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Panpsychism, Conceivability, and Dualism Redux

Abstract

In contemporary philosophy of mind, the conceivability argument against physicalism is often used to support a form of dualism, which takes consciousness to be ontologically fundamental and distinct from physical matter. Recently, some proponents of the conceivability argument have also shown interest in panpsychism, which is the view that mentality is ubiquitous in the natural world. This paper examines the extent to which panpsychism can be sustained if the conceivability argument is taken seriously. I argue that panpsychism's ubiquity claim permits a strong reading or a weak reading. This presents a dilemma. On the one hand, the strong reading, which is typically characterised as a form of monism, is undermined by the conceivability argument. On the other hand, the weak reading, while compatible with the conceivability argument, turns out just to be a special case of dualism. I also show that the related position of panprotopsychism cannot provide a tenable monist position because it too cannot withstand the challenge of the conceivability argument. Therefore, if the conceivability argument is taken seriously, then we are committed to a dualist metaphysics, regardless of whether or not we accept the ubiquity claim.

Keywords

philosophy of mind, consciousness, dualism, panpsychism, conceivability argument

Introduction

Physicalism, also known as materialism, is the view that everything metaphysically supervenes on the physical features of the world. This view is challenged by the conceivability argument, which proceeds from the logical conceivability of a world that is physically indistinguishable from our world but differing or lacking in phenomenality to the conclusion that phenomenality does not metaphysically supervene on the physical (Chalmers 1996). In light of this conclusion, some philosophers endorse a form of dualism, which takes consciousness to be ontologically fundamental and distinct from the physical features of the world (Chalmers 1996; Gertler 2007; Nida - Rümelin 2010; Fürst 2011; BonJour 2013). In recent years, there has also been interest in panpsychism, which is broadly the view that mentality is ubiquitous among the fundamental constituents of the material universe (Seager 1995; Strawson 2006; Goff 2017). Some supporters of this view suggest that panpsychism, unlike traditional physicalism, is not challenged by the conceivability argument, and so they hope that it might provide a potential monist alternative to dualism.

In this paper, I argue that this hope is misguided. If the conceivability argument is taken seriously, then any form of monism is refuted, and the only defensible version of panpsychism is just a special case of dualism. My argument will

proceed as follows. I will distinguish between strong and weak readings of panpsychism's claim that mentality is ubiquitous among the constituents of the natural world. I will argue that the strong reading, which suggests a form of monism, is undermined by the conceivability argument. Furthermore, any attempt to give up the conceivability argument to avoid this outcome would itself undermine a key motivation for considering panpsychism. I will then argue that the weak reading, while not challenged by the conceivability argument, is just an extravagant version of dualism. Although this is more defensible than the strong reading, there appears to be no strong reason to prefer it to the version of dualism that is more familiar in the philosophical literature. Hence, I suggest that it would be wise for the proponent of the conceivability argument who accepts that dualism is true to hold off any strong commitment to the weak ubiquity claim. Finally, I will show that the related position of panprotopsychoism also fails to provide an alternative monist position, because this too is undermined by the conceivability argument. The upshot is that taking the conceivability argument seriously commits us to a dualist metaphysics, regardless of whether or not we accept the panpsychist's claim that mentality is ubiquitous.

The conceivability argument for dualism

Over the past four decades, several philosophers have put forward influential arguments against physicalism, including the modal argument (Kripke 1980), the knowledge argument (Jackson 1982), the explanatory gap argument (Levine 1983), and the conceivability argument (Chalmers 1996). These arguments appeal to the phenomenal character of consciousness. When a stimulus is perceived, such as a red object, there occurs a whirl of causal activity in the brain. This activity does not go on "in the dark" but is accompanied by first-person subjective experience (Chalmers 1996, 4). To borrow an expression by Thomas Nagel (1974), there is "something it is like" to be a conscious subject. According to the aforementioned arguments, there is an epistemic gap between the totality of physical facts about the world and the phenomenal fact about subjective experience. That is to say, once we have the complete physical facts about the structure and dynamics of a system, the presence of consciousness, qua first-person subject of experience, remains a further fact to be considered. Therefore, the physical facts do not exhaust all the facts about the world, indicating that physicalism is false.

David Chalmers couches the above in terms of logical conceivability and metaphysical possibility. He gives the following formulation of the conceivability argument, where P is the totality of physical facts about the world and Q is any given phenomenal fact:

1. $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable.
2. If $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible.
3. If $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false.

4. Materialism is false. (Chalmers 2010, 142)

The basic idea is that there is no logical contradiction in a world that is indistinguishable from our world concerning the totality of physical facts, but which differs from our world with respect to some phenomenal fact about consciousness. It follows that this phenomenal fact about consciousness is an

extra fact that is not captured by the totality of physical facts, and so physicalism is false.

