exactly what it is to be in the center of all relations. Although there might be no color or pain experiences in ultimates, the very basic

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41 Seager 2006, p. 130.
42 Strawson 2006, p. 21f.
structure is the same. Our own consciousness is the only intrinsic nature we know of. It is not itself a thing but the conjunction, the very center of all relations.

Contrary to the argument that we have no reason to believe that ultimates have mental properties, I want to note that exploring the intrinsic nature of an ultimate is impossible for the same reason for which I cannot experience your experiences and you cannot experience mine. The intrinsic characteristics are the inner realm of ultimates. If they were observable in any way (that was not by behavior) they would again be relational and therefore extrinsic. Let me apply my intuition by analogy: For the same reason one could not assess my experience of red by examining my brain, its states or functions, one can not detect any intrinsic properties of ultimates by examining their relational properties. It is built into the conception of an intrinsic nature that it eludes our examination from an outside perspective. Nonetheless, as stated above, it is by abductive reasoning, by all means necessary to assume intrinsic properties in order to have something relations can be built upon.

6. Avoiding the combination Problem

One problem that arises within the position of panpsychism is that we cannot explain how the single perspectives bundle so that at the bottom of the line we have an additional perspective on a higher level. It seems as if we fall again into the same trap as functionalism and emergentism did before. Is our perspective a function that is constituted by many proto-mental ultimates? It seems as if the panpsychist ends up just where he started. We may have taken consciousness to be a fundamental feature of everything, but this account seems still insufficient when it comes to explaining our own higher perspectives. Our perspective again becomes deeply mysterious. William James has put it like that:

“Take a hundred of them [feelings], shuffle them and pack them as close together as you can [...]; still each remains the same feeling it always was, shut in its own skin, windowless, ignorant of what the other feelings are and mean. There would be a hundred-and-first feeling there, if when a group or series of such feeling were set up, a consciousness belonging to the group as such should emerge. And this 101st feeling would be a totally new fact; the 100 original feelings might, by a curious physical law, be a signal for its creation, when they came together; but they would have no substantial identity with it, nor it with them, and one could never deduce the one from the others, or (in any intelligible sense) say that they evolved it.”43

43 James 1890/1950, p. 160
Why is this problem so severe? Not only that one had to find mechanisms explaining how proto-phenomenal ultimates combine into one higher perspective. One would also have to explain these mechanisms as something non-physical, because otherwise one would face the old problem of functionalism all over again. If the mechanisms that bundle together the many perspectives to one overarching perspective are thought of as some kind of physical mechanism, one could as well accept that there are no such properties that are proto-phenomenal. The term “mechanism” indicates that it has something to do with interactions, with something that is going on between two or more physical entities. Panpsychism, which asserts that some sort of phenomenal consciousness is settled on the very lowest level of reality, would have to answer in what way these properties of the ultimates aggregate in a non-mechanical manner.\footnote{Chalmers 2002, p. 261 says: “There are two possibilities here. First, it could be that consciousness is itself a fundamental feature of the world, like spacetime and mass. In this case, we can say that phenomenal properties are fundamental. Second, it could be that consciousness is not itself fundamental, but is necessitated by some more primitive fundamental feature $X$ that is not itself necessitated by physics. […] In that case […] we can say that protophenomenal properties are fundamental.”}

I think it is not possible to “find” this kind of mechanism, in fact I think it does not exist at all. The only way to solve the combination problem is by avoiding it in the first place. The mistake the panpsychist makes when assuming that there has to be a mechanism is that he implicitly thinks that consciousness is some kind of substance that needs to interact.

But when protomentality is understood as mere perspectivity in the sense of intrinsic natures, I think the need for a psychophysical mechanism is avoidable. What we are searching instead is a fundamental dialectical relation of intrinsic and extrinsic properties. Perspectivity as the center of all relation, as something every matter possesses, is what we should concentrate on.

A higher perspective is simply in another relation then the parts it consists of. The relations on the lower level simply do not give in to the higher perspective. They remain the center of their own relations, yet the organism that is realized on a higher structural level possesses the same characteristic of being in the center of a relation.

The claim is that perspectiveness is a fundamental feature of matter itself that is settled on all levels of physical being. There is no bonding of feelings or pains or whatever. Instead it is enough to assume a single feature that can be found wherever there is relation.
References


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