THE REASONABILITY OF PANPSYCHISM

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I cannot refute an incredulous stare.
—David Lewis, defending his view against an astonished critic

Consciousness is both what we know most and what we know least. It has been called the “center of our epistemic world,” yet after wrestling with the questions it poses we always emerge bruised and humbled. What is consciousness? What is the origin of our consciousness? Why am I conscious? How can we know or describe anyone else’s consciousness? How does consciousness fit in with the natural world? Providing definitive answers to these questions is not my goal in this paper. Rather, I hope to reveal how very abstruse consciousness is by creating legitimate theoretical space for a theory of consciousness that is equally abstruse, panpsychism.

Panpsychism is the view that it is like something to be every particular thing in the universe; there exists a first person perspective, or experience, for humans, bonobos, single-celled organisms, electrons, etc. At first glance, this view seems strongly counterintuitive, even irrational. But one does not have to look far to see that this same criticism befalls our most supported scientific theories. Quantum mechanics, the most supported physical theory, is full of counterintuitive claims about the world. One of many peculiar results of the double-slit experiment (widely considered to be the most famous experiment in quantum mechanics) was that electrons change their properties when we measure them in different ways. If we measure the electrons before they pass through the slits the electrons behave like waves. But when we observe the electrons after they have passed through the slits they behave like particles. The simple act of observing electrons changes their fundamental nature! It is as if the electron itself is aware of its being observed. If this doesn’t already seem incredible to you, imagine anything on a macrophysical scale functioning in this way: objects weighing a certain amount when
observed in one way and a different amount when being observed in another way, orchestras playing beautiful symphonies while being listened to, but projecting no sound at all when their tones fall on deaf ears, or tennis balls traveling straight when we hit them to a partner but in waves when we play alone. We are hard-pressed to accept that the simple act of observation is the reason for the alteration of something’s properties. Yet this is exactly the case for electrons.

We accept the strange phenomena that quantum mechanics entails because of its overwhelming evidentiary support. The evidence pointing to the validity of the theory is so substantial that we have no choice but to agree with the strange picture of the world it depicts. Consciousness works in a similar fashion. We are constantly engaged with the evidence of consciousness, namely our own conscious experiences. We are incorrigible about the existence of this evidence. Therefore, we should be willing to accept strange consequences in a theoretical structure as long as it encapsulates the evidence accurately. This is not to say that we should endorse eccentricity for eccentricity’s sake. Instead, we should encourage widening the scope of what we consider to be possible.

I hope to prove that panpsychism is a viable theory of consciousness. I will proceed by focusing my discussion on consciousness and its relation to the physical world. I will first show that consciousness exists and is not physical. Next, I will demonstrate that consciousness must exist intrinsically rather than existing as an emergent from the physical domain. I will buttress this claim by demonstrating that the current accepted theory of the physical world itself is in need of, but currently lacking, an adequate way to describe what is intrinsic or essentially existing in the physical world. Lastly, I will argue that because consciousness is intrinsic to our world, panpsychism follows. I will also introduce some objections that will be overcome. My proof will follow this general structure:

1. Consciousness is a real phenomenon.
2. Consciousness is not physical.
   (a) Chalmers’s Zombie Argument
   (b) Chalmers’s Inverted Spectrum Argument
   (c) Strawson’s Linguistic Argument
   (d) The Knowledge Argument
3. Consciousness must either be intrinsic to the physical or emergent from it.
4. Consciousness cannot be emergent.
5. Consciousness must be intrinsic.
6. Panpsychism

It is important to note now that while I believe my argument to be a compelling one, it is not intended to be absolute. I am not proclaiming to prove that panpsychism is the only option if we are to accurately explain consciousness. There are many other significant choices. However, the purpose of this paper will not be to survey every single viable theory. That is surely another project. Here I am trying to show the reasonability of panpsychism in the face of incredulous stares.

What Exactly Is Consciousness?

While many fields of inquiry incorporate language that resists exposition, none does so perhaps more than the study of consciousness. Terms such as consciousness, self-consciousness, awareness, subjectivity, qualia, experience, and the like, have in their everyday usage become so confused and diaphanous that oftentimes any discussion about them never has a chance to be substantive. That is, if we use the same words, such as consciousness, but mean different things, we will always be talking past one another.

