Panmentalism

-A short challenge for "our" scientific world view-

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1. Introduction

We call a metaphysical position panmentalistic if the existence of irreducible mental states of consciousness, which may have causal effects on all physical systems, is assumed. Panmentalism is distinguished from materialism by the assumption of non-physical states, from epiphenomenalism by the assumption of their causal effects, from classical dualism by the assumption of mental states of stokes and stones and from idealistic positions by the concession of the existence of the physical reality [1].
We prepare here a panmentalistic meal and serve it with arguments. We are cooking this meal for our refreshment and try to make it palatable to the reader. Panmentalism appears tasty compared with other metaphysical conceptions. Contemporary materialistic and naturalistic positions are dominant in the discussion despite the fact that there are no good reasons to accept them, this is the poor soup of the new century [2]. epiphenomenalism does not meet our needs for freedom in the choice of physical ingredients and thus has the bad taste of forcible tube feed. Subjective Idealism is a lonely affair it could not serve the inter-subjective quality of the common physical meal. An objective idealism with respect to nature ignores the wild variety of natural ingredients we may use. At least classical dualism is not well done by the restriction of the assignment of mentality to creature.
We serve our dish in six courses:
We first sketch our conception of physical reality with a short glimpse on recent results related to determinism. Then we describe our conception of mental reality and argue against supervenience of mental states on physical states. In the third course we remind the reader on effectiveness of his will and introduce a mental-physical low of free will. After that we explain the advantage of the assignment of mental states to stocks and stones by means of a mountain. In the next course we ask empirical questions for further scientific inquiry that may support or refute our metaphysical speculation. At the end we include a few comments on ethical consequences of panmentalism compared with other metaphysical conceptions.

2. Physical Reality

Physical objects have spatial-temporal properties, especially two physical objects of the same kind may not be at the same time at the same place. The distribution of matter and energy has spatial-temporal properties and thus the interactions of physical objects have such properties as well. In this sense physical objects and their interactions are in the physical space-time.
Obviously the physical universe is not static, we find different states of the physical reality at different times. There is an evolution of the universe, the evolution of galaxies,

solar systems, the evolutions of biological kinds on the earth, human society and economy are part of this general evolution.
To describe the evolution of the universe by physical laws is the great project of scientific inquiry. Also science is a very recent phenomenon in the development of mankind there are first achievements of scientific efforts. At this the metaphysical assumption of determinism is widely propagated in the scientific community. It is supposed that the states and the dynamics of physical systems are determined by physical conditions, the physical universe is assumed to be causally closed. Many representatives of the scientific community are committed to naturalism: Nature became what it is by natural reasons. This ideology prearranges as "our" scientific world view the sentences of western societies.
Ironically recent results of physical research demonstrate that at least determinism is false. The behaviour of physical systems at small space scales is not at all determined. If we know the state of the system by measurement only a probability distribution of possible states of the system in its near future is determined. If a system at macroscopic scales in reasonably complex the uncertainty at small scales leads to uncertainty of the evolution at large space scales, if we consider long spaces of time. The amount of time in the evolution of a system that leads to stochastic prognosis depends on the complexity of the dynamics of the system. Complex physical systems have wide variety of states that may arise in a short time of their evolution. In highly complex physical systems like the body of a human being only a probability distribution of behaviour is determined after a while. Especially if we consider coupled oscillators as an appropriate model of the human brain, physicality undistinguishable input may produce completely different output of the brain. In relative simple mechanical models like those of the solar systems the states are determined for long times up to some error bounds. Nevertheless after millions of years only a stochastic description is possible [3].
The uncertainty of the evolution of the physical universe does not contradict the thesis that it is causal closed, it contradicts determinism. If one assumes objective randomness of physical reality, one may insist on causal closeness: Nature became what it is by natural chance. Only if we reject randomness, the assumption of effects in physical reality that are not physical, is necessary.
We note at this point that scientific inquiry is free of judgement on the problem of randomness, divine fate, or causal effects of mentality. In fact there remains a lot of work for philosophical reasoning.

3. Mental Reality

I have sensations, sentiments, emotions and thoughts. Topology is a priori not the form of existence of this objects, thus they are not in the physical space time. Therefore mental states are not part of physical reality. Mental states are a priori states of a consciousness, the consciousness of the mental is its characteristic property in the same way as the physical is spatial-temporal. The attempts to naturalize the mental reality are therefore to end up in smoke. Something that is continuous is not spatial, something that is not spatial is not physical. No model of the body of a human being, even if it includes an sophisticated description of the brain and its dynamics, explains how and why anything is conscious. A theory of spatial-temporal nature does not explain or just describe the quality of experience or the intention of thoughts [4]. It is just the consciousness of the mental that excludes it from reduction on physical processes. At this we do not dispute

