

# Taking the Hard Problem of Consciousness Seriously: Dualism, Panpsychism and the Origin of the Combination Problem

by Michael Blamauer

*About the nature of the external world we have at the onset nothing but hypotheses. Before we test them in any very exact way, we may with safety try to understand them. Perhaps what seemed the wildest of them all may turn out to be the very best.<sup>1</sup>*

*Josiah Royce, "Mind and Reality"*

## 1. FROM DUALISM TO PANPSYCHISM

The “hard problem of consciousness”, made prominent by David Chalmers over the last fifteen years (cf. Chalmers 1995, 1996, 2002) essentially concerns the idea of fundamental mental properties and the concept of naturalistic dualism. The present paper aims to discuss two important implications of this notion of the hard problem. The first regards the principle difficulty of limiting the scope of fundamental properties. The second regards the combination problem. I will argue firstly that naturalistic dualism entails panpsychism, by demonstrating that the fundamentality of mental properties entails their ubiquity. Secondly, I will show that the core dualistic assumptions presupposed in the formulation of the hard problem within the standard materialist framework might be the origin of the combination problem.<sup>2</sup> In the last section I will discuss two alternative positions – substance dualism and metaphysical idealism – with the primary aim of showing that a reformulation of panpsychism in one of these frameworks may have the advantage of sidestepping the combination problem.

The major challenge of the so-called “hard problem of consciousness” is related to the question: How does subjective experience fit into the materialist metaphysics of our world? The reason for the hardness of the problem lies in the fact that reductive explanation of subjective phenomena by physical or

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<sup>1</sup> Royce (1882), 35.

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank Galen Strawson for the remark that the formulation of the “hard problem of consciousness” is essentially entailed in the assumption of the “standard materialist framework”. This remark substantially influenced my thoughts on the combination problem.

functional processes or states seems impossible.<sup>3</sup> This means that a phenomenon (Q) can be fully *captured in terms of* or *reduced to* some more fundamental phenomena (P), so that  $P = Q$ . (Cf. Lewis 1994 and Chalmers 1996, 70) David Chalmers developed a powerful argument against reductive positions on consciousness such as physicalism or a posteriori materialism (Cf. Chalmers 1996, 52ff. and 131ff.). The basic idea is that the meaning of consciousness is determined in a different manner than the meaning of other scientific concepts, like  $\text{water} = \text{H}_2\text{O}$ . To take an example, if identity in the aforementioned sense would hold for consciousness (and its underlying physical processes), an atom-for-atom physical or functional duplicate of mine (a thing indiscernible from me by methods of physical science) would have identical phenomenal experiences. However, whereas it is difficult to make sense of the idea of a physical duplicate of Lake Michigan lacking the property of being wet or being frozen under certain circumstances, I can of course make sense of a physical or functional duplicate of mine lacking conscious experience. But if there is no necessity in the relationship between the occurrences of subjective experiences and physical (or functional) brain states they cannot be identical, because identity is a relation that requires necessity (cf. Kripke 1980). Hence reduction in the mentioned sense is impossible.

The same argument holds for the idea of consciousness as an *emergent property* of the brain. The concept of emergence here is taken similarly to the way we take liquidity to be an emergent property of a group of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  molecules.<sup>4</sup> Liquidity is a property of *water*, but liquidity is not a property of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  molecules. If we try to understand the relation between the property of liquidity and the non-liquid components of the system, we find that liquidity arises due to some law-like behavior of the components under certain conditions (temperature, pressure, etc.). Liquidity therefore depends (in a strong sense) on the law-like behavior of the  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  molecules – it reduces to it. Insofar as a reductive approach to consciousness is rejected, a more radical kind of emergence has to be assumed, because it does *not intelligibly* reduce to something more fundamental. Yet such a kind of radical (unintelligible) emergence seems to imply a kind of magic or miracle, and it would not provide any explanatory advantage over weak emergentism or physicalism (cf. Strawson 2006, 18). Hence Strawson also rejects *brute emergence* in the aforementioned sense.<sup>5</sup>

