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Idealism, or Something Near Enough

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Some observations:

1. Mathematical entities do not come for free. There is a field, philosophy of mathematics, and it studies their nature. In this domain, many theories of the nature of mathematical entities require ontological commitments (e.g., Platonism).
2. Fundamental physics (e.g., string theory, quantum mechanics) is highly mathematical. Mathematical entities purport to be *abstract*—they purport to be non-spatial, atemporal, immutable, acausal and non-mental. (Whether they truly are abstract is a matter of debate, of course.)
3. Physicalism, to a first approximation, holds that everything is physical, or is composed of physical entities. As such, physicalism is a metaphysical hypothesis about the fundamental nature of reality.

In section 1 of this essay, I urge that it is reasonable to ask the physicalist to inquire into the nature of mathematical entities, for they are doing heavy lifting in the physicalist's theory, describing and identifying the fundamental physical entities that everything that exists is said to reduce to (supervene on, etc.). I then ask whether the physicalist in fact has the resources to provide a satisfying account of the nature of these mathematical entities, given existing work in philosophy of mathematics on nominalism and Platonism that she would likely draw from. And the answer will be: she does not. I then argue that this deflates the physicalist program, in significant ways: physicalism lacks the traditional advantages of being the most economical theory, and having a superior approach to mental causation, relative to competing theories.

In section 2, I urge that given these results, both a kind of idealism and something near enough to idealism are in better shape, overall, than physicalism. In particular, I identify panprotopsychism (or "protomentalism," as I like to call my version of it) as the most promising answer to the mind-body problem, in light of the considerations in section 1, and other considerations that I introduce.

1. The Heart of Physicalism

Let me begin with my earlier observation: fundamental physics is deeply, if not exhaustively, mathematical.¹ To illustrate with a quotidian example: Suppose you are drinking a steaming cup of cappuccino. Why does it have the properties it has, such as its bitterness and its warmth? It has these properties because it is made of atoms configured in a certain way; and atoms have the structure they do because of their configuration of fundamental particles. And according to quantum field theory, fundamental particles are merely ripples or thickenings in the quantum field, which is explained mathematically. And if, for instance, string theory is employed to explain particle natures, the particles are vibratory frequencies of strings, which is again explained mathematically. In short, fundamental physics seems to be highly mathematical (Schneider forthcoming).

As it turns out, I've argued that the mathematical nature of fundamental physical theories raises a serious problem for physicalism. For consider that the physicalist generally regards her ontological universe as one of concrete entities, consisting in entities like spatiotemporal objects and property instantiations. But fundamental physics is mathematical, and mathematical entities purport to be abstract—that is, they seem to be non-spatial, atemporal, immutable, acausal and non-mental. (Here, I am merely using the standard definition of an abstract entity.) Consider, for instance, the Schrödinger equation. And consider the heavily mathematical approaches to quantum gravity, such as string theory and loop quantum gravity. In essence: because fundamental physics is highly mathematical, mathematical entities, which are anything but “concrete,” are playing an important role in physics (Schneider forthcoming).

Mathematical entities do not come for free, however. As observed, physicalism holds that everything is physical, or is composed of physical entities. This is a metaphysical hypothesis about the fundamental nature of reality. It is reasonable to ask the physicalist to inquire into the nature of mathematical entities, for mathematical entities are doing major work in the physicalist's theory, describing and identifying the fundamental physical entities that everything that exists is said to reduce to (supervene on, etc.). The key question raised by this essay is whether the physicalist in fact has the resources to provide a satisfying account of the nature of these mathematical entities, given existing work in philosophy of mathematics on nominalism and Platonism that the physicalist would likely draw from. I believe the answer is: the physicalist does not.

I shall call a supervenience (reductive, realization, etc.) base that contains that which is identified by a given physicalist program as fundamentally a “physical base.” The physicalist holds that everything is physical, being either a fundamental physical entity or depending upon fundamental physical entities in the base.² Now, I've observed that

¹ Much of this section is an updated version of Schneider (forthcoming).

² Depending upon the reductive, realization, or supervenience thesis the “base” can be as large as all of spacetime or as small as the neural basis of a type identity claim. There are debates in the physicalism literature about these matters, but this discussion does not require a particular account of the size of the base nor a specific sort of dependency relation.

in the face of the aforementioned mathematical nature of fundamental physics, one could raise the following worry for physicalism.