the existence of correlations between mental states and the physical states. If I take a sleeping pill, my mental states will change and perhaps I will find some sleep. If I have a couple of drinks in a bar, this will have an influence on my emotions and perhaps on my sensations as well. As in case of physical correlations mental-physical correlations may be interpreted causally. Also we do not know what causality beside correlation means, we adopt here the phrase of cause and effect.
All contemporary naturalist, materialists epiphaenomenalists or whatever, agree in the assumption of the supervenience of mental processes on physical processes: There are no mental changes without physical changes that cause them. We are not convinced by this minimal materialism. We assume that the same brain process may cause different mental episodes under different perspectives of the consciousness. We have the experience of the change of perspective of consciousness. Similar states of our body feel different depending on the perspective of our consciousness. We claim here that the state and dynamics of this perspective is not caused by physical states or processes. This hypothesis is in principle open for an empirical justification. We will not find identical neuro-physiological processes of different persons, but maybe we find sufficient similar processes. Now we ask the persons what their mental episode was like. We claim that the persons may tell us up very different mental episodes. Especially we assert that we will be told about changes in the mind of one person that does not appear in the mind of another person. We would interpret such a result as change in the perspective of consciousness that is not caused by physical changes. If we were right with our hypothesis, the assumption of supervenience of the mental on the physical would have serious difficulties. There is a special dualistic concept of the consciousness of mental states and processes beyond our hypothesis that we like to describe.
A consciousness in our sense is a monadic entity that does not exists in physical space-time. Consciousness is in a perspectivecal relation to physical systems, like human bodies. Physical processes are thus correlated with mental processes. We might say that for instance neuro-physiological process cause sensations, sentiments, emotions and thoughts. The conscious experience of sensations, sentiments, emotions and thoughts depends on both, the perspective of consciousness and the content of consciousness that is caused by physical reality. If we assume this conception of consciousness, the thesis of emergence of consciousness in the biological evolution, in question, is unnecessary. There is no answer to the question why and how the physical universe in its evolution should lay consciousness one sunny day on the table of nature. The qualitative gap between conscious and unconscious objects is an explanatory gap. Thus the assumption of emergences is not justified, if it is necessary for our world view. We think emergence is nothing but an arbitrary metaphysical construction to defend materialistic monism. We prefer to assume that our world contains consciousness as one of its basic structures.

4. Free will

Beside the ability of thought, sensation and sentiment my consciousness has an additional property, it wants certain actions of my body. The phenomenology of this intent is easy to describe: From the range of spatial-temporal evolutions of our body in its environment we choose one. Then we use will power and if this power is strong enough, our body does what our consciousness wants it to do. If we do not use will power, our brain in interaction with its environment will dice out our behaviour. Physical condition determine a probability distribution of possible actions. Which behaviour appears is not

at all determined. A brain without the intent of consciousness is nothing but a highly complex roulette table.
If we use will power, the probability distribution of possible actions will change. Beside physical conditions, the mental condition of will does have an impact on the physical evolution of a system. We define a unit of will power as the mental power that is needed to make a behaviour that appears with probability ½ under physical conditions certainly determined. The will power that we need for a physically impossible action is infinte and the will power for a physically certain action is obviously zero. Therefore we introduce the mental-physical low of will as follows:

$$W(P)=1/P-1$$

here P the probability that an action appears under physical conditions and W(P) is the will power that is needed to make this action certain.
The will power that individuals have is bounded and is subjected to temporal changes that may depend on mental episodes. Therefore not only physical impossible behaviour but also physical possible behaviour is not certain to obtain. In some situations we need luck to do what we want to do.
Beside physical forces the will power of consciousness is one basic condition for the evolution of the universe. Beside chances will power may be used to explain why one of many possible evolutions of a system takes place in nature. The fact that will power is not considered by scientists is caused by metaphysical prejudices: Consciousness is not part of spatial-temporal nature and may hence not have effects on nature. Our sciences dances around the golden calf of causal closeness of nature. Interests of groups account for this. If we give up causal closeness of nature abilities like creativity, intuition and compassion, would designate the distribution of funds. Such abilities are not trained and rarely accepted in the scientific community.
At this point we like to recommend a metaphysical turn to all people that are in true love with the term nature: Nature contains spatial-temporal processes and processes in consciousness. Both processes constitute in permanent interaction our reality. This attitude does not limit the scope of natural science, in fact it extents it.

5. Panmentalism

Consider a mountain. Mountains do have an evolution in time. In hundred thousand years one valley might have become deeper or it might have vanished by aggradation. If we have all information about the mountain and its environment, future science will predict the probability of the alternatives. On the other hand it is not determined by physical conditions what alternative takes place. The spatial-temporal system “mountain” is complex enough to justify this conjecture. Of course we might assume that there exists chance in nature and the mountain became what it became by chance. At this point we argue that a stochastic model does give any explanation why one of the physical possible states get real. This abandonment of explanation is respectable in consideration of human ignorance. On the other hand it is not necessary if we have an explanation.
What a mountain might be conscious of and what motivates its decisions remains of course creative speculation. Human beings and mountains are quite different systems thus the content of consciousness of a mountain and human being will considerably differ. We do not want to assume that a mountain sees, hears, tastes or smells. Also we do not expect thoughts as the consequence of functional cognition. We assume that a mountain has a sensation of its rawness and a sensation of its weight. Assuming some