What follows from the impossibility of reduction within this argumentative framework? An apparent consequence is that consciousness must be viewed as something fundamental. Now, due to the claim of irreducibility concerning consciousness within the scope of materialism and the “hard problem”, the following points establish the framework of arguments:

1. What physics say about nature is true. (Physical properties are taken as fundamental properties of reality.)

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<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive overview of the major arguments against materialism/physicalism can be found in Chalmers (1996) and Chalmers (2002). Others are also to be found in Foster (1991) and Searle (1992).

<sup>4</sup> This kind of emergence refers to what is typically understood as “weak” emergence in contrast to “strong” or “brute” emergence. For further reading on the difference between “weak” and “strong” emergence cf. Chalmers (2006).

<sup>5</sup> A similar rejection of the concept of consciousness as a brute emergent phenomenon was already prominently featured in William James’ *Principles of Psychology* (1890). (Cf. James 1890/1998, 145ff.)

2. Consciousness is a fundamental and irreducible fact of reality. (Phenomenal properties are taken as fundamental properties of reality.)
3. Our universe consists only of one kind of stuff. This stuff has two fundamental kinds of properties: physical properties and mental properties.
4. These properties correspond to a set of fundamental laws that correlate the two kinds of basic properties with each other.

These four assumptions form the pillars of a position that David Chalmers calls “naturalistic dualism” (which is in fact a variety of non-reductive materialism) (Cf. Chalmers 1996, 123ff.). Naturalistic dualism takes consciousness seriously yet at the same time accepts the physical facts of physical science as fundamental facts of reality. However, these assumptions seem to imply a further assumption due to the relationship between (1), (2) and (3), namely:

5. The fundamental features of reality must be ubiquitous.

The reason for assuming (5) is that if we take physical properties to be ubiquitous, we must assume this of mental properties as well and in the same way. There seem to be no grounds to presuppose that something fundamental would initially appear at a certain functional or organizational level. William Seager famously pointed out that

[i]t is disturbing that consciousness can be an absolutely fundamental feature of nature while being dependent upon particular systems satisfying purely functional descriptions [...]. No other fundamental feature of the world has this character, or a character even remotely like it. It is rather as if one declared that ‘being a telephone’ was a fundamental feature of the world, generated by a variety of physical systems agreeing only in fulfilling the relevant, highly abstract, behaviourally defined functional descriptions. [...] Of course, seeing that consciousness is a truly fundamental feature we cannot ask *how it is* that all and only systems meeting certain functional descriptions are conscious, yet this idea does seem to deepen rather than mitigate the mystery of the generation problem. (Cf. Seager 1995, 275)

It should be noted that this statement was addressed against Chalmers’ “principle of organizational invariance”, which is constitutive for the restriction of the fundamentality claim of consciousness in order to define the framework of naturalistic dualism and to establish a border to panpsychism. Chalmers introduced this principle because he clearly saw that if we take mental properties to be fundamental and ubiquitous in the same way we do for physical properties, then the fifth assumption pushes the case for panpsychism (cf. his own remarks on panpsychism in Chalmers 1996, 293ff.).

This structure of reasoning provides a rather good argument for panpsychism and is indeed originally found in some notable papers on this topic (Cf. e.g. Nagel 1979, Seager 1995 and Strawson 2006): If we accept the irreducibility of consciousness to pure physical or functional states, and if we are doubtful on the topic of brute emergence, we have a strong argument for panpsychism.

Panpsychism is – in short – typically understood to be the view that conscious experience is a fundamental as well as ubiquitous characteristic of our universe, equal to physical properties like mass, charge and spin. It is assumed to be a possible coherent thesis about the relationship between mind and body. According to this definition, every concrete thing has both physical and mental aspects. Galen Strawson takes panpsychism to be the position that holds “that the existence of every real concrete thing involves experiential being even if it also involves non-experiential being” (Strawson 2006, 8). Thus the scope of experience to be found in the universe may range from the micro-experiential level of ultimate particles to the macro-experiential level of human beings.