It seems that the fundamental particulars and fundamental properties in the physicalist's base—the building blocks of the physicalist's ontological reality—need to be *individuated* mathematically. That is, mathematical entities seem to make the entities in the base the types of entities that they are. And if something individuates something else it is often considered to be part, or even all, of the entity's nature. Unless, that is, an argument is provided to the contrary.³ I am challenging the physicalist to provide such an argument. Without an argument, the presumption is that the individuating entity does, at least in part, contribute to the nature of the entity (Schneider forthcoming). So, again, playing Devil's advocate, I ask the physicalist: why is the physical base not abstract (at least in part) if fundamental physical entities seem to be individuated by abstract entities? Why do abstract entities not contribute to the nature of the properties and particulars in the base?

Here's another way to state the matter, and which provides some background on the notion of individuation. Consider an example of a well-known identity condition. In the personal identity literature, the soul theory offers an identity condition involving identity of a person over time (the psychological continuity view offers another). This is a proposal about how to *individuate* persons, presenting an identity condition in which the survival of a person is determined by having the same soul over time. An entity *individuates* something else when it figures in its identity condition. The presumption is that if something individuates something else, that individuating entity is part of its nature, at least without an argument to the contrary. The physicalist owes us an argument, if this is not really what is going on. Prima facie, mathematical entities seem to play a key role in the identity conditions for entities in the physical base—the conditions of sameness and difference of entities within a given metaphysical category at a given time or over time. So why aren't the entities in the physical base abstract, then, given that fundamental theories in physics are heavily mathematical?

To be sure, most physicalists will vehemently reject the idea that abstract entities are part of the nature of the physical base. They will generally say, as seems reasonable, that mathematics merely describes the universe; the universe isn't mathematical. *I agree*. For I am just pressing the physicalist to explain *why* the entities in the base are metaphysically distinct from mathematical entities—why all the mathematics is merely descriptive. For this seems to me what the physicalist should say. But can she say the mathematics is merely descriptive? What ontological resources are available to her?

Here, the physicalist can appeal to work in philosophy of mathematics. *Platonism* in philosophy of mathematics contends that there are mathematical entities, that is, entities that fall in the domain of mathematics, such as numbers and mathematical structures.⁴ According to the Platonist, mathematical entities are abstract: they are

³ We shall consider such arguments shortly. See also Schneider forthcoming.

⁴ Different Platonist theories regard different kinds of entities to be basic (e.g., numbers, structures).

non-physical, non-causal, immutable, non-spatiotemporal, and non-mental. *Nominalists* in philosophy of mathematics reject Platonism, holding that there are no abstract entities.⁵ This being said, a natural response to our problem is to appeal to a form of nominalism, called “fictionalism.” Fictionalism agrees with Platonism that our mathematical sentences and theories purport to be about mathematical entities, but *contra* Platonism, fictionalism denies that there are abstract entities. Our mathematical statements are not true. (However, fictionalists can allow that the statements are “true in the story of mathematics.”⁶) Fictionalism is currently regarded by most philosophers of mathematics as being the most plausible form of nominalism.

According to fictionalism, sentences like “ $1+1=2$ ” are not true for the same reason that sentences like “Commander Data was on the Enterprise” are not true—there are no such things as Data or the number two. Both are fictional (Balaguer 1998; Field 1980, 1989). What is meant by “fictional” in the context of mathematical fictionalism? Mark Colyvan explains the sense in which mathematical entities are said to be fictional:

fictionalism in mathematics does not mean that “anything goes.” Authors of mathematical theories, like writers of good literary fiction, are not free to develop their fiction in any way they please. For a start, consistency is usually thought to be strongly desirable. Beyond that, there are also requirements not to introduce unnecessary items. In good mathematics, like good literary fiction, posited entities contribute to the story. But perhaps the greatest constraint on writing mathematical fiction is that the latest installment must be consistent with all previous installments. Previous generations of mathematicians introduced such “characters” as sets, functions, natural numbers and so on. The current generation of mathematicians must develop these “characters” in ways that are consistent with what went before. It is as though current mathematicians are all contributing to a multi-authored series of books. (2011)

The difference between sentences like “11 is odd” and “7 is even” is that the former (and not the latter) are in the fictional story of mathematics—a story that’s made up of our mathematical theories. As Colyvan writes, fictionalism has “a very straightforward epistemology: there is nothing to know beyond the human-authored story of mathematics. And coming to know the various fictional claims requires nothing more” (2011). Why do we appeal to certain mathematical stories, and not to others? As Mark Balaguer explains: “The reasons are that this story is pragmatically useful, that it’s aesthetically pleasing, and most important, that it dovetails with our ‘way of thinking’” (1998: 13).