This can be illustrated with some examples. Chalmers (1996) considers the logical conceivability of a zombie, which is a system that is physically indistinguishable from a conscious human being, but which lacks phenomenality. That is to say, the physical processes in the conscious human being and in the zombie are structurally and dynamically the same, but any subjective experience in the zombie does not accompany these processes. The logical conceivability of a zombie world which is indistinguishable from our world with respect to its physical facts indicates that the presence of consciousness is an extra fact that is not entailed by the physical facts. To take another example, Sydney Shoemaker (1982) considers the logical conceivability of a conscious being in another world who is physically indistinguishable from a human being in this world, but whose phenomenal quality of experience is inverted. That is to say, the physical process that is accompanied by phenomenal quality *A* in the human being is accompanied by phenomenal quality *B* in the inverted being, while the physical process that is accompanied by *B* in the human being is accompanied by *A* in the inverted being. The logical conceivability of such a phenomenally inverted world which is nonetheless physically indistinguishable from our world indicates that subjective experience is an extra fact that is not entailed by the physical facts.

Of course, the conceivability argument and the zombie example are both controversial, and it may be simpler for the dualist to argue from the irreducibility of phenomenality to physicality that some “extra ingredient” is needed (Chalmers 1995). Objections to the conceivability argument have been raised by a number of critics (Loar 1990; Hill 1997; Balog 1999; Perry 2001). Comprehensive replies to these objections can be found in Chalmers (2010, 154–192). In recent years, there have also been scholars who have attempted to sidestep the conceivability argument by suggesting that phenomenal experience is an illusion (Dennett 2017; Frankish 2016). My response, which is in line with what has been argued by various philosophers, is that illusionism is false in virtue of its being incoherent. If experience is an illusion, then it just seems to be real, but seeming is itself an experience, and so it necessarily follows that experience exists (Nagel 2017; Seager 2017; Strawson 2018). In spite of the conceivability argument’s controversial status, my reason for framing my discussion around it is that some prominent contemporary panpsychists take the conceivability argument to be a key motivation for considering panpsychism as an alternative to traditional physicalism (Seager 1995; Goff 2017). Hence, while a reader may note that much of what I claim is conditional on the plausibility of the conceivability argument, my justification for taking the plausibility of the conceivability argument for granted is that I am addressing the panpsychists on their terms.

The conceivability argument, if sound, refutes physicalism, and so some other metaphysical position is required to account for phenomenality. In light of this, many philosophers have proposed that a form of dualism is true. As well as Chalmers (1996), contemporary proponents of dualism in the philosophy of mind include Brie Gertler (2007), Martine Nida-Rümelin (2010), Martina Fürst (2011), and Laurence Bonjour (2013). According to dualism, consciousness is ontologically fundamental and distinct from the physical features of the world. Hence, phenomenality does not metaphysically supervene on physicality. Rather, contemporary property dualism posits that phenomenality and physicality are nomologically related so that certain physical processes are

robustly correlated with certain phenomenal experiences via psychophysical laws (Chalmers 1996, 87). However, this nomological relation is contingent. That is to say, certain physical processes are accompanied by certain phenomenal experiences in possible worlds where certain psychophysical laws hold, but there may be possible worlds where these psychophysical laws do not hold or possible worlds where different psychophysical laws hold. Therefore, this sort of dualism is favourable, because (1) the psychophysical laws it posits account for why certain physical processes are reliably correlated with certain phenomenal experiences, and (2) the contingency of the nomological relation between phenomenality and physicality accommodates the logical conceivability and metaphysical possibility of physically identical yet phenomenally different worlds, such as zombie worlds and inverted worlds.

It is worthwhile noting here that some scholars suggest that property dualism is akin to a form of monism, as they interpret it as claiming that the mental and the physical are two distinct properties possessed by an underlying reality (Jackson 1982; Kim 2005). However, other philosophers have argued that this interpretation is wrong and have proposed that a dualism of properties implies a genuine dualism of fundamental particulars (Schneider 2012; Zimmerman 2010). For example, Dean Zimmerman (2010) argues that a nonphysical phenomenal state entails a nonphysical phenomenal subject. Indeed, given that what is essential to consciousness is its first-person subjectivity, phenomenal experience necessarily amounts to the existence of a first-person subject of experience (Blamauer 2013). Perhaps more relevant to the current discussion, Susan Schneider (2012) examines two leading contemporary theories of substance, namely the bundle theory and the substratum theory, and argues that property dualists, insofar as they are committed to *sui generis* mental particulars, cannot maintain ontological monism but are committed to a fundamental ontology of both mental and physical particulars, regardless of which theory of substance they assume. Hence, there is a good reason to take property dualism to be a *bona fide* form of ontological dualism. I will revisit Schneider's argument in my critical discussion of panpsychism in the following section.