However, the problem of articulating consciousness runs much deeper than simple fallacies of equivocation. The fact of the matter is that the subjective nature of consciousness in itself makes it impossible to explicate fully. There will always be something linguistically ambiguous and indeterminate when one is attempting to describe consciousness. This is because I can never experience the conscious states of anyone else; I can only experience my own consciousness. I cannot experience what it is like to be you. Nevertheless, we can still pinpoint roughly what we mean by consciousness and the terminology that surrounds it. What I mean by consciousness in this paper is experience; the subjective perspective of what it is like to be someone or something. I think David Chalmers best draws out this elusive and ambiguous term:

The subject matter [consciousness] is perhaps best characterized as “the subjective quality of experience”. When we perceive, think and act, there is a
whir of causation and information processing, but this processing does not usually go on in the dark. There is also an internal aspect; there is something it feels like to be a cognitive agent. This internal aspect is conscious experience. Conscious experiences range from vivid color sensations to experiences of the faintest background aromas; from hard-edged pains to the elusive experience of a thought on the tip of one’s tongue; from mundane sounds and smells to encompassing grandeur of musical experience; from the triviality of a nagging itch to the weight of a deep existential angst; from the specificity of a taste of peppermint to the generality of one’s experience of selfhood. All these have a distinct experienced quality. All are prominent parts of the inner life of the mind.\textsuperscript{1}

Generally, consciousness is our subjective experience. Borrowing Nagel’s terminology, a being is conscious if \textit{it is like something} to be that being.\textsuperscript{2} A state is conscious if \textit{it is something it is like} to be in that state. The qualities of a conscious state are called its qualia. Our conscious experiences include but are not limited to: visual experiences, auditory experiences, tactile experiences, olfactory experiences, taste experiences, pain, experiences of hot and cold, mental imagery, our sense of self, and emotional experiences.\textsuperscript{3} For our purposes, words such as \textit{consciousness, conscious experience, phenomenal experiences, and experience} can be seen as referring to the same phenomenon. Conscious states, oftentimes called phenomenal states, are different from psychological states. Psychological states are “the causal or explanatory basis for behavior.”\textsuperscript{4} In other words, psychological states are purely functional physical mental states used by cognitive scientists to explain our behavior.

\textbf{Consciousness and Nature}

It is clear that consciousness and the physical are very closely intertwined. There is an abundance of examples that show this connection. Here are a few examples I find illuminating. (1) Where we find brains, we normally find conscious experience. Brains, lumps of grey physical-stuff, most likely produce consciousness, nonphysical stuff.
(2) Anyone who has had one too many alcoholic beverages knows that physical substances can alter our conscious states. (3) Our conscious states are closely tied to our psychological states; consider the example of pain. The connection between our pain receptors firing and the conscious state of feeling pain seems to be a nomological one. Our sensations appear to be intimately affixed to our functional states.

In all of these examples we see a close relationship between consciousness and physical entities, namely brains. One might suggest that consciousness itself must be a physical thing. This does not appear to be the case. Experience resists reduction to more basic physical processes. In other words, consciousness itself seems to be something that cannot be described by science. So the question in turn arises: *How can something physical stand in relation to something nonphysical?* Or, *How is it possible that physical stuff and nonphysical stuff interact?* This interaction or “handshake” is a mystery that has baffled philosophers and scientists through time. These questions, along with other enigmas surrounding consciousness, are so bewildering that they have caused great minds to deny the existence of consciousness. This denial is perplexing in itself, for if you deny the existence of consciousness, who, then, is asserting this denial? Nevertheless, in struggling to answer the questions consciousness poses concerning its place in nature, we can still arrive at truths, even if they fall short of answering our queries in full.

**Consciousness Is a Real Phenomenon**

I will call all things that exist in space and time to be within the domain of the real; any phenomenon or existent that is in space and time is a real phenomenon. Consciousness is a real phenomenon and any accurate ontology of the real needs to include it. There is a certain nonnegotiability about this point. I will not try to prove the existence of consciousness because no such argumentation exists. But this premise is certainly not a brash assumption. While arguments do not exist, evidence surely does. The evidence is experience. To deny your own experience, to proclaim that it is nothing it is like to be you, unfortunately means that this paper is not appropriate for you, and you perhaps may be a zombie. Our experience is also evidence of the spatiotemporal character of consciousness. Experience
is temporal insofar as it is necessarily occurring, always happening in the present. But the qualia that we experience change with time. Now you are experiencing pleasure because you thoroughly enjoy the study of consciousness. Or perhaps you are in pain while reading. Nonetheless, after you are finished reading your experience of pain or pleasure will change as time progresses. Experience is also spatial; when we experience sensations we experience them somewhere, someplace, rather than nowhere.

The real should not to be confused with the physical. The physical domain contains what we normally understand to be physical entities, that is, chairs, trees, buildings, cells, atoms, etc. More precisely, the physical is what science can describe. The sciences, such as biology, chemistry, and physics, describe physical things in terms of their relations to other things.

According to Chalmers:

Physics [and all science] characterize physical entities and properties by their relations to one another and to us. For example, a quark is characterized by its relations to other physical entities, and a property such as mass is characterized by an associated dispositional role, such as the tendency to resist acceleration.⁶

In other words, science describes relations of structure and disposition. A good way to comprehend the physical is to imagine a completed science. If every scientific theory about the world was unified and completed so that every fact about the physical world could be explained, the constituents of the entire physical domain would be known.⁷ For our purposes, then, the physical will be defined as what would be described if we were to have a completed science, a science that was completely subject to reductive explanation.