⁵ Herein, when I speak of “nominalism” I have in mind nominalism in philosophy of mathematics, rather than nominalism about universals.

⁶ Both Field and Leng hold that “9 is odd” and “5 is even” are both *strictly untrue*, but “9 is odd” is *true in the story of mathematics*. (To be true in the story of mathematics, for them, is to follow from mathematical axioms accepted by humans.) For Mark Balaguer, the story of mathematics can extend beyond the currently accepted axioms, encompassing the “full conceptions,” in his own words, that humans have of mathematical entities (Balaguer 1998; Field 1980; Leng 2010).

I've argued that physicalists should not be fictionalists (Schneider forthcoming). For fictionalism takes mathematics to be a purely human story, explaining mathematical discourse in terms of mental phenomena such as human aesthetic and pragmatic interests. This gives rise to three difficulties. First, physicalism will become circular, for mental phenomena are explained by reference to physical properties and particulars that are themselves individuated by mental phenomena. Second, a putative physicalist solution to the mind-body problem must employ a reductive (supervenience, realization, etc.) base that is itself physicalistically kosher, being free of mental or otherwise non-physical entities. And a base of physical entities that is individuated by mental entities is not physically acceptable. Third, because a prediction or law in fundamental physics is couched in a mathematical vocabulary, it will turn out to be untrue, being either false or vacuous. While physicalists realize that current physics is false, as relativity theory and quantum mechanics contradict, it would be a bad result if the physicalist had to say that the claims of a completed physics will turn out untrue, or are merely true within the fictional story of mathematics!

A natural response to these difficulties is to observe that although fictionalism is mind-dependent, the fictionalist Hartry Field also proposed a promising nominalization procedure that is separable from his fictionalism, and this is what the physicalist should appeal to (Schneider forthcoming a). Field argued that it is not necessary, in producing a physical theory, to quantify over abstract entities. Drawing from Hilbert's axiomatization of Euclidean geometry, Field provided a formalization of Newtonian gravitational theory in which the quantifiers range over spacetime regions (including points) and point-particles. He provided relational predicates that, as applied to spatiotemporal intervals, allows one to mimic the operations of multiplication, addition, and so on (Field 1980). Let us call this "the spacetime response."

I quite like Field's nominalization program. Unfortunately, the physicalist cannot appeal to it. Consider that theories of quantum gravity are more fundamental than quantum mechanics, seeking to unite quantum mechanics and Einstein's theory of general relativity, which are currently at odds with each other. According to two leading theories of quantum gravity (loop quantum gravity and string theory) spacetime is not fundamental—it is emergent (Schneider forthcoming; Seiberg 2006; Huggett and Wuthrich 2013; Swingle manuscript). Physicists often use the expression "emergent" without defining it, but overall, these discussions seem to paint a picture in which spacetime is what philosophers have called "*strongly emergent*" (Chalmers 2006). That is, the spatiotemporal truths are not deducible from truths at the fundamental level, even in principle.⁷ Consider, for instance, holographic theories, which map all the information from a 3D structure to a 2D boundary, preserving all the same information, leading people to ponder whether the universe is a hologram. The point here

⁷ I am not suggesting that advocates of the view that spacetime is emergent suggest there is downward causation, however. I am just claiming that they hold that the spatiotemporal truths are not deducible, even in principle.

is that there seems to be no unique spatiotemporal structure that is fixed by the base-level physical laws and facts.

Now, I've observed that the situation with these theories of quantum gravity raises a problem for the spacetime objection (Schneider forthcoming). The spacetime regions and points would be individuating the fundamental properties and substances posited by these theories, entities like strings and spin networks. But spacetime *emerges* from the fundamental entities. It is very puzzling to say that the fundamental entities are also individuated by them. If something emerges from some base, it is supposed to be due to the nature of the entities in the base that the emergent entity exists, otherwise, it doesn't really emerge from the base. If macroscopic spatiotemporal features individuate fundamental microscopic entities, then, aren't these features just part of the nature of the microscopic entities? If this is correct, then the features of emergent spacetime would trace back to the configurations of microscopic entities, but then, since a given microscopic entity would have one or more spatiotemporal properties as part of its nature, spacetime would seem to emerge from itself. For spacetime is individuating that which it "emerges" from (Schneider forthcoming). I find this puzzling, especially since the string theorists are saying that spacetime is *not* found at the fundamental level, just appearing "as approximate semiclassical notions in the macroscopic world" (Seiberg 2006; Schneider forthcoming).