In spite of the aforementioned merits of dualism, some theorists who grant the plausibility of the conceivability argument remain disinclined to accept dualism fully, because it seems to provide a “radically disunified picture of nature” (Goff, Seager, Allen-Hermanson, 2017). Instead, these theorists suggest that panpsychism can offer a more parsimonious monist position that is not challenged by the conceivability argument. In the following section, I examine panpsychism in greater detail and show why it does not offer a tenable monist alternative to dualism.

Two readings of panpsychism

Panpsychism is broadly “the view that mentality is ubiquitous and fundamental in the natural world” (Goff, Seager, Allen-Hermanson, 2017). Although the literal translation suggests the claim that everything is mental, contemporary panpsychists are not usually committed to such strong a view. For example, they are not necessarily committed to the view that macroscopic objects like rocks and buildings have minds (Chalmers 2013). Rather, the suggestion is that the fundamental physical constituents of the natural world have mental properties. The central claim of panpsychism, which I call the ubiquity claim, can accordingly be expressed as follows:

The Ubiquity Claim: All of the members of some given fundamental physical types have corresponding phenomenal properties.

Therefore, while panpsychists may doubt that rocks and buildings have mental properties, they nonetheless hold that their fundamental parts do.

In recent years, there has been interest in a particular brand of panpsychism, which has been termed “Russellian monism” after Bertrand Russell (1927), although it is unclear whether Russell actually endorsed this view (Stubenberg 2005). This is based on the observation that physical science only captures the dispositional properties of things, but not their intrinsic natures. For example, particles can be described in terms of such properties like mass, charge, and spin, which indicate how the particles are disposed to act in space and time, but science does not characterise the particles in terms of how they are in themselves. According to this brand of panpsychism, phenomenal properties are the intrinsic properties, while physical properties are the dispositional properties.

Panpsychism has attracted a number of prominent proponents, including William Seager (1995), Galen Strawson (2006), and Philip Goff (2017). The attraction of this view is that it offers a reason why phenomenality cannot be captured by physical explanation. Because physical science is only in a position to capture dispositional properties, intrinsic properties remain unexplained. Furthermore, as noted earlier, proponents of panpsychism are attracted by its apparent parsimony. As Goff suggests, “[t]he theoretical imperative to form as simple and unified a view as is consistent with the data leads us quite straightforwardly in the direction of panpsychism” (Goff 2017, 170). The hope is that by tying phenomenality and physicality closely together, it can provide an alternative monist position that is not challenged by the conceivability argument. However, as we shall see, taking the conceivability argument seriously precludes any monist reading of panpsychism.

As noted above, panpsychism’s core claim is that mentality is ubiquitous among all members of some fundamental physical types. However, I argue that this ubiquity claim permits a strong reading and a weak reading. As we shall see, the two readings have different modal implications, which in turn entail different kinds of relation between phenomenality and physicality. The strong reading is as follows:

The Strong Ubiquity Claim: It is necessary that all members of some given fundamental physical types have corresponding phenomenal properties.

This reading ties phenomenality and physicality together by positing a necessary connection between them. As is customary in contemporary debates about necessity and contingency in the philosophy of mind, we can express this claim in terms of possible worlds. Consider that a given physical type is associated with phenomenality. According to the strong reading, all members of this physical type are associated with instances of phenomenality, not only in our actual world but also across all possible worlds. By contrast, the weak reading is as follows:

The Weak Ubiquity Claim: It is contingent that all members of some given fundamental physical types have corresponding phenomenal properties.

This reading posits a looser contingent relation between phenomenality and physicality. Again, this can be expressed in modal terms as follows. In some but not all worlds, all members of some given fundamental physical types have corresponding phenomenal properties. Hence, it may be that all mem-

bers of a certain physical type are associated with instances of phenomenality in our actual world, but there are possible counterfactual worlds where not all members of this physical type are associated with phenomenality.

The strong ubiquity claim suggests a variety of monism because it ties phenomenality and physicality so tightly together that they necessitate each other. However, the problem with the strong ubiquity claim is that it is incompatible with the conceivability argument. As noted earlier, the conceivability argument states that $P \& \sim Q$ is logically conceivable and thus metaphysically possible. That is to say, there is a possible world in which the same physical facts obtain as in our world, but in which the phenomenal facts differ. This contradicts the strong ubiquity claim's suggestion that some fundamental physical types are necessarily connected to certain phenomenal properties. According to the strong ubiquity claim, all members of these fundamental physical types are associated with such instances of phenomenality in all possible worlds. Therefore, the result of assuming this necessary connection is that $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically impossible, which contradicts the conceivability argument's central claim that $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible. The implication is that accepting the conceivability argument entails rejecting the strong ubiquity claim.