Consciousness, the phenomenal, is not a part of the physical because it is not reducible in this sort of way. The cognitive sciences, such as neurobiology and psychology, can never entirely explain away the nature of experience in more fundamental physical terms. This is not to say that consciousness does not exist in space and time. Consciousness does exist in space and time; it is within the domain of the real. Consciousness is just not described by science. In sum, the physical and the phenomenal exist in the set of the real, but the phenomenal does not fall within the physical and the physical is distinct from the phenomenal.
Consciousness Is not Physical

I know that this separation between the phenomenal and the physical cannot simply be proclaimed. I will introduce several arguments to defend this claim. Each argument can be seen as independent from one another. Rejecting one argument will not be infectious upon the others. My position is only dependent on the acceptance of the overarching proposition, that consciousness is not physical. In turn, if only one of the arguments presented survives scrutiny, then my position holds.

Chalmers’s Zombie Argument

In our world there exist facts about conscious experiences and facts about physical entities. If the facts about consciousness are not necessarily entailed by the facts about the physical, then consciousness itself is a different sort of thing than the physical. Our world is constructed in such a way that consciousness comes about when certain conditions have been met. In another world, consciousness might not exist in the way it does in our world, or perhaps not at all. If a logically possible world is conceivable in which the physical facts are identical to our world but the conscious facts are different, then the physical facts of our world do not necessarily entail the phenomenal facts. A proposition is conceivable, according to Chalmers, if we can coherently imagine it, and no contradiction reveals itself even on reflection. In other words, if we can point to at least one logically consistent case in which the physical facts of our world hold but the phenomenal do not, then we have successfully shown that these facts are distinct from one another. This is because we will have demonstrated that the physical, can exist fully without the phenomenal.

Chalmers formalizes the argument in The Conscious Mind:

In our world, there are conscious experiences.

1. There is a logically possible world physically identical to ours, in which the positive facts about consciousness in our world do not hold.
2. Facts about consciousness are further facts about our world, over and above the physical facts.

The logically possible world referred to in step 2 is the zombie world. In the zombie world, all of the physical facts of our world apply but the facts about consciousness do not exist. The people that exist
in the zombie world are all zombies; it is nothing it is like to be them. Zombies have no subjective experiences. They operate algorithmically, like computers. They receive external stimuli from the world, and then produce responses to those stimuli based on the construction of their brains. Because the physical facts in the zombie world are the same as the physical facts in our world, the zombies are zombie twins of each and every person in our world. My zombie twin, zombie Adam, exists in the zombie world and is identical to me physically. He behaves and acts in the exact same way as I do and is composed of the exact same physical entities. The only distinction is that there is no inner subjective experience in his head.

The zombie world is logically possible. Therefore the nature of consciousness in our world is not fixed by the nature of the physical. In other words, it is possible for everything to be the same physically, but be different consciously. Determining whether the zombie world is logically possible depends upon the conceivability of zombies. If we can conceive of zombies in the right way, then they are logically possible. The prior argument can be restated as follows:

1. In our world, there are conscious experiences.
2. The zombie world is conceivable.
3. Conceivability implies logical possibility.
4. The zombie world is logically possible.
5. Facts about consciousness are separate from physical facts.

It might be objected that if zombies were possible, then we would never know if anyone in our world is a zombie or not. This objection is not an actual objection at all. In fact, it is consonant with how we understand consciousness to begin with. Consciousness is only accessible through our first person point of view. We can speculate as to the consciousness of others but we can never know if someone else is in fact conscious. But I can know that I am not a zombie because I know that it is something it is like to be me.

In turn, for the actual world to exist as it is, more than just the physical facts need to exist, namely, the phenomenal facts need to exist. To make this idea clearer, Chalmers invokes a theoretical God or creator of our world. He states:

When God created the world, after ensuring that the physical facts held, he had more work to do. He had to ensure that the facts about consciousness held. The possibility of zombie worlds shows that he had
a choice. The world might have lacked experience, even if all of the physical facts had been the same.11

The facts concerning consciousness needed to be instantiated because in our world, consciousness is a real phenomenon. Because this existence of consciousness is only contingently connected to the physical in our world, consciousness is distinct from the physical.

Chalmers’s Inverted Spectrum Argument

Perhaps you do not buy that zombies are conceivable. One could object that imagining a being without any conscious experiences from the perspective of a conscious being is impossible. Even if we grant this position, which I do not, phenomenal facts can still be seen as separate from the physical facts. Consider the example of a world where conscious experiences of color were inverted. The zombie world may be hard to conceive but the inverted color spectrum world is not. In the inverted color spectrum world, everyone is physically identical to his or her twins in our world but their color sensations are reversed. If this world is logically possible, then facts about consciousness are different from physical facts.

