

Dieter Wandschneider

Seeing Zombie off – Axiologically – Nomologically¹

Answer to Vittorio Hösle's Replica²

Abstract: The zombie, mocking all nomological arguments, gives rise to axiological considerations that also result in a vindication of the nomological paradigm. So the 'philosophical benefit of zombies' ultimately proves to be that they lead to an understanding they were originally invented to *refute*.

(1) Clarification regarding 'selfness' and 'subjectivity': I start with the less weighty monita of the criticism formulated by Vittorio Hösle (who, by the way, omits my detailed Chalmers criticism). First of all, a clarification regarding my use of the terms 'selfness' and 'subjectivity' of the organism: Hösle sees here "two concepts of selfness strictly to be distinguished": "self in the sense of a behaviour oriented towards self-preservation and self in the sense of subjectivity", i.e. with "a mental life accompanying it" (Hösle's replica). For Hösle, 'subjectivity' is thus always connoted with 'mentality'. On the other hand, I use 'subjectivity' in the sense of a general characteristic of self-preserving beings, so that "organisms, even at the lowest levels of organization" are characterized as "subjects" (Wandschneider 2018, 252 f.). With regard to their *mental* equipment this means that they *can* have mentality, but do *not have to* have it (according to higher or more primitive developmental stages). Of course this is not mainly a question of language usage, but obviously the different terminology has given rise to some misunderstandings.

(2) Comparison with the robot: Subjectivity and selfness, as I have explained, are to be understood as a consequence of the organicistic 'principle self-preservation'. Hösle refers to a similar view in Hans Jonas (Jonas 1973). Well, I was interested here in further interpreting this connection by means of a contrasting comparison with the *robot*: that the specificity of the *organism*, its intrinsic 'care structure' in the sense of the principle self-preservation, essentially owes itself to its *natural origin* and that for it, through the permanent, self-preservation-related valuation of everything it encounters, *sense* – sense of self-preservation – is constituted.

(3) Self-preservation for robots? But can biotic evolution, Hösle argues, not also be interpreted in the way of a (natural or possibly divine) *programming* of life forms? I myself have already anticipated this objection in my text (Wandschneider 2018, 253 f): Although selection processes could also be regarded as a kind of programming, this would not change anything about the *end-in-itself character* (in Kant's sense) of the organism. Once it is released into its world, it is destined to maintain *it-self*, and that is decisive for its entire own being and existential sense. Hösle further argues that an artificial biogenesis, which may be possible in the future, should also be considered in regard that robots, too, might be capable of *self-preservation*. My text, however, expressly refers to "note: robots in the present form" (253), namely for the purpose of *clarifying the sense dementia* of today's limited techno-beings in comparison with organisms. This does not deny that it might at some futu-

¹ English translation of: Dieter Wandschneider, *Zombie-Verabschiedung – axiologisch – nomologisch*, in: Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung 72 (2018), 590–597.

² Vittorio Hösle: *Über den philosophischen Nutzen von Zombies. Eine Verteidigung von Chalmers' Dualismus gegen Dieter Wandschniders "Abschied von Chalmers' Zombie"*, in: Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung 72 (2018), 578–589.

re point be possible to technically create a 'self-preservation robot' to whom – as I have discussed in another work (Wandschneider 2016b) – "should indeed be acknowledged *life*. It would be a technical animal, would have subject character, selfness, and perception would have *existential sense* for him" (2016b, Chapter IV.5). But this is science fiction today, and so it is currently only the *natural origin* of organisms that guarantees the character of life. Hösle's misgivings "when differences in essence are tied to *genesis*" (Hösle replica) should thus be dispelled. However, I also hear the more fundamental, not explicitly expressed criticism that *logical validity* is to be substituted by *gradual genesis*, which, of course, justification-theoretically is not possible. But that is not the point here. If the 'natural origin' of the organism is claimed here for the development of selfness and sense-relatedness, then it is not the *genesis qua genesis* that is essential, but the *specific type* of *genesis* (natural selection).