In response, one might object that the panpsychist could just reject the conceivability argument. This could allow the panpsychist to hold onto the necessary connection between phenomenality and physicality that is suggested by the strong ubiquity claim. However, a problem with this approach, as noted by Robert Howell (2015), is that giving up the conceivability argument undermines a major reason for considering panpsychism in the first place. This is not to say that the conceivability argument is the only motivation for considering panpsychism, as one might be drawn to it due to other considerations, such as unity and parsimony. Nonetheless, the conceivability argument is certainly taken to be an important motivation among some prominent proponents of panpsychism (Seager 1995; Goff 2017). We saw earlier that much of the recent interest in panpsychism was prompted by dissatisfaction with traditional physicalists' responses to the challenge of the conceivability argument. Given that panpsychism is supposed to offer an alternative position that can withstand the challenge of the conceivability argument more satisfactorily, it only becomes a consideration if one rejects the type-A physicalist's claim that $P \& \sim Q$ is not really conceivable and if one rejects the type-B physicalist's claim that $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable but metaphysically impossible (Howell 2015, 36). If one does reject these claims, then one is no more justified in entertaining panpsychism than in assuming traditional physicalism. Therefore, to deny the conceivability argument is to remove what some prominent contemporary panpsychists take to be an important motivation for considering panpsychism.

The above suggests that the strong ubiquity claim is unmotivated, but I argue that something stronger can be said. I suggest that the strong ubiquity claim is implausible because there are independent reasons for accepting the central claim of the conceivability argument. One reason is the strength of the intuition that $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible. We can readily conceive of worlds involving zombies and inverted beings. There is also a long tradition of appealing to the conceivability of disembodied phenomenality without physicality (Descartes 1993; Kripke 1980; Gertler 2007). These considerations provide at least some evidence that phenomenality and physicality come apart modally. Hence, the panpsychist cannot convince the dualist merely by

making the *ad hoc* claim that phenomenality and physicality are necessarily connected, because the strong intuition that $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable gives the dualist a reason to doubt such an *ad hoc* claim. The onus is on the panpsychist to face up to the challenge presented by this intuition.

Another reason, raised by Chalmers (1996) and Seager (2014), concerns the arbitrariness and inexplicability of the purported brute necessity between two distinct properties both taken to be fundamental, namely phenomenality and physicality. Such a concern is also briefly raised by Adam Pautz (2010), who refers to David Hume's (2000) dictum that there is no necessary connection between matters of fact. The problem, according to Chalmers and Seager, is that in no other area of enquiry do we need to posit such a brute metaphysical necessity between distinct domains. Rather, where two domains are not linked by any connection of identity or logical entailment, it is taken that modal variation is possible between them. For example, Seager notes that the most basic parameters in the standard model of physics are those which are not dependent on the values of other parameters. These basic parameters present a space for modal variation for their values. That is to say, while the values of these parameters have turned out to have certain values in our world, they could have had different values in other worlds. In fact, Seager points out that hypotheses about how things would have otherwise turned out had the values of these parameters been different have yielded significant cosmological insights. Hence, positing a brute necessity between the domains of phenomenality and physicality is arbitrary and inexplicable, especially given the absence of any analogy from other areas of enquiry. As noted by Chalmers, it is no more justified than it is to "stipulate that it is metaphysically impossible that a stone could move upward when one lets go of it" (Chalmers 1996, 137).

A further reason, also raised by Chalmers (1996), is that positing a brute metaphysical necessity between two logically unconnected domains leads to the unjustified proliferation of modalities. Traditional modal metaphysics already recognises a distinction between the classes of worlds that are naturally possible and metaphysically possible worlds. The former class corresponds to the range of scenarios that are possible within the nomological constraints that obtain in the actual world. The latter class corresponds to the range of scenarios that are logically possible and includes possibilities about how things would have been under different sets of nomological constraints. However, positing a brute metaphysical necessity between two logically unconnected domains requires us to countenance another class of possible worlds, namely those that are logically possible but metaphysically impossible. The problem is that we have no reason, beyond *ad hoc* stipulation, to believe in this as a distinct class. As noted by Chalmers, the proponent of brute necessity who holds that $P \& \sim Q$ is logically possible but metaphysically impossible is claiming either that the possibility is coherent but it could not happen, or that it could happen but it is nonetheless metaphysically impossible. Both claims are unjustified.