We are inclined to accept this possibility because in the actual world we are not in a position to know whether the color sensations of others agree with our own. For example, person X (let us call him Kyle) has been born with an inverted color spectrum. His color sensations are reversed compared to everyone else’s (where we see red he sees violet, where we see orange he sees indigo, etc). But when Kyle learned how to describe the colors that he sees he learned this pictorially. Someone showed him a picture of a red ball and said, “This is red.” This is how we all learn which colors coordinate to which name. But when Kyle saw the red ball for the first time, what he really saw was what we would consider to be violet. But he did not know the word for red or for violet before that moment. For Kyle, the word red refers to the color sensation we know as violet. Kyle will always be correct in picking out what is red, but what he sees is what we would call violet.12

The world in which people experience inverted color spectrums is physically identical to ours but has different conscious experiences. It need not be the case that conscious experiences are nonexistent in a logically possible world. All that is needed is a difference in conscious facts. It then follow that consciousness is not physical.
God once more had more work to do. After establishing the physical facts he had a choice between the conscious experiences we currently have or other ones, such as no conscious experiences, color inversion, etc. The fact that there was a choice entails that conscious facts are "over and above the physical facts" and that consciousness is not physical.

I want to make a brief technical remark. The distinction between the physical and consciousness is that consciousness does not logically supervene on the physical. B-facts logically supervene on A-facts when fixing the A-facts entails the B-facts in every logically possible world.\(^\text{13}\) The physical can be reductively explained using supervenience. The explanation of higher-level physical facts in terms of lower-level physical facts is entirely exhaustive. There is nothing else to explain. Consciousness however, cannot be reductively explained in more basic physical terms because there exist logically possible worlds where consciousness is not entailed or guaranteed by stipulating the physical, that is, the zombie or inverted spectrum worlds.\(^\text{14}\)

**Strawson’s Linguistic Argument**

Galen Strawson argues that we can never have an “objective phenomenology” because the language of science cannot capture our experience in full.\(^\text{15}\) Even though two experiencers may agree linguistically about what they are experiencing, we simply cannot know that they are in fact experiencing the same thing. Formally the argument looks like such:

1. There exists an experiential fact of what it is like for A to experience X.
2. There exists an experiential fact of what it is like for B to experience X.
3. A and B agree linguistically about their experiences of X (ex: we both agree verbally that there is a red piano playing a B flat chord).
4. Even though A and B agree linguistically about X they cannot know that their experiences are identical.
5. A and B cannot know that their experiences are identical.
6. Agreement in language does not prove agreement in experience.\(^\text{16}\)

Science is predicated upon our ability to make objective claims. When we experience the sound of a piano there is an objective fact about the world, namely, the frequency of the vibrations created by the piano. But we cannot know that we are having identical experiences because agreeing linguistically does not necessitate agreement in our experience. In other words, we cannot test our experiences
objectively. We can indirectly test them by recording our verbal reports. But we can never access the experiences of another individual. For example, take Kyle, our color-inverted friend. We can never know by testing his verbal reports whether or not his color spectrum is inverted. Yet it is certainly the case that his experiences are different than ours. In turn, the limitation of science boils down to language. Experience is not the sort of thing that can be expressed objectively in the terms of science. Therefore, consciousness is not physical because the physical is what science describes.

The Knowledge Argument

Many different philosophers such as Chalmers, Jackson, Maxwell, Nagel, and Broad have articulated the knowledge argument in different forms. The argument is that there are facts about consciousness that are not deducible from physical facts. One could know all of the physical facts, much like Laplace’s Demon, but not know all of the conscious facts. From this it follows that consciousness is distinct from the physical. Frank Jackson’s version of the argument is a particularly compelling one. Jackson asks us to imagine Mary the scientist. Mary knows every physical fact there is to know regarding color vision. She knows which wavelengths produce which color, how the eye functions in relation to color and all other physical facts needed to understand color vision from a physical standpoint. However, she has lived her entire life in a black and white room and has never experienced any colors. At some point Mary departs from the room and sees red for the first time. When Mary has the conscious experience of red she learns a completely new fact about color vision: what it is like to see red. All of the knowledge she had of the physical processes of color vision could not allow her to know what it is like to experience a color sensation. Therefore, knowing all of the physical facts is not exhaustive of all of the facts that can be known; there exist conscious facts not deducible from physical facts.

The arguments demonstrating that consciousness is not physical can all be seen as coming from different directions. While one only needs to accept a single argument for my position to hold, the true argumentative force of step 2 in my overall position is that the same conclusion is reached from four different starting points. The collective power of the arguments must be taken into account. The fact that the separation between consciousness and the physical can be
demonstrated from several distinct grounds greatly strengthens this conclusion.