Yet the assumption of consciousness as something widespread, as well as the talk of micro- and macro-experience seems to obscure the meaning of the concept. If we speak of the consciousness of a dog, a cat or a mouse – even if it is quite obvious we are not equating the term with “human consciousness” – we end up with a rather confused idea of what exactly we mean by it. As a matter of fact, the matter becomes even more confused the deeper we descend the “ladder of evolution”. Due to this difficulty, I think it is important to keep at least the most fundamental characteristics of consciousness in mind when we try to consider it on the lowest organizational levels of the universe. This is even more important if we are attempting to arrive at panpsychism as a sound theory of the human mind-body relationship. This means that the kind of consciousness we ascribe to ultimates must at least *provide the possibility* of generating a full-blown version of these features at the level of more highly organized animals.

In the current debate, *the* fundamental characteristic of consciousness, which is likewise associated with the hard problem, is its *experiential phenomenal character*. But despite the comprehensive discussions of the nature of phenomenal consciousness, one might still feel uncomfortable with this as an exclusive characterization. This is because narrowing the concept of consciousness as a *dimension of subjectivity* solely to its *experiential phenomenal character* seems to leave out some of its fundamental aspects.

Therefore, I intend in the following to take a deeper look at the problem by arguing that consciousness is not just an *empirical fact*, but also a *transcendental feature* of our world.<sup>6</sup> The term “transcendental” is used here in the classical sense as the view that the subject’s conditions of possibility of experiencing objects are simultaneously the conditions of the possibility of the appearing objects themselves. Furthermore, I assert that consciousness as a *dimension of subjectivity* is primarily intentional, and characterized by some basic form of selfhood and experiential feeling.

In the context of the following outlines, intentionality is taken in the sense of always being involved with something other than itself. Whereas consciousness represents things in a certain way, things like tables, chairs and knives do not represent things in a certain way. They are not about anything. On the contrary, tables, chairs and knives are rather things being represented in conscious experience *of* them. Yet conscious acts do not only involve the consciousness *of* something, but also an immanent awareness of the experiencing subjects themselves. This accompanying consciousness of the subject itself is no additional act directed towards an empirical person, but rather the core self-givenness of every intentional act.

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<sup>6</sup> In recent years, Rowlands (2003) has referred to this interpretation of phenomenal experience as transcendental rather than as an empirical feature of our world.

Consciousness does not appear to itself in the same way objects do. Rather, it is in itself *immediately* self-conscious by representing the world in a certain way. There is no additional experience. This brings us to the topic of selfhood. The term selfhood is taken in the sense that everything that is perceived or experienced, is perceived or experienced by a subject of experience. The concept does not thereby refer to higher cognitive or reflexive features such as a self-model, a self-concept, a higher-order reflexive awareness of one's own mental states or internal system status, and the like. Rather, the argument is for an experience-immanent structural feature of first-personal presence or *mineness* of experience. The unfortunately untranslatable, though correct, German formulation of this idea would be that experiences are "jemeinig". However, I don't think it makes sense to speak of experience that is not present to anybody.<sup>7</sup> And of course, coming to the third and last of the basic features of consciousness, every perception or experience of something is steeped in some exclusive feeling which is the essence of *what it is like for me* to see, hear, smell, do, etc.

In the following, it is assumed that every one of the aforementioned features entails problems for panpsychism, especially concerning the challenge of making sense of tiny subjects summing.