And so, the above considerations suggest that the panpsychist is obligated to accept the central claim of the conceivability argument, but this entails rejecting the strong ubiquity claim. However, still available to the panpsychist is the weak ubiquity claim. This posits that mentality is ubiquitous among all members of some fundamental physical types in the world, but does not suppose that phenomenality and physicality are necessarily connected. Rather, it concedes that the ubiquity of mentality is just a contingent fact about the world in which we reside. That is to say, our world is a world in which all members of some fundamental physical types are associated with phenomenal properties,

but this might not have been the case had certain laws in our world had turned out to be different. For example, in counterfactual worlds where the laws differ from those in our world, it might turn out that only some fundamental physical features are associated with phenomenal properties, that no physical features are associated with phenomenality, or that only certain macroscopic processes are associated with phenomenal properties.

The weak ubiquity claim allows the panpsychist to maintain that phenomenal properties are present among all members of some given fundamental physical types, while accepting the conceivability argument's premise that there are metaphysically possible worlds in which phenomenal properties and physical properties are correlated in different ways, or indeed come apart altogether. The concession that phenomenality and physicality can come apart modally entails that the former is not metaphysically supervenient on the latter. In other words, the resultant position is not a version of monism, but a version of dualism. More specifically, it is an extravagant case of property dualism, according to which all members of some given fundamental physical types are accompanied by instances of phenomenality in virtue of nomological relations. That is to say, phenomenality and physicality are ontologically distinct features that are ubiquitously correlated in virtue of the laws of the natural world, but can come apart in worlds where different laws obtain.

While the conceivability argument does not challenge this position, a problem with it is that it leaves the ubiquity claim somewhat unmotivated. As noted earlier, the initial attraction of panpsychism for its supporters was the hope that it might offer a more parsimonious monist alternative to dualism that could also accept the central claim of the conceivability argument. However, I have shown that the kind of panpsychism that accepts the central claim of the conceivability argument is not a monist alternative to dualism, but is ultimately an extravagant version of dualism. And so, parsimony fails to provide a reason to prefer this extravagant version of dualism to the more traditional version of dualism that proposes nomological relations between phenomenal experiences and certain physical processes at the macroscopic level. Of course, this is not to deny the metaphysical possibility of a world where nomological relations hold between phenomenal qualities and the members of fundamental physical types, but to say that there is no reason to suppose that our world is such a world. Hence, having arrived at a dualist metaphysics in virtue of the conceivability argument, it would be wise to hold off any strong commitment to the weak ubiquity claim.

Before I move on to consider the trouble with panprotopsychoism, it is worthwhile addressing an important potential objection to what I have so far argued. Up to this point, I have suggested that taking the conceivability argument seriously entails the rejection of any necessary connection between phenomenality and physicality. In response, the panpsychist might suggest that there is a way in which the outcome of the conceivability argument can be accepted while still holding onto some sort of necessary connection at the constituent level. This is by positing that the physical properties of the basic constituents are multiply realised. That is to say, while a given physical dispositional property may follow as a matter of strict necessity from the intrinsic nature of a constituent that exhibits a certain phenomenal property, it may be that that same physical dispositional property could also follow as a matter of strict necessity from the intrinsic nature of a constituent that exhibits a different phenomenal property. This could allow the panpsychist to accept the possibility of a world with the same physical properties as our world but which differs with respect to its phenomenal properties.

Let us illustrate this with an example. Suppose that there are two constituents, C_1 and C_2 . Consider that C_1 exhibits phenomenal property R and necessitates the dispositional property “up”, and C_2 exhibits phenomenal property G and necessitates the dispositional property “up”. In the case of C_1 , the dispositional property “up” is connected to the phenomenal property R in virtue of each being necessitated by C_1 . In the case of C_2 , the dispositional property “up” is connected to the phenomenal property G in virtue of each being necessitated by C_2 . Hence, “up” can be multiply realised by different constituents with different phenomenal properties. Accordingly, there can be two different worlds which have the same distribution of “up” properties but have different distributions of G properties and R properties. The panpsychist could attribute this to there being different proportions of C_1 and C_2 in these worlds.

In reply, I offer two problems with this approach. The first problem is that it encounters all the previously noted issues associated with positing brute metaphysical necessity between distinct domains. Although the multiple realisability approach has the advantage of allowing the panpsychist to accept the outcome of the conceivability argument, the positing of a necessary connection at the constituent level again seems somewhat arbitrary and inexplicable. Moreover, this leads to the unjustified proliferation of modalities described by Chalmers (1996). The property dualist, by contrast, is at an advantage because he or she can accept the outcome of the conceivability argument without the need to posit such an *ad hoc* brute metaphysical necessity or to needlessly proliferate modalities.