(4) Mentality in higher animals: If, as in my text, the organism is generally ascribed a reference to *sense* through self-preservation, then a distinction must undoubtedly be made between *lower* and *higher* animals. Among the latter I would count those that have phenomenal perception (including qualia), which empirically certainly already exists 'below' the developmental level of man. To this form of perception necessarily belongs also an '*antenna*' regarding *sense*, concerning for example *attractive* and *aversive* objects or *positive* and *negative* sentiences. I would speak here of *mental*, even if not yet conscious, states; which latter I would assume exclusively for forms of human perception (and which I do not explicitly thematize here). All this is empirical and in a certain sense hypothetical (I can only speculate, spoken with Ernest Nagel, what it is like to be a bat), but at least widely plausible.

(5) 'Objective' sense without mentality - misunderstanding: Now to the more weighty objections: Hösle sees a problem in the *objective* sense relationship assumed for *lower* animals. By 'lower' animals I mean those that possess a primitive form of perception, but *not a phenomenal-mental* one. Changes in the pH-value of the environment or the light intensity directly trigger reflex reactions in them, which are *objectively sense-ful* (according to the principle self-preservation), but *subjectively do not constitute a mental dimension*. There is a misunderstanding here with Hösle when he writes: "Wandschneider's central argument" is that "all living beings must have mentality", because "a self-preserving system without mentality is logically impossible" (Hösle's replica). I did not say this anywhere – and I did not insinuate it either. I have described as quasi 'logically necessary' the *care structure* of the organism that has emerged from the 'selectionist fire' (Wandschneider 2018, 252), its character as an end in itself (254), and furthermore that "with self-preservation there is always selfness and sense implied" - in the case of *lower* animals, however, as I said, only an *objective* (self-preservation-)sense, i.e. *without a mental grasp of sense*: Hösle, although he expressly refers to this, see next section (number (6)), obviously did not take this into account. And I've argued that the fact that self-preservation always logically implies selfness and sense is independent of *how* self-preservation may be realized in each case (for self-preservation is self-preservation, and that 'in all possible worlds') (259).

(6) Mentality not *qua* self-preservation, but *qua* equipment: With the clarification of the misunderstanding concerning my opinion, that self-preservation is to logically imply mentality, Hösle's zombie argument, which I will briefly repeat, is cancelled out: The fact that I assume self-preservation for lower animals, but not mentality, means, so Hösle, that "the mental property group can be removed from *life*" without a contradiction resulting from it (Hösle's replica). Mentality-free beings, for instance with the physical equipment of the author (or also of his critic) – i.e. zombies –,

must thus be accepted as possible without contradiction; as far as Hösle. Now, lower animals are denied mentality here exclusively because of their poor physical equipment, because the ability to perform mental operations is empirically bound to certain preconditions, e.g. the existence of a brain. Thus: not by self-preservation per se mentality is implied, but by a corresponding physical equipment. If one remains in this – nomological, i.e. natural law – mode of explanation, then there is no reason to simply deny mentality to the mentioned human-like equipped animal individuals, i.e. to regard them as zombies. If the zombie argument is nevertheless upheld, then the nomological framework of explanation is abandoned, and the question arises: Why? An answer to this question will become visible in the next section.