**Consciousness as Intrinsic or Emergent**

Consciousness is not physical. But it is apparent that there is some sort of interaction between consciousness and the domain of the physical. This was articulated earlier with the examples of brains, intoxication, and pain. How then, are consciousness and the physical connected? There seem to be only two plausible answers to this query; either consciousness is intrinsic to the physical or consciousness emerges from the physical.\(^{19}\) In the former view, consciousness is the “categorical bases of fundamental physical dispositions.”\(^{20}\) Consciousness underlies the fundamental constituents of the physical world, providing them each with independent existence, separate from their relational existence to other fundamental particles. Consciousness would exist, “at the bottom of things” and would thusly exist for us because we are complex organizations of these fundamental constituents.

In the latter position, consciousness merely emerges from the physical. According to Strawson, the emergence thesis states, “Physical stuff in itself, in its basic nature, is indeed a wholly non-conscious, non-experiential phenomenon. Nevertheless when parts of it combine in certain ways, experiential phenomena ‘emerge.’”\(^{21}\) Here, consciousness is not intrinsic to the physical but “emerges” or comes about through particular arrangements of physical entities. The existence of our conscious states is akin to the existence of liquidity; liquidity is not a characteristic of hydrogen or oxygen atoms, but when they are put together in the right way, the properties of a liquid emerge.\(^{22}\)

**Consciousness Cannot Be Emergent**

Strawson argues that consciousness cannot emerge from the physical. According to Strawson, reality is constructed out of fundamental entities. He uses the term *ultimates* to refer to these fundamental entities. Whatever turns out to be the most basic constituent of reality—quarks, strings, fields or whatever—that entity is an ultimate. In emergentism, ultimates are entirely physical. The fundamental nature of physical entities is entirely nonexperiential.\(^{23}\) Consciousness comes
into play due to interactions and arrangements between physical entities.

Emergentists point to several different physical emergent phenomena to argue that ultimates are entirely physical. Strawson uses the example of liquidity:

Liquidity is not a characteristic of individual $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ molecules. Nor is it a characteristic of the ultimates of which $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ molecules are composed. Yet when you put many $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ molecules together they constitute a liquid (at certain temperatures, at least), they constitute something liquid. So liquidity is truly an emergent property of certain groups of $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ molecules. It is not there at the bottom of things and then it is there.\(^{24}\)

Liquidity emerges from lower-level physical notions such as shape, size, mass, charge, number, position, and motion. Liquidity is entirely reducible to shape/size/mass/etc phenomena. Liquidity then, is entirely dependent on these phenomena. The lower-level phenomena need to be a certain way for liquidity to emerge. And when they are that specific way, liquidity does emerge in virtue of that specific arrangement. Therefore, when $Y$ is emergent of $X$, $Y$ is wholly dependent on $X$.\(^{25}\) For the emergentist, ultimates are entirely physical or nonexperiential. All physical phenomena emerge from physical ultimates. For instance, chairs are emergent of physical ultimates. The existence of a chair is wholly dependent on physical ultimates. If the lower-level facts are fixed correctly, the properties of the chair will emerge. Consequently, chair phenomena are emergent of wholly non-chair phenomena.

However, any physical example an emergentist provides, like that of liquidity from nonliquidity, will not be analogous to the emergence of consciousness from nonconscious ultimates. Every example will be put forth as something nonexperiential emerging from something nonexperiential. Positing that these examples are analogous to the move from nonexperiential to experiential is a false analogy. Upper-level physical phenomena, such as liquidity, emerge from lower-level physical phenomena because upper-level physical phenomena supervene on lower-level physical phenomena. Fixing the physical facts of ultimates logically guarantees the existence of the upper-level physical phenomena. This is not the case for experience.
Fixing the physical facts of ultimates does not logically entail the existence of any experiential phenomena. This has already been demonstrated in step 2 of my overall position.

Experience cannot be emergent of entirely nonexperiential ultimates. Describing the emergence of physical phenomena from more simple physical things is not problematic. But if we start with nonexperiential ultimates it is very difficult to see how we can arrive at experience. Strawson posits a genuine analogy for the emergence of experience from nonexperience: extension from nonextension. Assume that ultimates are nonextended entities. That “there is no sense in which they themselves are extended; that they are real concrete entities, but are none the less true mathematical point entities.” But when the nonextended ultimates are arranged properly, genuinely extended real entities exist.

This seems to Strawson and myself to be completely absurd. Yet, some scientists (like geometers) hold that this emergence relationship is true; ultimates, like points, are nonextended. Even though ultimates, on their account, are nonextended they must in some sense be spatially located. Granting the emergence of extension from nonextension is problematic, to say the least. But the emergence of spatial entities from wholly nonspatial entities is simply impossible. Emergent phenomena owe the entirety of their nature to that which they emerge from; they are wholly dependent on the lower-level phenomena that guarantee their existence. The existence of spatial entities would therefore have to be wholly dependent on nonspatial entities. This is akin to saying; spatial entities are spatial in virtue of them being nonspatial. Or, spatial entities are spatial entirely because they come from things that are not spatial. It does not seem to be metaphysically sound to believe that this could be the case. This emergence relation is analogous to the emergence of experience from nonexperience and thusly, a destructive analogy.