The second problem, raised by Kevin Morris (2016), is that the multiple realisability approach results in a radical separation of physical structure from phenomenal quality, which again collapses into a form of property dualism. Multiple realisability allows the modal possibility of the same physical disposition being maintained despite a change in the accompanying phenomenal qualities. Given that different phenomenal and physical properties can co-occur in different combinations, the phenomenality-grounding and physicality-grounding roles of the constituents seem to be fundamentally distinct aspects of them. Furthermore, these two aspects come apart modally. Having a particular physicality-grounding role does not entail having a particular phenomenality-grounding role. For example, one constituent may have an “up”-grounding role accompanied by an R -grounding role, as in the case of C_1 , while another may have an “up”-grounding accompanied by a G -grounding role, as in the case of C_2 .

The unrelated and disparate roles of the phenomenality-grounding and physicality-grounding aspects call into serious doubt whether they can be claimed “to flow from some single underlying nature” (Morris 2016). Given that they come apart modally, it makes better sense to take the phenomenality-grounding and physicality-grounding aspects respectively as being fundamentally distinct particulars, which in different combinations yield the different constituents $C_1, C_2 \dots C_n$. This evokes a line of thought offered by Schneider (2012) in her analysis of substance. The multiple realisability theorist’s conception of a constituent, such as C_1 , is a reductive category. That is to say, it is not itself a basic unit, but a mereologically complex kind that is composed of and reducible to basic units that are modally independent, namely the phenomenality-grounding unit and the physicality-grounding unit. What this indicates is that the multiple realisability theorist cannot maintain ontological monism. Rather, he or she is committed to a dualist ontology of fundamental phenomenality-grounding and physicality-grounding particulars. The con-

stituents $C_1, C_2 \dots C_n$ are themselves not fundamental, but are constructs of phenomenality-grounding and physicality-grounding particulars in different combinations. Therefore, we have again arrived at an ontological dualism between the phenomenal and the physical.

The trouble with panprotopsychism

Thus far, in this paper, I have shown that panpsychism cannot provide a tenable monist alternative to dualism if the conceivability argument is taken seriously. It is reasonable to ask whether a closely related position, panprotopsychism, can fare any better concerning the conceivability argument. While panpsychism suggests that the fundamental physical constituents of the world are associated with phenomenal properties, panprotopsychism suggests that they are associated with protophenomenal properties. That is to say, they are associated with properties that themselves are not phenomenal but can collectively give rise to phenomenality in certain combinations. Varieties of this position have been defended by Daniel Stoljar (2001), Derk Pereboom (2011), and Sam Coleman (2012). As with panpsychism, the interest in panprotopsychism is motivated by the hope that it might offer a parsimonious monist position that avoids the shortcomings of traditional physicalism.

However, I will argue that panprotopsychism fares even worse than panpsychism with respect to the conceivability argument. First, the same problems that affect panpsychism also affect panprotopsychism. The main difference between panpsychism and panprotopsychism is that the former claims that all members of some given fundamental physical types have phenomenal properties, while the latter claims that all members of some given fundamental physical types have protophenomenal properties. Hence, the challenge that the conceivability argument poses against panprotopsychism will be isomorphic to the challenge that it poses against panpsychism. The claim that protophenomenal properties are ubiquitous among fundamental physical types permits a strong reading, according to which protophenomenal properties and physical properties are necessarily connected, and a weak reading, according to which they are ubiquitously but contingently related. Again, the strong reading is undermined by the conceivability argument, while the weak reading is ultimately just a peculiar form of dualism. Moreover, the panprotopsychist cannot afford to give up the conceivability argument to maintain the strong reading, because this would undercut a key reason for considering panprotopsychism in the first place.

Second, panprotopsychism faces a further challenge from the conceivability argument that is not faced by panpsychism. This concerns the problem of how protophenomenal properties could possibly combine to give rise to phenomenality. Chalmers suggests the following conceivability argument, where *PPP* is the totality of protophenomenal facts about the world and *Q* is any given phenomenal fact:

1. $PPP \& \sim Q$ is conceivable.
 2. If $PPP \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, it is possible.
 3. If $PPP \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible, constitutive panprotopsychism is false.
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4. Constitutive panprotopsychism is false. (Chalmers 2013, 24)

Versions of this argument against panprotopsychism have also been suggested by Yujin Nagasawa (2002), Dean Zimmerman (2010), and Michael Blamauer

(2013). The basic idea is that it is logically conceivable that there is a world where the same protophenomenal facts obtain as in our world, but which differs from our world with respect to some phenomenal fact. It follows that this phenomenal fact is an extra fact that is not captured by the totality of protophenomenal facts, and so panprotopsychism is false.