sentiments in addition such sensations will motivates a mountain to certain decisions. If our mountain feels to raw or to weighty it will use its will power to cause such physical changes that counteract these situation. If its will power is big enough, corresponding physical changes of our mountain will really take place. In this manner we can explain physical changes that appear arbitrary in contemporary science. If we have the best possible physical predictions of the evolution of mountains, the development of a behaviour theory and an individual psychology of mountains makes sense.
After this example we finish with a philosophical argument for panmentalism. I only know that I am conscious. The diversity and unity of my experience takes me by a conclusion on the best explanation to the assumption of physical reality. After we have left the solipsistic perspective we find nothing in physical reality that explains why anything is conscious. Therefore classical dualism that assigns consciousness only to human beings or creatures gets inconsequent. In the same sense as the behaviour of other human beings indicates that they are conscious and hence have free will, behaviour of stocks and stones may explain what in the physical random game indeed happens. We interpret this as an evidence for mental states of mountains as we interpret the behaviour of other people as an evidence for their consciousness. In consequence everything might be conscious.

6. Empirical questions

Consider a roulette table once again. If the results of a long sequence of games significantly differ from the expectation values, the roulette table will be replaced by the owner of a gambling house. There may be physical explanations for this phenomenon, for instance the roulette table may be out of balance. If we now examine the roulette table as good as physical possible and do not find a physical explanation, things get metaphysically interesting. If the results of the sequence of games, were very improbable we might search for a non-physical explanation. There are in principle three different kinds of explanations of individual behaviour of a roulette table. Firstly we could insist on chance. On the long term even the improbable happens. Such a stochasticism is not open for refutations since it means the abandonment of an explanation. Secondly we could stipulate a miracle which means that “gods” have some effect on physical reality. Since we are not acquainted with “gods” this type of explanation seems to us not very attractive. Thirdly we could assume, in projection of our own will, that the roulette table in question wanted to behave in that way that it behaves. In further projection we might stipulated a mental motivation of the roulette. For instance the identical distribution might be boring to some roulette one day. Then the roulette uses its will power to produce metaphysically more interesting behaviour.
We do not claim here physically normal roulette tables with individual behaviours exists. We only claim that they possible exists, hence the existence of such roulette tables is a empirical questions. Data concerning this question are gratefully accepted.
Now we like to have a look at more complex roulette tables like human beings or mountains. If we had a statistical analysis of most exponents of this classes of objects, that confirm stochastical distribution of behaviour determined by physical conditions, we would give up free will of men and mountain. We would accept stochastical determinism of nature and epiphenomenalism of mental states. But this is not the state of scientific research. For complex systems neither our scientific models nor our mathematical tools

are sufficient to give honest forecasts. If we have such forecasts one day we conjecture that empirical data will hint on the existence of mental effects and free will.

7. Ethical consequences

As we indicate in the introduction metaphysical questions are any time questions about taste. With strong assumptions and appropriate adaptations in our net of opinions any metaphysical position could consistently be defended. Arguments and empirical data are never strong enough to disprove any position. On the other hand not only the search for truth, but also the aspiration of goodness is a philosophical motivation. Hence a metaphysical position is not only evaluated by its epistemic justification, but also by its ethical consequences.
Materialism promotes the orientation of human civilisation on material values. Together with determinism this is the end of ethics. If we continue to fight each other, using egoism and competition, this would be our causal destination. If we continue to destroy the earth with the growth of our population and the growth of our economy this would be our nature as a biological kind. Stochastic determinism and epiphenomenalism is no way out of this. Hence we should not accept this position if we do not have strong reasons to do so. Even classical dualism promotes the hubris of mankind with the hypothesis that our mentality is something very special in the universe. Such a position may cause the irreverent behaviour of mankind we see all day. Of course this is not desirable.
In contrast panmentalism gives us back the idea of freedom and responsibility in the boundary of our will power in the physical universe. Principally Panmentalism equates us with all complex systems in the universe with respect to options of decision and does hence tear down all hubris. It allows compassion not only with animals but also with plants, mountains, houses, oceans and even with the hole solar system. There is no question that such a comprising compassion is ethically desirable.

Remarks

[1] In the literature we find the term “panpsychism” for this position. We do not use the term “psyche” since is original only assigned to living beings. We do not have any philosophy historical or exegetical intentions here. We recommend the bibliography for “panpsychism” by Chamers und Bourget, see http://consc.net/mindpapers/1.4g to readers with such interests.
[2] Our materialisms criticisms appeared in “Marburger Forum” see http://www.philosophia-online.de/mafo/heft2007-4/neu_wid.htm
[3] The literature to this issue is enormous, see again Chamers und Bourget http://consc.net/mindpapers/
[4] This interpretation is not common-sense in mathematics and physics. It is our opinion after ten years of research in stochastic analysis of complex dynamical systems. We will justify this opinion in detail elsewhere. A reader who is not convinced may read the rest of the paper under the condition: What follows if he is right here?