Consciousness Is Intrinsic

If experience cannot emerge from nonexperiential ultimates, then ultimates must be experiential. There must be something experiential at the fundamental basis of reality for experience to exist. We know firsthand that our consciousness exists. For this consciousness to exist in our world, the ultimates that ground reality at a fundamental level must in part be conscious as well. Therefore, consciousness
must be an intrinsic property of ultimates. An intrinsic property is a property that belongs to a thing in itself; it is its *thisness*. It is what makes something the thing it is rather than something else. A full description of an ultimate qua ultimate must invoke consciousness. The nature of the consciousness experienced by ultimates is a mystery. But we should expect difficulty in explaining the consciousness of something so vastly different than ourselves. Thomas Nagel demonstrated that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat. If we cannot know what it is like to be a bat, something far more similar to us than a quark, *how can we expect to know precisely what it is like to be an ultimate*? I have remarked earlier that we are also epistemically limited from knowing what it is like to be anyone else beside oneself; it is in the nature of consciousness to be first personal. A fortiori, we are epistemically limited from knowing precisely what it is like to be an ultimate.

There are many reasons that make the intrinsicness of consciousness seem attractive. We must speak about our consciousness when considering what is intrinsic to us, what makes us who we are. But, perhaps the most attractive reason that draws us to the intrinsicness of experience is the diaphanous state of the physical world without it. Chalmers articulates Russell’s view in showing that science’s description of the physical world fails to account for the intrinsicness of the actual world. Science characterizes physical entities through their relations to other physical entities. The properties of a quark, such as spin and charge, are simply relations to other quarks. Mass is just a dispositional role, the tendency to resist acceleration. Everything physical is described by science as relational; science says nothing about the intrinsic nature of physical entities.

When we have relations, we expect things to stand in those relations. For example, let us consider Matt and Adam and their heights. The relational knowledge that we have of fundamental physical entities is like saying that Matt is taller than Adam rather than saying that Matt is a specific height and Adam is another height. All that we have knowledge of is the proposition: Matt is taller than Adam. Since we know that this relation exists, we expect two entities to stand in that relation, Matt and Adam. But we have no empirical information about Matt qua Matt or Adam qua Adam. All science gives us is, X is related to Y instead of X, Y. If one were to criticize this example, one could point to the fact that we can measure height and Matt is in fact 5’6.” This criticism actually strengthens the example. It tries to
use measurement to derive intrinsic properties. But measurement is precisely what demonstrates relative properties, not intrinsic properties. All we are doing through measuring in this case, is comparing the height of Matt to the height of something else and saying that it is the same. Matt and whatever units of measurement used stand in relation to one another. Nothing, then, is intrinsic of Matt qua Matt about this characterization.

In fact, all of science is measurement. Eddington wrote, “Our knowledge of the nature of objects treated in physics consists solely of readings of pointers (on instrument dials) and other indicators.” Even observation is measurement. Therefore science is wholly relational. We can see this by not only looking at the properties of fundamental particles but in the organization of fundamental physical laws. Every term in \( E = mc^2 \) denotes a relation. All functions are relations; and all physical laws are function-based. There is something very shallow, then, about science and physical entities. If the intrinsic nature of the things the relations characterize can never be reached, the relations themselves become meaningless. There is nothing that the relations are about. If we have \( X > Y \) but \( X \) and \( Y \) do not exist, what is the point of \( X > Y \)? But consciousness can provide substance to the relations by giving independent existence to the relata that stand in physical relations.

If consciousness is intrinsic to ultimates, then the relations of the physical world are grounded and we have created a tightly knit picture of reality: (1) the physical depicts the structure and disposition of the world through relations; (2) the phenomenal accounts for the categorical base that underlies the structure and disposition of the world. Strawson notes that it seems silly to assume that this intrinsicness is not in some ways phenomenal; we know consciousness exists but not how it relates to the physical, and we know that the physical world needs something intrinsic. Positing experience as the intrinsicness should not be seen as farfetched, it should seem like an inference to the best explanation.

**Panpsychism**

The physical world rests upon consciousness. The ultimates of reality are intrinsically phenomenal. This must be the case because: (1) Consciousness is not physical; (2) Consciousness is not emergent; and (3) Consciousness is somehow connected to the physical
world. All physical things are composed from ultimates. Thus, all things are in part experiential. In other words, it is like something to be anything physical. Panpsychism is precisely this view. There exists a first person perspective for animals, tables, electrons, etc. All of these things are loci of experience. Even though it is difficult to accept, the evidence points to consciousness for all of these things because they are composed from conscious entities.