(7) 'Strong' emergence: Dualism as an advance assumption: A dissent of a fundamental nature concerns the *concept of emergence* and the question of its explanatory value. Hösle refers here to Chalmers, who in his main work *The Conscious Mind* (1996) paid scant attention to the concept of emergence and only states in a reference, "that nothing in the story about emergent causation requires us to invoke phenomenal properties anywhere. The entire causal story can be told in terms of links between configurations of physical properties" (Chalmers 1996, 379). These are "structure and dynamics" (Chalmers 2002, 25). And still in 2003 he states, "that from structure and dynamics, one can infer only structure and dynamics" (Chalmers 2003, Ch. 7). In 2006 however, on the occasion of his participation in an emergence congress, Chalmers published the article *Strong and Weak Emergence*. The distinction addressed in the title concerns on the one hand 'normal' emergence phenomena ('weak'), according to which the characteristics of a system may be completely new compared to those of its subsystems, but are nevertheless 'deducible' from them - which, on the other hand, should no longer apply to the form of a 'strong' emergence. Therewith Chalmers has discovered the concept of emergence for himself: "I think there is exactly *one* clear case of a strongly emergent phenomenon, and that is the phenomenon of *consciousness*". "If these claims are correct, it appears to follow that facts about consciousness are not deducible from physical facts alone" (Chalmers 2006, 246 f). Taking this up, Hösle declares that with regard to consciousness he "assumes a strong emergence with Chalmers, that Wandschneider on the other hand must reject" (Hösle replica). Well, if the claims Chalmers is talking about are valid, I don't have the option of rejecting them. But they refer to Jackson's thought experiment ('Mary') and Chalmers' own zombie argument, both of which I criticize in my text. These are intended to support the view that consciousness is the only case of strong emergence. So it is not that the concept of strong emergence here provides an *explanation* for the non-deductibility of consciousness, but those thought experiments ('Mary' and 'Zombie'), which can be criticized in turn, are conversely intended to support the Chalmers thesis, in other words: In the end, this, too,, boils down to the *advance presumption* of dualism, which I criticized in my text with regard to Chalmers. Dualism, it seems to me, here has the value of a *fundamental conviction*. So Hösle formulates: "*The laws of the physical do not imply that there is a mental*: In my opinion, one must agree with Chalmers on this." "Mental and physical phenomena are not identical", and "the solution to the question of where the mental appears in nature is simply 'certainly not from the physical in it'" (Hösle's replica). These are clear words, and the added 'certainly not' reaffirms Hösle's dualistic view, which, it seems to me, is to be understood more as a basic assumption than as a result (but see section (11)).

(8) Supervenience as physicalism-avoidance: But how does the dualist then deal with the overwhelming empirical evidence of the dependence of consciousness on somatic-neural processes? Here the *concept of supervenience* lends itself. Even if consciousness cannot be *reduced* to the physical,

it is nevertheless somehow *connected* with it: "Consciousness still supervenes on the physical domain" (Chalmers 2006, 247) – also for Hösle a possibility in principle: "Even those who consider the mental to be irreducible in relation to the physical, can still take the view that it can only exist by supervening on something physical, especially an organism" (Hösle replica). Is this an attempt to save dualism without having to negate that empirical evidence – in order to get past physicalism by a hair's breadth after all? And this only addresses *one* of the difficulties with which dualism is confronted. Hösle himself mentions the problem of interactionism, which remains "inscrutable", but, "as the example of Leibniz proves, does not necessarily have to occur (Hösle replica), whereby obviously is thought of a form of 'pre-stabilized harmony'.

(9) Sweeping character of 'the physical': 'The physical': This vocable dominates all literature on the body-mind-problem, including that of Chalmers and Hösle. But what is 'the physical'? According to Chalmers (see above) 'structure and dynamics'. On the one hand this is true, but on the other hand it is fatally sweeping. What remains hidden, for example, is the fact that the physical can also take on configurations that enable it to represent logical facts (in the broadest sense). One need not even think of computer systems and programming – even the thermostat of a heating system can handle a logical task. This does not mean that it should be considered as thinking. What I am getting at is that *as a system*, it has a specific new ability compared to its parts: a case of what Chalmers calls 'weak' emergence, according to which systems can be given wholeness-properties, system laws, that their subsystems lack. Properly understood, the whole nature and technology is thus subject to system laws. Now the *brain* is essentially a *system*, so that emergence phenomena can be expected from the outset. To ignore this, among all, just in the body-mind discussion is to be seen as a kind of malpractice. From this point of view, the criticised, undifferentiated talk of 'the physical' gives cause for thought. The Leibnizian mill-allegory³ mentioned by Hösle also belongs in this context: certainly as a magnificent staging of what is the brain, which admittedly is *sweepingly interpreted as 'physical'*. The fact that one can walk around in it like in a mill without even sighting any traces of the mental, illustrates, currently turned around, basically the perspective of the brain researcher who, for methodological reasons, of course, just only can find physical-chemical structures and processes. It is this undifferentiated sweeping philosophical understanding of 'the physical' that is allegorically manifesting itself here.