Further, even putting aside this direction of explanation problem, it isn't even clear how spacetime, since it is said to be an *approximation* that is not even applicable to phenomena at the microphysical level, could be said to individuate the fundamental entities in string theory. Why would a mere approximation play such an important role? In any case, it is crucial to bear in mind that theories of quantum gravity are under constant development. Perhaps these issues will be clarified upon a fuller elaboration of the manner in which spacetime is emergent. (The matter is rather unclear in the discussions in physics I've seen.) For now, the spacetime response is problematic.

Of course, the physicalist can respond that there are many other nominalist approaches to choose from. Unfortunately, I cannot canvass these today, but I have considered them elsewhere and so far, I have been unable to locate a nominalist approach that is both independently plausible *and* physicalistically kosher (Schneider forthcoming). One problem is that mind-dependency seems rife in the nominalism literature in philosophy of mathematics, although sometimes the mind-dependency is not explicit.⁸ And any mind-dependent approach will not suffice for the same reason fictionalism did not. For example, *psychologism* claims that mathematics is about mental objects. E.g., "2+2=4" is about the ideas of 2 and 4. *Conventionalism* holds that mathematical sentences are analytically true, e.g., "2+2=4" holds solely in virtue of the meanings of the expressions. Notice that conventionalism would not yield a physicalist answer to the mind-body problem because mental phenomena would be supervenient upon (or reducible to, etc.) physical entities individuated by intentional properties.

⁸ For instance, below, I suggest that the Millian approach is covertly mind-dependent.

Game formalism says that mathematics is a symbol manipulation game. Again, this is mind-dependent, as these “games” are human creations, and, as an anti-realist theory, much of even a future physics would turn out to be false (Schneider forthcoming).

What about an approach that takes the truthmakers for mathematical statements to be properties or objects? Let us now turn to a familiar object-based approach to see what the problem is.

1.1 *Object and Property-Based Nominalist Approaches*

On the Millian approach, mathematics is the most general of the sciences, giving us laws about physical objects. For example, “ $2+2=4$ ” tells us that whenever we add two objects to a pile that already has two objects, we will end up with four objects (Mill 1973). I shall call these objects “Millian objects.” Notice that according to physicalism the entities in the physical base are supposed to be the basic building blocks for everything that exists. Because the physicalist is hoping to individuate these building blocks, the individuating entities cannot be macroscopic physical objects, for the fundamental building blocks are supposed to compose macroscopic objects (Schneider forthcoming). If the physicalist appeals to macroscopic objects to be the truthmakers for statements in mathematized physics, her approach would be circular.

Perhaps the Millian objects should instead be fundamental physical objects like particles and strings, rather than macroscopic ones. This broadly Millian approach will not work, however (Schneider forthcoming). First, if the physical base contains physical substances, then the Millian approach will be circular, as one cannot individuate fundamental objects by reference to themselves. Second, I’ve mentioned that physicalists often have property ontologies, taking a spatiotemporal mosaic of properties as metaphysically basic (where such can have causal natures or be entirely categorical or non-nomic, as with a Humean supervenience thesis). Pure property ontologies need to take physical objects as metaphysically derivative, even objects that physics regards as fundamental. Objects are instead bundled out of properties or they are properties, together with a substratum or thin particular (see Armstrong 1997; Schneider 2012, 2013a). Bearing all this in mind, the Millian approach puts the ontological cart before the horse. For objects, not physical properties, would turn out to be basic. And the nature of the physical properties would depend upon the Millian objects. So substances (including minds) could not be propertied substrata or bundles of tropes. Third and finally, this view presupposes the very concepts of number and addition—notice the objects are already numbered, and they are added together—so upon reflection, it doesn’t really explain the nature of number. And because this position presupposes the concepts of units and addition, it makes covert appeal to human classifications and concepts. The physicalist needs to avoid mentalistic approaches to the nature of mathematical entities, as discussed.

For further discussion see (Schneider forthcoming), where I also respond to a related trope-theoretic approach, which explains numbers via tropes, rather than objects (Campbell 1990). Now, having discarded a variety of nominalisms in pursuit of

a nominalist answer to our problem, let us turn to a different approach entirely—a physicalism that draws from Platonism.