## 2. THE COMBINATION PROBLEM

In light of the characteristics of the outlined *subjective dimension* of consciousness, panpsychism raises several problems.<sup>8</sup> One of them is the so-called *combination problem*, first noted by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). It concerns the fact that we currently have no idea as to how a combination of micro-experiences could produce full-blown conscious experience like ours. Although James does not refer to panpsychism per se, since his critique was directed only at so-called "mind-dust" theories, he points out the logical incomprehensibility of the idea of subjects summing (Cf. James 1890/1998, 158 and 160; also Seager 1999, 242). Hence, even if one could make sense of the idea of atoms having conscious experience, there seems to be no easy answer to the question of how lower single states of subjective experience could be combined to result in higher (and even more complex) states of consciousness, especially with respect to the *subjective dimension* of consciousness.

The problem starts when we attempt to explain how multiple streams of consciousness – e.g. the streams of every single unit that constitutes my brain – can combine to constitute one single perspective (namely mine) on the object. The perspectival relationship of the ultimate to its environment must in some sense be constitutive in its having an intentional object present and hence in the object's condition as three-dimensional thing. How then, can zillions of these perspectives combine to form my single perspective on an object? The same applies to the concept of selfhood: You cannot arrive at a single first-person-perspective from the fusion of many first-person-perspectives. For the sake of argument, let us imagine

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<sup>7</sup> Galen Strawson has also recently put this idea forward. Cf. Strawson (2009, 63ff.).

<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive overview of the problems of panpsychism can be found in Seager (1999, 216-252) and Seager / Allen-Hermanson (2005).

that every single particle has a basic kind of “self” or “I”. Even if it does not see or hear because it has no ears or eyes, it has a specific feeling for its environment. It stands in an intentional – though very primitive – relationship to it. Now, combine a multiplicity of these different experiencing “selves” or “I’s”. You won’t ever arrive at yourself as an experiencing single “I” or “self” via a combination of different other “I’s” or “selves” (Cf. James 1890/1998, 158ff.). And again, the same holds true for a single subjective experience. My feeling (severe) pain is not constituted by the fusion of a multitude of (slightly) pained tiny subjects (cf. Goff 2006). Treating the combination problem by evaluating the concept of panpsychism, it seems Thomas Nagel was right in his programmatic paper of 1979. There, he stated that the acceptance of the premises that lead to panpsychism is more coherent than their negation, but in the end, panpsychism as a whole turns out to be rather problematic. Yet how could it be that all the presented arguments coherently lead to panpsychism, but culminate in such a seemingly serious problem?

### 3. ON THE ORIGIN OF THE COMBINATION PROBLEM

If all of the reasoning concerning panpsychism ultimately leads to the combination problem, it seems plausible that the error might be found along the way. Hence, a recapitulation of the outlined assumptions, arguments and consequences is in order. I will go about it by critically discussing the basic assumptions and major steps of the foregoing argumentation, which has led us to panpsychism and the combination problem.

Let us begin by examining the background of the non-reductive approaches to consciousness under discussion today, which were the source of our reasoning. This is the background of the so-called “hard problem”, which can be interpreted as the name for the main point of dispute between reductionists (physicalists or functionalists) and non-reductionists (dualists or panpsychists) in regards to the nature of consciousness. Whereas reductionists (physicalists or functionalists) claim – in short – that mental phenomena are identical with physical or functional processes and hence reducible to it, non-reductionists (dualists or panpsychists) hold that consciousness is something fundamental *besides* the fundamental physical aspects of reality. Generally speaking, the standard materialist framework entails the formulation of the “hard problem”, and this problem indicates the difficulty of finding a space for consciousness within the physical domain of our world. And given the fundamentality claim concerning consciousness within this framework, one is naturally driven to a dual-aspect position better known as property dualism.<sup>9</sup> It is essential to bear this in mind when we return to the combination problem later.