The heart of my position is to support that this basic tenet of panpsychism, that all things experience, is reasonable. Yet, many philosophers seem to hold the assumptions that I have spelled out without considering the panpsychist implications that the assumptions entail when held together. If one accepts my assumptions that consciousness is not physical and emergence is nonsensical, then panpsychism follows. Panpsychism is not without problems. It was never my intention to argue that panpsychism offers a complete understanding of consciousness and its connection to the physical. Nevertheless, we must allow for legitimate theoretical space for panpsychism and continue researching to hash out the specifics of the theory. This is the ultimate conclusion that I intended to reach. That being said, I will now put forth a more speculative theory of panpsychism.

Panpsychism does present some problems. For instance, what sort of consciousness do things such as tables and quarks have? In order to answer this question we are faced with the central issue with panpsychism, the combination problem. If ultimates are conscious, then our consciousness stems from them (emergence is not an option). Our experience is however, a unified single experience. The combination problem asks the question: How then, does the intrinsic phenomenal character of fundamental entities combine in such a way to create human experience? Or more generally, How do ultimates combine? We know that ultimates combine in physical ways. Neurons are connected in our brain so that information can be transferred along synapses. But consciousness is not physical. Physical relations will not suffice in explaining the nature of consciousness. Intrinsic phenomenal properties must combine in an entirely different way. Furthermore, even though the ultimates in our toes are conscious, it does not seem like their consciousness is our consciousness. Why certain ultimates in our body seem to combine to form our experience (brain ultimates) rather than other parts of our body (nose, toes, etc.) is also very problematic.
The combination of intrinsicness must also not be random and unorganized. It is clear that when the world is arranged in certain ways, certain types of conscious experiences regularly come about. In turn, there must exist laws of consciousness, phenomenal laws. The existence of phenomenal laws should be no surprise. Consciousness possesses the most significant ontological status; it is what truly exists at the most basic level. Consciousness is fundamental in our universe, just as the existence of matter and energy. Brute or nonreductive laws govern matter and energy. It appears as if laws must govern experience as well. The picture of consciousness created is one where: (1) consciousness exists as the fundamental intrinsic properties of ultimates, (2) consciousness is regulated by fundamental phenomenal laws, (3) these laws organize the phenomenal properties of ultimates into more complex arrangements of consciousness such as our own. This is a similar picture to that we have of the physical world. It may be the case that the only way to understand this combination must be through some indirect method. Doing scientific studies in the normal fashion will only yield physical evidence, because they are measurement-based and therefore relational. However, ignorance of this combination is not a knockdown argument. Not knowing the specifics does not invalidate the earlier steps in the proof.

With some phenomenal laws in place we can account for what I would like to call a spectrum of consciousness. It seems to be the case that our consciousness is more robust than that of much simpler organisms. Imagining what it is like to be an electron is so foreign to us because we are substantially different than an electron. But that does not mean that an electron does not experience. The electron may just experience a very weak, thin form of consciousness. As organisms grow more physically complex, it may be the case that consciousness also grows more complex. When physical things organize, the intrinsicness of those things is also arranged in certain ways as well. These physical arrangements may be coupled by conscious arrangements that in turn produce certain types of consciousesses. This is not to say that consciousness is physical. It is to posit that the separate physical laws and phenomenal laws may work in conjunction at some level. We expect some sort of connection between the physical and the phenomenal, and this may be this connection.
Objections

Panprotopsychism

Chalmers defends a version of panpsychism called panprotopsychism. Panprotopsychism, according to Chalmers, is “a sort of a neutral monism: there are underlying neutral properties X (the protophenomenal properties), such that the X properties are simultaneously responsible for constituting the physical domain (by their relations) and the phenomenal domain (by their collective intrinsic nature).”\(^3^0\) The protophenomenal view rejects the claim that “there is something it is like to be an electron.”\(^3^1\) Chalmers is advocating a position in which there is one fundamental neutral substance, X. X is constitutive of both the physical world and consciousness. The organization of X in physical relations gives rise to the physical. Organizing X through intrinsic relations gives rise to consciousness. But X qua X is neither physical nor phenomenal. It is neutral.

Panprotopsychism is an unacceptable compromise. Chalmers seems to have shrunk back from full panpsychism in order to create a more palatable view to physicalists. “Collective intrinsic nature” is emergentism in disguise. If the substance that underlies everything is not phenomenal, then experiential properties necessarily emerge from nonexperiential properties. Emergentism does not seem plausible because of the position already articulated. Chalmers may defend emergentism but then he is no longer a panpsychist in any meaningful sense of the term. What makes panpsychism panpsychism is that it denies the possibility of emergentism. Chalmers cannot have his cake and eat it too.