In response, the panprotopsychist might object that we do not fully know what protophenomenal properties involve, and so we cannot rightfully claim that $PPP \& \sim Q$ is conceivable. For example, the panprotopsychist could claim that there is an *a priori* entailment from protophenomenality to phenomenality, but that this *a priori* entailment is not obvious to us because we currently do not possess all the relevant protophenomenal facts. However, I argue that this objection is unconvincing. While we do not fully know the natures of these putative protophenomenal properties, it is still possible to conclude something about what they must involve for panprotopsychism to stand as a distinctive position. For example, recall that panpsychism posits that the properties ubiquitously associated with fundamental physical types are experiential. Accordingly, panprotopsychism must deny that these properties are experiential for it to avoid being identical to panpsychism. And so, we can conclude that these putative protophenomenal properties must be nonexperiential.

The problem for panprotopsychism, then, concerns the conceptual gap between the nonexperiential and the experiential (Blamauer 2013, 303; Chalmers 2013, 25). Insofar as protophenomenal properties are supposed to be objective properties lacking in any experientiality, they can only yield objective nonexperiential facts. Accordingly, given any conjunction of such objective nonexperiential facts, the presence of a subjective “what it is like” of experience remains a further fact to consider. Even if it turns out that certain conjunction of nonexperiential facts is correlated with a certain experiential quality, we can always conceive of the same conjunction of nonexperiential facts obtaining without the experiential quality. Therefore, in virtue of protophenomenality’s purported nonexperiential nature, the gap between the protophenomenal and the phenomenal is as significant as the gap between the physical and the phenomenal. If the conceivability argument is taken seriously, then phenomenal consciousness must be taken to be fundamental.

The above suggests that panprotopsychism fails to account for subjective experience for the same reason that physicalism fails. Indeed, it is interesting to note that protophenomenal properties are sometimes described in structural and dynamical terms in the literature, much like traditional physical properties. For example, Seager describes them as “constellations of neutral structures” (Seager 2009, 244), while Coleman refers to “the essentially structured (composite) nature of the phenomenally-qualified systems posited” (Coleman 2012, 159). This casts doubt on whether they are sufficiently different from traditional physical properties to comprise a distinct category. Peter Lloyd writes:

“More precisely, my argument against neutral monism is that, (i) any terms that do not denote mental things must be defined analytically rather than by private ostensive definition, and therefore must be topic-neutral; but (ii) physical terms are topic-neutral and therefore denote no specifically physical intrinsic character, and hence (iii) protophenomenal stuff is, in fact, no different from physical stuff – and neutral monism is, in effect, a variant of physical monism.” (Lloyd 2006, 125)

If protophenomenal properties are entirely lacking in first-person subjectivity, then they can only be positively characterised in terms of third-person objective data. Given that the trouble with physicalism is due to the failure

of third-person objective data to necessitate first-person subjectivity, it would seem that panprotopsychoism fares no better if protophenomenal facts are only characterisable in such third-person objective terms. However, the panprotopsychoist cannot avoid this by suggesting that protophenomenal properties are not entirely nonexperiential but involve degrees of experientiality, because this would just revert to panpsychism, which in turn ultimately collapses into dualism if the conceivability argument is taken seriously.

And so, the panprotopsychoist faces a dilemma concerning how to characterise the putative protophenomenal properties. If, on the one hand, protophenomenal properties are purported to be nonexperiential, then they fail to account for phenomenal qualities. If, on the other hand, protophenomenal properties are purported to be experiential, then they just are phenomenal qualities, and the “proto” becomes redundant.

Conclusion

The conceivability argument against physicalism is usually used to support dualism in the philosophy of mind. In recent years, it has also prompted interest in panpsychism, which has been characterised by some proponents as an alternative to dualism. However, I have shown that the only version of panpsychism that is compatible with the conceivability argument is not an alternative to dualism at all, but just a special case of dualism.

Panpsychism’s core claim that mentality is ubiquitous in the natural world permits strong and weak readings. The strong reading suggests a form of neutral monism, according to which there is a necessary connection between phenomenality and physicality at a fundamental level. I have argued that the conceivability argument refutes this version of panpsychism. However, the panpsychist cannot just give up the conceivability argument to avoid this outcome, because doing so would itself undermine a key motivation for panpsychism. This leaves the weak reading, which suggests that all physical features in the natural world are associated with phenomenal qualities, but only contingently so. While this is compatible with the conceivability argument, I have argued that it is just an extravagant form of dualism and that there is no strong reason to prefer it to the more traditional form of dualism. I then argued panprotopsychoism fails to provide proponents of the conceivability argument with an alternative monist position, because this faces the same problems as panpsychism, as well as being refuted by the conceivability argument in an additional way. Therefore, if we are to take the conceivability argument seriously, then we are committed to a dualist metaphysics, regardless of whether or not we also buy into the claim that mentality is ubiquitous in the natural world.