Now, as I have argued above, it is apparently only a small step from property dualism to panpsychism. The reason for this is the principle difficulty of limiting the scope of fundamental mental properties to within the overall framework. And the reason for this in the first place is that consciousness is not a vague

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<sup>9</sup> David Chalmers labels his position “naturalistic dualism”, even though it is a kind of property dualism. By “naturalistic” he wishes to emphasize the fundamentality of both the physical and the mental, and likewise indicate the – albeit yet unknown – lawful and natural relationship between these two distinct domains.

concept.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, following William Seager, it turns out to be rather incoherent to artificially limit mental properties to appearing only in systems with a certain complex and fine-grained functional architecture while generally taking physical properties to be ubiquitous. It is more coherent to view mental properties as ubiquitous as well, above all when facing the problems of emergentism (cf. Strawson 2006, 12ff.).

These outlines urge us to address the question of the status of physical properties in relation to mental properties and, moreover, the distinct mode of being of both. For these reasons, Strawson infers a position he calls “micropsychism” (Cf. Strawson 2006, 24ff.). Micropsychism, like property dualism, presupposes the existence and fundamentality of a mind-independent, physical world. According to Strawson, micropsychism is a position similar to property dualism insofar as it takes mentality to be a fundamental property of physical systems. But it avoids the problem of emergence by not only ascribing mentality to certain complex systems, but by taking it to be the property of (at least some) fundamental particles as well:

Real physicalists must accept that at least some ultimates are intrinsically experience-involving. They must at least embrace *micropsychism*. Given that everything concrete is physical, and that everything physical is constituted out of physical ultimates, and that experience is part of concrete reality, it seems the only reasonable position, more than just an ‘inference to the best explanation’. (Strawson 2006, 25)

Now, it follows that the concept of property dualism and its subsequent development as micropsychism are obviously the origin of the combination problem. This diagnosis is based on two strong reasons:

1. The ontological separation of the mental and the physical, by taking both as fundamental properties of reality (which are neither reducible, nor emergent).
2. The transfer of this fundamental separation from the ontological macro- to the ontological micro-level (to save the intelligibility of emergence).

To arrive at this diagnosis, we must merely draw the logical conclusions from the foregoing passage: If the subjective dimension of consciousness is nothing we can think of in terms of generation, then micropsychism, as the idea of (some) fundamental particles having physical properties as well as mental properties in the aforementioned sense, is a dead position. Within such a framework, panpsychism (as well as micropsychism) lacks an explanatory advantage over any dualistic position – on the contrary, it must deal with counterintuitive consequences and additional ontological dead weight. To put it differently: In the case portrayed above, the mind-body problem has only been transferred from the macro-level of human consciousness to the micro-level of particle-consciousness merely to avoid the problems of emergentism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Goff developed the argument that the non-vagueness of the concept of consciousness leads to a kind of panpsychistic ontology. He presented this idea at the workshop, “The Mental as Fundamental” at the University of Vienna in May 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Dean Zimmermann (2006, 115) referred precisely to such a kind of “micropsychism” as a rather “bizarre theory”, which nevertheless “qualifies as compositional dualism” even if it seems “to be a kind of materialism”.

After evaluating the recapitulation of arguments, the standard materialist framework as the primary source of property dualism turns out to be the origin of the combination problem. It has been argued that this kind of dualism is also manifested in the sort of panpsychism that later faces the unsolvable combination problem. Hence, if we want to overcome the combination problem we have two alternatives: Either we abandon panpsychism and turn to a completely different position, with other premises etc. Or, if we wish to uphold panpsychism as a sound theory, we must challenge the background assumptions of the standard materialist framework by finding an alternative position that meets the different requirements. In other words: If we take the mental to be fundamental, it is not necessarily self-evident that we should take physical properties to be fundamental *in the same sense*. However, precisely this is presupposed in the formulation of the “hard problem” and, moreover, the mind-independence of the physical domain is in fact an unquestioned premise of the most prominent arguments voiced in this discussion (e.g. the zombie-argument or the knowledge-argument).

Actually, I believe a fully elaborated position that meets all the outlined requirements is currently lacking. Nevertheless, I view a few positions as possible candidates for further consideration with regard to the combination problem. In the following, I will outline two of them.