1.2 *Platonistic Physicalism*

Platonistic physicalism may strike you as unusual, as we expect physicalism to be a form of monism. But is actually a form of dualism of the abstract and concrete. Platonism in philosophy of mathematics does not entail that there are concrete entities, but our Platonist is a physicalist, so she will surely include concreta in her ontology, although she will face problems concerning their nature, as we'll see. There is, on the one hand, a realm of abstract mathematical entities, as per Platonism, and on the other, a realm of concrete entities, such as ordinary objects and their dispositions, as per physicalism. Given this, we can contrast *physicalist monism*, which repudiates abstracta, from *physicalist dualism*, which quantifies over both abstract and concrete entities.

Elsewhere, I've urged that Platonistic physicalism is not really a physicalist position, and further, that it faces deep epistemological and metaphysical problems (Schneider forthcoming). I will confine myself to a few remarks here: if physicalism must appeal to Platonistic physicalism, then it loses the following two traditional advantages.

(1) Perhaps the strongest consideration in favor of physicalism is that it promises to be the most economical account of reality. For according to the physicalist, competing views of the nature of mentality, such as property dualism and substance dualism, posit extra ingredients to reality, above and beyond those posited by science, and are less economical than physicalism.⁹ But Platonistic Physicalism cannot deliver on this promise, however, for it posits extra ingredients outside of spacetime that are not part of physics itself, and that are arrived at on the basis of philosophical reflection about the nature of mathematical entities. Indeed, I've just observed that this form of physicalism is a kind of dualism, for there is, on the one hand, the concrete realm of objects and their properties, and on the other, an abstract realm of Platonistic entities.

(2) Insofar as the nature of the entities in the physical base seems abstract, both mental and physical causation becomes a mystery, for how do abstracta enter into causal relations? Abstracta are, by definition, immutable, acausal, and outside of space and time. While the physicalist has traditionally had an advantage over property dualism in the domain of mental causation, claiming that mental properties are epiphenomenal if property dualism is true, the physicalist's situation is even *worse* than the property dualist's. For the Platonistic physicalist cannot even explain *physical* causation, insofar as the base is abstract.¹⁰ Further, because the physicalist holds that the mental is just the physical, mental causation will be mysterious as well.

⁹ Of course, it may be that positing an extra ingredient is justified because doing so provides the best explanation of consciousness.

¹⁰ The physicalist will likely want to deny this. To do this effectively, she must provide an account of the nature of the entities in the base, one in which the basic entities are clearly concrete. I've ruled out various

So, where does all this leave us? Thus far, the physicalist faces a dilemma. On the one hand, it is natural for the physicalist to turn to nominalism to answer the problem of the base. But even well-received nominalist theories, like fictionalism, introduce severe direction-of-explanation worries into the physicalist's program. On the other hand, we've seen that Platonistic physicalism is dualist: it holds that immutable, non-spatiotemporal entities exist, and play an important role in physical theories. And it faces serious problems. Given this, it is time to consider if we can do better than physicalism.

2. Comparison: Protomentalism, Panpsychism, Property Dualism and Idealism

Let us ask: How does our discussion of the problem of the base inform the debate over the nature of consciousness? Does it improve the case for idealism, for instance? I believe it does, although I suspect that a different position is superior, a position that is still admittedly close to idealism. I will consider idealism shortly, but it is instructive to begin with a discussion of a well-known alternative to physicalism, naturalistic property dualism. *Naturalistic property dualism* holds that qualia and physical properties are both fundamental properties, and further, qualia are macroscopic properties that emerge from brains, and perhaps other complex systems (Chalmers 1996). The property dualist claims she has a superior explanation of the explanatory gap between mental and physical properties. Physicalists dispute this, of course, and they contend that physicalism is more economical than dualism. Property dualists counter this, saying that the addition of qualia to one's fundamental ontology is justified, for it is the best explanation for consciousness. Physicalists then respond that the dualist is just taking qualia as fundamental, and doing this is not really explaining qualia but taking them as basic. And the debate continues (Schneider forthcoming).

In my experience, when it comes to intuitions about consciousness, philosophers tend to rarely change their minds. Instead of debating warring intuitions, I've used a different sort of strategy, one that claims that physicalism rests on weak metaphysical foundations. For physicalism doesn't mesh with well-respected positions on properties and particularity in the fields of metaphysics, and, as we've seen, with theories of the nature of mathematical entities in the field of philosophy of mathematics. Physicalism thereby lacks a solid metaphysical foundation (Schneider 2012, 2013a 2013b, forthcoming).