Panprotopsychism also fails to solve the essential problem it is supposed to remedy. The ultimates of the physical world are without intrinsicness. By positing panpsychism we are positing consciousness as this intrinsic base. If consciousness only exists through some collective organization, then individual ultimates no longer have intrinsicness, only the collection of ultimates do. Consequently, those individual ultimates are still diaphanous and the original problem persists in full force. Chalmers would have to propose something to grant X, the neutral substance, fundamental existence. If there is some different intrinsicness besides experience, perhaps just neutrality, the emergent issue still remains. Therefore, panprotopsychism is
inconsistent, because it rests upon the theory that panpsychism is intended to oppose, emergentism.

Panpsychist Zombies

I have defended the conceivability of zombies and the zombie world to demonstrate that consciousness is not physical. But now that the world has been characterized as a panpsychist one, the zombie argument must also adapt. Conceiving of a logical possible world without consciousness is not only to conceive of a world without human experience, but without the consciousness panpsychism finds ubiquitous and necessary to all physical things. In the panpsychist zombie world, ultimates are not experiential, and thus are insubstantial, diaphanous or intrinsicless. In the terms of Eric Dietrich, we have created a diaphanous world (DW). Diaphanous worlds are insubstantial; they do not have genuine existence. They are more akin to Impossible worlds, worlds where round-squares exist and $2 + 2 = 3$.

To embrace the possibility of DWs to save the zombie argument is entirely inconsistent with panpsychism. Panpsychism criticizes Physicalism for not being able to describe what essentially, intrinsically exists in our world. If we assume that worlds can exist without anything intrinsic or substantial, then we have undermined the basis for positing Panpsychism. According to Panpsychism, we need consciousness to be what intrinsically exists, to provide our world with substance. A panpsychist could reply that other worlds could be diaphanous but our world is not. But this would surely be begging the question. The panpsychist would be assuming our world needs consciousness to be intrinsic because our world needs intrinsicness. Thus, we would be endorsing the possibility of DWs to prove a theory that is supposed to remedy the fact that DWs are impossible. For panpsychism to make sense we must reject the diaphanous worlds.

The only other foreseeable option is to assume intrinsicness in the panpsychist zombie world. This intrinsicness would have to be something other than consciousness. Panpsychism does not proclaim that only consciousness can be intrinsic in all cases. The claim is that consciousness is intrinsic in our world. In our world, there exists this explanandum, conscious experience. In our world, consciousness is the perfect candidate for the intrinsicness of the world. In the zombie world, there is no conscious experience to be explained. In turn we can propose another candidate for intrinsicness, perhaps
Chalmers’s neutral substance X. This proposal is not emergentist because in the panpsychist zombie world, experience does not exist. It is nonexperiential from the top down. This must only be logically possible for the argument to hold. We can still maintain that in our world, consciousness must be intrinsic, while entertaining the possibility of other worlds where it is not.

In making this move, consciousness now becomes contingent upon the particular phenomenal laws that contingently exist in our world. This result is theoretically sound. If the laws were different, then the character of our conscious experience would be different. If the physical laws were different, then physical world would be different (ex.: the force of gravity on the same amount of matter would be different). There would exist a range of possible worlds, with different types of conscious experience just as there is a range of possible worlds with different sorts of physical entities.

**Conclusion**

In the words of David Chalmers, we need to take consciousness seriously. Our consciousness is what makes us who we are. Morality seems to be dependent on it (ex.: if there is no sensation of pain, how can there be suffering). There is a lot at stake here. Dogmatically assuming the materialist doctrine is not a serious attempt to decode the puzzles of experience. We must own up to the overwhelming evidence of consciousness, the evidence that we carry with us each and every day. If the proper explanation of consciousness entails panpsychism, substance dualism, monism, epiphenomenalism or any other theory; so be it. Panpsychism may not provide us with a complete knowledge of experience. But the arguments and the evidence that support the theory are compelling. In turn, we must pursue the theory farther if we are to make a genuine attempt at explaining consciousness.

**NOTES**


4. Ibid., 11.

5. Real phenomena refer to what philosophers typically refer to as concrete existents. For further explication of this category such as whether or not concrete existents need to be spatial, see Galen Strawson, *Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism* (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2006).


7. I owe this very useful way of understanding the physical from discussion with Eric Dietrich.


10. Chalmers argues in *The Conscious Mind* that conceivability implies possibility. A particular subject not being able to conceive of a proposition is not an objection against its possibility. His arguments can be found from pages 35 to 68.


12. This is a ubiquitous example in philosophy that dates back to John Locke. I am fortunate enough to have come across it in conversation with Eric Dietrich.


14. Arguments for the non-supervenience of consciousness on the physical can be found in Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*.


18. Ibid.

19. For arguments that demonstrate that this dichotomy is exhaustive, see C. D. Broad’s *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, specifically ch. 14. Also see Chalmers, “Consciousness and Its Place in Nature.”

20. Ibid., 35.

22. Ibid., 13.

23. Ibid., 11.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 14.

26. Ibid., 15.


29. I owe the examples used to demonstrate the relational nature of science to conversations with Eric Dietrich.


31. Ibid.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