#### 4. TWO ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING THE COMBINATION PROBLEM

If the combination problem is in principle unsolvable within the scope of the materialist framework, it seems the only viable strategy is to sidestep it – either by switching the framework or by abandoning panpsychism per se. There are at least two alternative approaches to property dualism, with quite different background assumptions. Both take consciousness seriously, yet without running into the combination problem. On the one hand, there is substance dualism, which avoids the combination problem by avoiding panpsychism as such. On the other hand, there is – at first glance, the more radical approach of – idealism, which avoids the combination problem by constructing a different framework for panpsychistic ideas.

Let me begin with the first candidate: substance dualism.<sup>12</sup> In the following discussion of this doctrine my major focus is on its relevance to the combination problem. I will not discuss the typical problems related to this view.<sup>13</sup> In his book on Cartesian dualism, John Foster presents the five basic claims of substance dualism. It is astonishing that they are in most respects similar to the basic claims of panpsychism. He lists them as follows (Foster 1991, 1):

1. There is a mental realm.
2. The mental realm is fundamental.

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<sup>12</sup> In my discussion of substance dualism I primarily follow Forster (1991), Crane (2003), Zimmermann (2006) and Robinson (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Which are in fact the interaction problem and the pairing problem. For a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the different problems of substance dualism cf. Zimmermann (2006), Robinson (2007) and Lycan (2009).



3. There is a physical realm.
4. The physical realm is fundamental.
5. The two realms are ontologically separate.

Of course, one can easily see that it is claim (5) that is essential to the idea of substance dualism. Contrary to panpsychism and even to property dualism, substance dualism views the mental and the physical as possibly existing independently of one another. Every single mind is something that exists merely through and by itself, without further dependence on a physical body consisting of physical ultimates. Foster points out that substance dualism views the mind as being (i) conceptually fundamental, as well as (ii) metaphysically fundamental. According to (i), “No mental statement is amenable to a non-mentalistic analysis”; and according to (ii), “No mental fact is non-mentally constituted” (Foster 1991, 8). And the same holds true for the physical realm. So again, contrary to property dualism, which faces the problem of emergence when attempting to make intelligible the occurrence of mental properties at a certain level of functional or physical complexity, substance dualism avoids it by simply holding that the mind is neither an emergent phenomenon, nor identical with physical processes (neither token- nor type-identical), since “facts or states of affairs, cannot be identical if their ontological ingredients are different” (Foster 1991, 9). In Descartes’ view, the mind is simple and essentially indivisible. He takes it to be a substance in the classical Aristotelian sense of having independent existence (in addition to being persistent and property-instantiating).<sup>14</sup> Minds are unities in a core sense, and each individual mind is considered to be an individual mental substance. This was one of Descartes’ basic characteristics of the mind, posited to differentiate it from material (extended) objects: whereas objects can be divided into smaller parts and, vice versa, constructed of such parts, the mind is an indivisible unity, though a unity of different and complex experiences. Substance dualism is a “radically non-physicalistic account of what exists or occurs within the mind” (Foster 1991, 202) and it furthermore views all appearances as belonging to a basic mental subject in the sense that “mental events are always and necessarily events concerning the mentality of these subjects” (Foster 1991, 205). However, this talk of the mind as a substance does not imply that the mind is to be regarded as a “thing” in the same way we regard tables, knives and chairs as things. Substance in this context simply means that the mind is something fundamental in the sense of not ontologically relating to anything other than itself. Moreover, the mind is not to be considered a thing since things are contents of representational states and the mind is first and foremost no such content. On the contrary, the mind represents things in a certain way due to its intentional character. Obviously, because of this radical separation of the mind-sphere from the physical world of material objects, substance dualism faces nothing like a combination problem, since the mind is not understood as something generated or composed.

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<sup>14</sup> Crane (2003), referencing Peter Simons (1998), indicates that the concept of substance has little relevance in current ontological discussions since it is challenged by other ontological categories like events, particulars, etc.