I've noted that physicalists have long claimed that their approach is more economical than dualism. They also hold that they have the upper hand with respect to mental causation, for they claim that a complete account of the causation of thought and behavior can be provided by appealing to the physical properties of the brain. Qualia,

nominalist approaches to making the base concrete. In Schneider (forthcoming), I show how the Platonistic physicalist might try to render the base concrete as well. I respond to these attempts.

being non-identical to physical properties, are epiphenomenal. I've just observed that the Problem of the Base strips physicalism of these two advantages, though. For if the physical base threatens to be abstract, physicalism is in worse shape, overall, than property dualism with respect to causation, as she now has a problem with *both* physical and mental causation. Further, physicalism is not more economical than property dualism: an ontology of physical and abstract entities is just another form of dualism, after all, and this is not more economical than traditional property dualism, at least if the property dualist does not add abstract entities to her ontology (Schneider forthcoming).

This leads me to ask: can the property dualist really avoid abstracta? If not, she would not be a dualist, but a pluralist, so her position would actually be less economical than physicalism. There is indeed a sense in which the traditional property dualist faces the Problem of the Base. For the property dualist quantifies over both mental and physical properties, and perhaps over physical particulars, and given that physics is highly mathematical, it may seem, at least at first blush, that physical entities are abstract. Having naturalistic inclinations, the property dualist needs to explain why this is not the case. After all, we've noted that if physical entities have (even partly) abstract natures then causation would be mysterious. Further, the dualist may wish to specify the nature of fundamental physical entities in order to provide a well-defined conception of the physical, and relatedly, to demarcate the difference between physical and non-physical properties.

The property dualist could be a Platonist, of course, although in this case, technically, she would be a pluralist, not a dualist. Indeed, perhaps the dualist should be a Platonist, as Platonism is a well-respected approach in philosophy of mathematics that may be correct. But importantly, *the property dualist need not be a Platonist*, for she can view mathematics as a system of human classifications without falling prey to circularity. For mental phenomena can be the truthmakers for statements in mathematized physics (Schneider forthcoming). For the property dualist takes mental phenomena to be fundamental in any case.

Appealing to mentalistic truthmakers changes the shape of property dualism, however. Here, there are two routes the dualist can take. (i) If mathematical entities are explained in terms of phenomena like human classifications, or aesthetic concerns, as with fictionalism, for instance, then the property dualist can claim that macroscopic mental properties, such as concept or belief types, individuate the fundamental physical entities. Although naturalistic property dualism has not been framed herein as a version of panpsychism, this modified dualist position is similar to panpsychism in that mental phenomena are metaphysical constituents of microphysical entities. However, the view features fundamental mental entities that are macroscopic, rather than microscopic. The macroscopic mental entities serve to individuate the fundamental physical properties (Schneider forthcoming).

This may be too much to swallow, but one is willing to live with this feature of the view, there are benefits. This brand of property dualism is no less economical than

physicalism, as noted, and there is a sense in which mental entities are causal. Because mental properties individuate the physical properties, the mental is part of the nature of the physical. (Part, but not all, for presumably the property dualist will want the physical properties to be something more than just mental properties.) If the physical depends on the mental and the physical realm is causal, one can devise at least a derivative sense in which the mental properties are causal.

(ii) The following position strikes me as superior to this one, however. Notice that the property dualist can avoid macrophysical truthmakers altogether by turning to panpsychism or panprotopsychism, and thus putting mental (or protomenta) phenomena into the micro-level itself. (According to panprotopsychism, the fundamental entities identified by physics have properties that are precursors to consciousness and can collectively constitute consciousness in certain sophisticated computational systems, such as brains.) Because, in this case, the truthmakers for mathematical statements would supervene upon a supervenience base of micro-level mentalistic or protomenta entities, macroscopic properties are not required to individuate fundamental physical properties and objects. The micro-level properties can do all the work (Schneider forthcoming).

There are both monistic and property dualist versions of panpsychism and panprotopsychism (Alter and Nagasawa 2015; Chalmers 2015 Goff 2015; Strawson 2006). *Ceteris paribus*, a monistic version of either view that repudiates Platonism would stand to be *more* parsimonious than physicalism, and a property dualist/nominalist version of either view stands to be equally parsimonious. Panpsychism and panprotopsychism both tend to fare well with respect to mental causation as well, for the phenomenal properties are at the micro-level (Chalmers 2015 Schneider forthcoming).