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Hane Htut Maung

Panpsihizam, pojmljivost i reduks dualizma

Sažetak

U suvremenoj filozofiji uma, argument pojmljivosti obično se koristi protiv fizikalizma da bi se podržao oblik dualizma koji uzima da je svjesnost ontološki fundamentalna i različita od fizičke tvari. Posljednje vrijeme, neki podržavatelji argumenta pojmljivosti pokazali su zanimanje za panpsihizam, što je pogled prema kojemu se tvrdi da je umsko sveprisutno u prirodnom svijetu. Ovaj rad ispituje domet do kojega je panpsihizam održiv ako se argument pojmljivosti ozbiljno uzme u razmatranje. Argumentiram da panpsihička tvrdnja o sveprisutnosti dopušta i jako i slabo čitanjem što nas vodi do dileme. S jedne strane, jako čitanje, koje tipično karakterizira oblik monizma, argument pojmljivosti potkopava. S druge strane, slabo čitanje, premda je kompatibilno s argumentom pojmljivosti, samo je poseban slučaj dualizma. Također pokazujem da uz to vezana pozicija panprotopsihizma ne može ponuditi održivu monističku poziciju jer isto tako ne može podnijeti izazov argumenta pojmljivosti. Prema tome, ako se argument pojmljivosti ozbiljno uzme u obzir, moramo prihvatiti dualističku metafiziku neovisno o tome prihvaćamo li tvrdnju o sveprisutnosti.

Ključne riječi

filozofija uma, svjesnost, dualizam, panpsihizam, argument pojmljivosti

Hane Htut Maung

Panpsychismus, Vorstellbarkeit und die Wiederbelebung des Dualismus

Zusammenfassung

In der zeitgenössischen Philosophie des Geistes wird das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit gegen den Physikalismus oft verwendet, um eine Form des Dualismus zu unterstützen, bei der die Bewusstheit als ontologisch grundlegend angesehen wird und sich von der physischen Materie unterscheidet. In letzter Zeit haben einige Befürworter des Vorstellbarkeitsarguments auch Interesse am Panpsychismus bekundet, der Lehre, nach der das Mentale in der natürlichen Welt allgegenwärtig ist. Dieser Aufsatz untersucht, inwieweit der Panpsychismus aufrechterhalten werden kann, sofern das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit ernst genommen wird. Ich vertrete die Ansicht, dass die panpsychistische Behauptung über die Allgegenwart eine starke oder eine schwache Lesart zulässt, was in einem Dilemma resultiert. Einerseits wird die starke Lesart, die typischerweise als eine Form des Monismus charakterisiert wird, durch das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit ausgehöhlt. Andererseits erweist sich die schwache Lesart, obwohl sie mit dem Argument der Vorstellbarkeit vereinbar ist, lediglich als ein Sonderfall des Dualismus. Ich zeige auch, dass die similäre Position des Panprotopsychismus keine haltbare monistische Position liefern kann, da auch sie der Herausforderung des Vorstellbarkeitsarguments nicht standhalten kann. Falls wir das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit ernst nehmen, sind wir daher verpflichtet, sich zu einer dualistischen Metaphysik zu bekennen, unabhängig davon, ob wir die Allgegenwartsbehauptung akzeptieren oder nicht.

Schlüsselwörter

Philosophie des Geistes, Bewusstheit, Dualismus, Panpsychismus, Argument der Vorstellbarkeit

Hane Htut Maung

Panpsychisme, concevabilité et relancement du dualisme

Résumé

Dans la philosophie de l'esprit contemporain, l'argument de concevabilité contre le physicalisme est souvent utilisé pour soutenir une forme de dualisme, qui suppose que la conscience est ontologiquement fondamentale et distincte de la matière physique. Certains partisans de l'argument de concevabilité ont récemment montré un intérêt pour le panpsychisme, la perspective selon laquelle la mentalité est omniprésente dans le monde naturel. Cet article examine dans

quelle mesure le panpsychisme peut être soutenable si l'argument de concevabilité est sérieusement pris en considération. Je soutiens que l'affirmation du panpsychisme sur l'assertion de l'omniprésence permet une lecture forte ou faible, menant à un dilemme. D'une part, la lecture forte, typiquement caractérisée comme une forme de monisme est nui par l'argument de concevabilité. D'autre côté, la lecture faible, tout en étant compatible avec l'argument de concevabilité, se révèle simplement être un cas particulier de dualisme. Je montre également que la position correspondante du panprotopsychisme ne peut fournir une position moniste défendable, car elle ne peut pas non plus résister au défi de l'argument de concevabilité. Par conséquent, si l'argument de concevabilité est sérieusement pris en compte, nous nous engageons dans une métaphysique dualiste, que nous acceptions ou non l'assertion de l'omniprésence.

Mots-clés

philosophie de l'esprit, conscience, dualisme, panpsychisme, argument de concevabilité