A position different to, and even more radical than, substance dualism would be one that denies the aforementioned metaphysical separation by (either entirely or merely partially) absorbing the physical realm into the fundamental dynamics of the mind. As a consequence, the physical realm would no longer be fundamental in the same sense as the realm of the mind, but rather be taken as derivative of fundamental mental processes or objects. Nowadays, such a position would be labeled classically idealistic. Most of these positions could also be interpreted as panpsychistic insofar as they consider the mental to be something fundamental and ubiquitous in their overall philosophical systems (e.g. those of Leibniz, Berkeley or the German Idealists).<sup>15</sup> It must firstly be stated that even though idealism is treated today as a rather dead position, it is obviously at no explanatory disadvantage to realistic, materialistic or dualistic positions. Indeed, quite the contrary is the case, although I will not attempt a vindication of idealism in the following. As in the preceding section, this position will only be discussed with regard to the combination problem.

A major aim of idealistic approaches was to overcome substance dualism as a doctrine claiming the existence of two different realms of being, which in their view was in some way an unintelligible distinction. One of the major critics of dualism was Leibniz.<sup>16</sup> In his *Discours de métaphysique* (1686/2002, 20ff.) he offers a challenging critique of Descartes' concept of extended substances and the notion of their divisibility. Even if the mind is taken to be an indivisible substance, the extended world (i.e. the material world made of matter) is in principle divisible ad infinitum. Leibniz's point of criticism was that if we consider matter to have this character, it would be unintelligible how an infinite number of infinitely small units could merge to result in a being of a certain shape and certain size, such as a table, knife or even a human body. So Leibniz assumed that objects, which are mere aggregates, must be made up of simples, which are by definition indivisible. There follows the distinction between mere aggregates and real unities (Cf. Rescher 1979, 77ff.). In Leibniz's philosophy, these indivisible simples or individual substances are called *monads* (Cf. Leibniz, 1714a/2002, 152ff.; 1714b/2002, 110ff.). One might now ask: What is the quality of a monad that makes it the indivisible constituent of everything that exists? Remembering Descartes' definition of the mental, one can easily infer that a monad must be something mental in order to meet the specified requirements. And this is what Leibniz's idealism is about.

However, idealism is only the umbrella term for a number of positions that range from a Leibnizian kind of pluralistic idealism, to Berkeleian phenomenalistic idealism, to the transcendental idealism of Kant and, later, the German Idealists. In general, the basic assumption of the idealistic position is that reality is epistemologically and (depending on the kind of idealism) metaphysically mind-correlative or mind-dependent. Of course, this assumption carries with it a real challenge, as it runs contrary to our everyday assumption about reality, which, in a nutshell, is that there exists a physical, mind-independent as well as metaphysically fundamental material world. But this should not concern us here, since we are only addressing the question of alternative strategies that avoid the combination problem.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Seager/Allen-Hermanson (2005), who label at least Leibniz and Berkeley as panpsychistic idealists. But certainly, e.g. Schelling's System (as representative of German Idealism) should be interpreted as panpsychistic idealism as well (cf. Blamauer 2006).

<sup>16</sup> In my discussion of Leibniz's idealism and his critique of Descartes' notion of substance I mainly follow Leibniz (1686/2002), Leibniz (1714a/2002), Leibniz (1714b/2002) and Rescher (1979).

In this context, a hypothesis worth exploring could be as follows:

- (H) All facts about states and objects of reality are facts about experiential or mental states or about relations between or within experiential or mental states.

(H) is conceptually connected with the following two claims:

1. Consciousness is epistemologically and metaphysically fundamental.
2. Mind and world are not distinct metaphysical realms.