(10) 'Weak-emergentist' dualism: The consideration of emergence phenomena leads to a more differentiated concept of the physical. The material-energetic basic constitution of which I would like to call the *merely physical*. Functionally relevant is the respective realized *system*. My text is about the highest perception level (of higher animals), i.e. phenomenal perception. The system relevant here is defined by the *cooperative of perception, valuation and behavioural actions*, which I have briefly named as *perc-val-act system* (described in more detail in Wandschneider 2015 and 2016a). Emergence is then to be spoken of in the sense that *perception* does not record individual neural spike trains, but rather, in the sense of its control function for *behaviour*, complex entities, 'objects', which, through the *valuations* (genetically predisposed or learned) assigned to them, gain a *sense character* for the perceiving subject. I admit that for the time being this has the status of a research project rather than an elaborated theory. What I am fundamentally concerned with here is the possibility, opened up by ('weak') emergence, of phenomena which are no longer *merely physical*, yet, because they are anchored in the physical, *can nevertheless execute physical effects*. Weak

³ Nicely presented in Bieri 1994.

emergence thus enables a *dualism*, as it were, of the 'merely physical' and the 'mentally senseful', which is *at the same time a monism* with regard to the overall physical basis – a kind of emergentist squaring of the circle. Could this emergentist dualism possibly suffice for the friends of dualism: at least with the philosophically not unattractive option to see the possibility of the mental already in the physical, and that means, properly understood, in its *ideal* laws? This understanding, based on the nomological constitution of the physical, is what I would like to call the *nomological intuition*.

(11) The axiological intuition: Hösle's *dualistic* understanding of the body-mind problem is based on another intuition, which he explains in more detail in part III of his replica. In the previous section I had spoken of a dualistic 'basic conviction', which I also see in Chalmers and the unsettledness of which I have criticized in my text. Yet Hösle can now put forward an *argument* for this which he characterizes as *axiological*, i.e. which includes the value aspect and thus allows the body-mind problem to be seen in a completely new perspective; I would like to speak briefly of an *axiological intuition*. Essential for the position that Hösle here only briefly sketches is the connection to Leibniz. His central principle is the "maximization of the good – to find a sufficient reason for the laws that govern our world". In this sense, it applies that "our real world in which we happen to exist is not simply one of an infinite number of equally possible worlds, but that this world is real because it is axiologically excellent [...]" But it is excellent because it is in principle recognizable, namely by finite spirit beings who can also understand each other". This understanding is mediated by physical signs. That these, however, should be trusted, that they are not mere associations of molecules, but reliably refer to the mental, is based on a principle that transcends the physical – the principle that ensures "that on its basis mental things can develop": "And therefore there cannot be zombies" (Hösle-replica).

(12) Amusing turn: *So not after all!* The laws of the physical in our world – which is axiologically singled out from other universes – do not allow it. Now, is that not again in the sense of the *nomological intuition*? Only in a Leibnizian-extended ontological framework according to the *axiological intuition*? The axiologically conceived ontology is then to be understood as a precondition for a possible nomological explanation of mentality. If I see it correctly, we thus have two forms of the body-mind problem with quite different focuses: Nomologically, the question arises as to how mentality is possible in a physical world – in my view the *classical form* of the body-mind problem. *Axiologically*, on the other hand, the question arises why we have exactly this physical world of ours, in which zombies are not logically but nomologically impossible – a *non-standard form* of the body-mind problem, so to speak, which raises disturbing, highly interesting questions that Hösle suggests here: Is nature 'designed' for recognizability and the human mind (the so-called *anthropic principle*)? "Must already the laws of the physical take into account the psycho-physical laws?" "Can consciousness be linked only to organisms", or can one assume that "such an [sc. *un-physical, purely mental*] existence exists after death?" (Hösle-Replik): Undoubtedly a substantially different, more fundamental form of the body-mind problem than the one I have discussed here.⁴ Yet both are obviously not incompatible: If the *axiological* ontology has been worked out to the extent that the significance of the nomological in it is clarified – according to Hösle with the result that "a transcendental subjectivity that precedes nature has designed nature for finite spirits" (Hösle replica) – then it can or has to be further questioned in the sense of the *classical* body-mind problem,

⁴ Independently of axiological considerations I, too, have repeatedly dealt with questions concerning the recognizability of nature and the anthropic principle (e.g. Wandschneider 2014 and 2011).

and it has to be explained how mentality is concretely realizable, and that means: *nomologically* possible. – Isn't it an amusing turn, certainly not of the history of philosophy, but of this friendly dispute, that "the philosophical benefit of zombies" (Hösle-replica) shows itself in the fact that it finally leads to a position for the refutation of which it had originally been invented!

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