Now let us ask: Is a monistic panpsychism, in particular, a form of idealism? (We shall return to panprotopsychism shortly.) Unlike leading solutions to the mind-body problem, contemporary philosophers of mind have paid little attention to idealism. This volume reflects the beginning of a new dialogue, so it is important to bear in mind that it is currently unclear what a fully refined definition of idealism will look like. But given our current understanding of what idealism is, it seems that a monistic panpsychism may indeed be a form of idealism, or something near enough.

In their introduction to this volume, Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce characterize idealism as the family of views that give priority to the mental. Daniel Greco, in his essay in this volume, provides an account of idealism in terms of grounding. According to him, idealism is the view that all grounding chains end in mental facts (Ch. 14). In his own essay in this volume, Pearce defines “fundamental idealism” as the view that all of fundamental reality is mind-like, but he distinguishes this position from weaker idealist theses (e.g., the mereological idealism he defends; Ch. 12).

These versions of idealism all seem to allow that some versions of panpsychism could be forms of idealism. Of course, it is important to look at the details of a particular version of panpsychism in order to understand the relation between the mental

properties (events, substances) and the physical properties (events, substances), and to see whether the panpsychism in question is even monistic to begin with, at least about concreta (more on concreta shortly). For instance, a view that is sometimes called “panpsychism” but in which only *some* of the fundamental properties are experiential, would not be a form of idealism, but a form of dualism or pluralism, because other, non-mental, properties are also fundamental ingredients of reality. A candidate panpsychist idealism would be a “pure panpsychism,” if you will—one in which all the fundamental entities are mental.

A word on “all the fundamental entities” in the above sentence. We might think the following situation should be compatible with idealism: consider a possible world in which (i), Platonism is correct and (ii), all the fundamental spatiotemporal entities fully depend upon mentalistic entities. This is a kind of dualism of the abstract and concrete (where concreta are mental), but it is not unreasonable to believe that this is a world in which idealism holds, or at least something near enough.

It is interesting to ponder whether panpsychism would be as popular as it currently is if more philosophers noticed that it is a form of idealism, or at least verges on idealism. For in the eyes of many, idealism simply gets the facts wrong: the world isn’t solely mental. In light of this, it is reasonable to ask: Are there ways to stop short of idealism? One way is to say that some quiddities instantiated in the spatiotemporal world are non-mental. This leaves one with a property dualism of mental and non-mental (i.e., physical) quiddities, a view that is less economical than a monistic position. This view has other drawbacks as well: As with all dualisms, one wonders how the mental and physical realms interact causally; in this case, it is unclear how the microproperties that are experiential can interact with those that are not. Further, one wonders whether the experiential properties are genuinely causal, or whether it is in virtue of an object’s having physical properties that it has the causal powers it has.

A better way to stop short of full-blooded idealism can be appreciated by considering the following approach.

2.1 Monistic Panprotopsychism (or “Protomentalism”):

A Minimalist Approach

We’ve seen that panpsychism, like emergent property dualism, treats experience as a fundamental feature of the universe. Panpsychism has an important advantage over emergent property dualism, in addition to the aforementioned advantage that in its monistic form, it is more parsimonious. (I will henceforth concentrate on monistic panpsychism, calling it, simply, “panpsychism.”) Emergent property dualism faces the serious concern that its mental properties will be epiphenomenal. Panpsychism does not face this difficulty, at least insofar as it is monistic, for it places experience at the ground level of physics, and experience thereby turns out to be causal.

Still, panpsychism has some serious problems. First, it seems implausible that fundamental particles (or strings, etc.) have experiential properties. There is simply no evidence for this. In contrast, it is clear that certain macroscopic systems have

experience, for each of us can tell, via introspection, that we have experience, and we infer from other's behaviors and neurophysiological similarity with us that others experience the world too. Why would there be clear evidence for macroexperience, but not for microexperience? (Here, by "macroexperience" I mean the sort of experience that humans, and at least some nonhuman animals, experience.) I suspect that the panpsychist would respond that microexperience is a minimal kind of experience—it is the "what it's like to be a microphysical entity." This level of experience is so minimal that we shouldn't expect it to be detectible.

This response is problematic. Why is this "microexperience" still a form of experience—that is, why is it an experiential property at all, given that it is so minimal that it can inhere in something like a quark or string? For consider Saul Kripke's well-received claim that the essential property of pain is its phenomenal feel: as Kripke observed, we cannot really conceive of a pain that lacks its phenomenal feel (Kripke 1980). Put more generally, the essential feature of a particular experience is that there is something it feels like for a subject to have it from the inside. But now consider that, in contrast, we can easily imagine fundamental physical properties lacking any experiential properties. *Being experiential* does not seem to be essential to any of these properties, *contra* panpsychism. So why are the panpsychist's putative "experiential" micro-level properties even the *same kind* of properties that are said to be essential to conscious experiences in macroscopic subjects? A commonly accepted feature of experiential properties—that they have their phenomenal feel essentially—does not seem present.