According to the basic notion of idealism, consciousness must be considered the constitutional basis of the objective world. Hence, mind and the objective world must be dynamically interrelated to each other due to their identical constitutional basis. Now, what consequences result for our main questions concerning the mind-body problem and the combination problem? Obviously, there is no longer a mind-body problem in the sense of the aforementioned “hard problem”, since within the scope of idealism, there is no more question of how the mind could fit into a supposedly fundamental physical framework. There is only one fundamental basis – be it interpreted dynamically as a process or more statically as a substance; no more question remains of how two epistemologically and ontologically different kinds of properties, substances, states, particulars or events could relate to each other. There is only mind, and that is the only immediately given, real fact. If we now examine the combination problem in light of this view, it seems to vanish into thin air.

Within the Leibnizian framework, there are only monads or aggregates of monads and a hierarchical organizing principle (Cf. Leibniz 1714a/2002, 156 and Rescher 1979, 110ff.). Every real unit is a monad, even if it assembles a set of monads beneath itself as the hierarchically superior monad and hence organizational principle. In the case of the mind-body problem, this means that even if the body is an aggregate of monads, it has a hierarchical organization where the highest principle is the apperceiving subject. This subject, of course, is an indivisible unit by itself, and hence there is no combination problem. Within a phenomenalist (Berkeley), or transcendental (Kant, German Idealists), framework, there is only the transcendental subject, or transcendental subjectivity, as the constitutional principle of an objectively given world. According to Descartes’ skeptical hypothesis outlined in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Meditation*, we cannot be sure whether we perceptually grasp things as they really are or rather merely as they are present to an experiencing subject. Kant’s transcendental project stands firmly in this tradition when it assumes that gaining objective knowledge about the external world is necessarily mediated by the subjective conditions under which we are aware of them. Due to the fact that knowledge of external things necessarily requires experience, and experience always means that things appear *for* a subject and only *under the subject’s conditions of experience*, we have no access to things as they are in themselves, but rather only to how they are present *for us* in experience. If we examine the question of objectivity from this transcendental point of view, the mode of being of the objective turns out to always be related to subjective conditions of

conscious experience. Being, in the sense of *being-an-object-for*, turns out to be relative to a subject;<sup>17</sup> it depends on the subject's point of view. In contrast, consciousness does not appear for itself in the same way objects do. It rather is in itself *immediately* self-conscious in representing the world in a certain way. This is the reason why all attempts of the subject to comprehend herself in terms of objectivity must fail – at least within the transcendental framework. And obviously, no combination problem occurs either.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Wild and airy indeed! But why so? Mind-Stuff was a worse hypothesis, because, when you tried to express all its consequences, it became unintelligible. The ordinary uncritical Atomism is a worse hypothesis, because we never get from it the least notion of how this eternally existent matter may look and feel when nobody sees or feels it. The mystical “one substance with two faces” is worse, because that is no hypothesis, only a heap of words. (Royce 1882, 40)

Keeping within the scope of Royce's thoughts, I think there is no better reflection of what I have tried to outline than these words. I began with a rejection of materialism and embarked on a quest for a suitable explanation of consciousness. I wished to take the fundamentality claim of conscious experience seriously and was naturally driven towards panpsychism. I attempted to show that panpsychism faces the combination problem only due to certain core dualistic background assumptions resulting from a rather questionable scientific worldview, which I classified as the *standard materialist framework*. This position also forms the background to the idea of “one substance with two faces”, nowadays better known as property dualism or as the derivative form of micropsychism. So in aiming for a solution to the combination problem entailed by the *standard materialist framework*, I have presented two alternative positions that both sidestep the combination problem by taking the mental as truly fundamental: one that avoids the problem by abandoning panpsychism as such – substance dualism; the other sidestepping it by constructing a different ontological framework: idealism. However, these positions may also have problematic consequences. One might ask with Dean Zimmerman (2006, 121f.) whether, in the end and given all these troubles, “ontic ignorance” might be a viable option? I do not think so. To be continued...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It must be mentioned that the former, epistemologically-driven, critical transcendentalism of Kant was transformed into a rather strong ontological idealism by the German Idealists, especially by Fichte and Schelling, as a result of the alleged unintelligibility of things-in-themselves.

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