Second, the panpsychist generally holds that the bearers of the putative microexperiential properties are mini-subjects ("microsubjects," if you will). Perhaps they feel they must defend this because that which has experience must be some kind of subject, e.g., a mind, self, or person. Particles are nothing like subjects, however. Particles lack the key ingredients that many associate with subjectivity—psychological continuity, brains, personhood, narratives, unified conscious experience, and so on. It is best to avoid this category mistake altogether and not use the expressions "experience" and "subject" in the context of fundamental microphysical entities. At best, we have panprotopsychism—the microproperties, instantiated by fundamental microphysical entities, *give rise* to experiences. Like transparency, experience is a macroscopic phenomenon that depends upon the arrangements of fundamental particles. But these basic ingredients are not themselves subjects. Nor do they have experiences.

Indeed, panprotopsychism is fairly palatable from the vantage point of physicalism itself. For the physicalist holds that consciousness arises from a configuration of fundamental properties. Like the panprotopsychist, the physicalist believes that her fundamental entities have properties that are the nonexperiential precursors to consciousness and which collectively constitute consciousness in certain sophisticated systems. The physicalist, like the panprotopsychist, thinks the microproperties do this.

Given this, why isn't panprotopsychism just a form of physicalism? It is not physicalism for two reasons. First, we have seen that the problem of the base leads one to rethink the traditional advantages of physicalism, viewing mentalistic monisms, in particular,

as having a dialectical advantage. While it is open to the panprotopsychist to appeal to Platonism to explain the nature of mathematical entities, as discussed, she can instead be a nominalist, and this would give her the most economical theory—her view would be a genuine monism, avoiding the dualism of the abstract and concrete that the Platonistic physicalist commits to. But if mental entities are the truthmakers for statements in fundamental physics, the fundamental entities in physics are themselves *mentalistic*. On a reasonable construal of physicalism, this is not a scenario in which physicalism holds; and if one insists on calling this view “physicalism,” it is a mentalistic physicalism indeed. More specifically, the protoexperiential properties that the panprotopsychist says underlie everything would serve as the truthmakers for statements in fundamental physics.

Second, as Galen Strawson has aptly observed, the physicalist’s (nonmentalistic) microproperties seem to be the wrong sort of ingredients to serve as the truthmakers. For the physicalist holds that experience in macroscopic systems fully depends upon the configuration of the system’s microingredients. So the experience must have been there, in the underlying microingredients, all the time. But if this is the case, at least some of the microingredients must be mentalistic to begin with. So (nonpanpsychist) physicalism is false.¹¹ From this conclusion, Strawson urges that what is needed is a view that puts mentality in the microingredients. I concur with Strawson, but this does not mean that panpsychism follows, for some form of panprotopsychism could be true.

3. Conclusion

The mathematical nature of fundamental physics was my point of departure, and I’ve argued that it undermines physicalism. Physics is not physicalistic, it would seem. At the end of the day, I’ve arrived at panprotopsychism, although idealism has not fared poorly. According to panprotopsychism, the fundamental entities identified by physics have properties that are precursors to consciousness and can collectively constitute consciousness in certain sophisticated computational systems, such as brains. Panprotopsychism firmly rejects panpsychism. There are not microsubjects having experiences, even low-level ones; there is not something it is like to be a quark or a photon. At best, physically fundamental entities have the ingredients that can constitute mental states in certain complex systems.

“Panprotopsychism” is an ugly name. We might instead call the view “protomentalism,” as it puts quasi-mentalistic ingredients at the fundamental layer of reality—the level of the fundamental physical properties characterized by a completed physics. This is a non-physicalist monism, for the fundamental ontology is not purged of

¹¹ I am taking liberties with Strawson’s argument, for Strawson believes that panpsychism is a form of *physicalism*. So on his view, physicalism is not false because panpsychism is true. But I will use a more conventional notion of physicalism here, according to which panpsychism is not physicalism.

anything mental, as the physicalist would have it. Indeed, as we saw, we needed mentalistic entities at the fundamental level to serve as truthmakers for statements in fundamental physics. This is not idealism either, for these truthmakers are not full-blown mental properties. But the view is close to idealism, as the fundamental ingredients are protomental.¹²

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