

Panpsychism: A Meta-View in the Philosophy of Mind

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Abstract: In this article, my aim is to present panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind rather than as a position that can be juxtaposed with leading positions such as materialism and dualism. I argue here that proponents of some versions of dualism, dual-aspect theory, some non-standard forms of physicalism, or idealism may be guided by the assumptions of panpsychism as a meta-view. For example, the literature includes positions such as Chalmers' naturalistic dualism, Strawson's physicalist panpsychism, and Sprigge's idealist panpsychism, along with Nagel's remarks on dual-aspect theory. I argue that panpsychism, as a meta-view, provides a framework within which to analyze how these positions address the mind-body problem. Consequently, I conclude that the solution to the mind-body problem itself remains neutral toward these positions. Instead of focusing on the elaboration of these metaphysical positions, attention should be directed toward the crucial issue for panpsychism: the combination problem.

Keywords: Combination problem; meta-philosophy; mind-body problem; panpsychism.

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1. Introduction

Panpsychism is typically understood as a metaphysical position in which mentality is considered fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world (see Goff et al. 2022). However, if this description is taken literally, it might imply that everything in existence possesses a mind, consciousness, or experiences, including entities such as atoms or the Taj Mahal. Nevertheless, my objective is to present panpsychism as a meta-view rather than a position within the philosophy of mind, such as materialism¹ or dualism.² The

¹ In this context, it is important to distinguish between materialism and physicalism. Materialism has an older philosophical tradition than physicalism, as the premises of this stance were articulated well before the emergence of modern physics. The materialist position appeared in antiquity, with early philosophers like Democritus positing that the world is constructed from a single substance, namely matter. Contemporary physics, however, tends to speak not of matter *per se*, but of energy or mass—quantities that can be measured. Nevertheless, most philosophers today equate materialism with physicalism. In this article, I propose understanding materialism from a narrower viewpoint, asserting that everything that exists has a physical nature and that mental terms (e.g., “pain”) reduce to physical terms (e.g., “C-neuron stimulation”). Physicalism, by contrast, is a broader position that allows the acknowledgment that not all that exists can be reduced to physical states or physical terms. This leads to distinctions such as reductive physicalism and non-reductive physicalism. For instance, a physicalist might accept mental states’ supervenience on physical states, exemplifying non-reductionist physicalist stance. A good example of a non-reductionist physicalist position is Davidson’s (1970) anomalous monism, which ontologically assumes the physical nature of the world but argues against the possibility of formulating psychophysical laws, thereby preventing the reduction of mental terms to physical terms.

² Skrbina (2017) seems to make a similar observation in his book *Panpsychism in the West*, when he writes about panpsychism as a meta-theory: “First, panpsychism is a unique kind of theory of mind. Its central feature is not that it examines or describes mind *per se*—although many panpsychists do this—but rather that it argues for a widespread or universal extent. In this sense it is a higher order theory, a meta-theory, of mind. It is a theory about theories. It simply holds that, however one conceives of mind, such mind applies to all things” (Skrbina, 2017, 3). Similarly, in the introduction to the collected work *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, Brüntrup and Jaskolla contend that panpsychism has numerous variants and can be

literature discusses perspectives such as Chalmers' (1996) naturalistic dualism, Strawson's (2017a, 2020) physicalist panpsychism, and Sprigge's (1983) idealist panpsychism, along with Nagel's (1986) remarks on the dual-aspect theory. These positions illustrate that it is possible to adhere to the tenets of panpsychism while simultaneously embracing some versions of dualism, something I call a non-standard form of physicalism,³ idealism, or dual-aspect theory.

These positions may therefore be based on what I would term a shared meta-metaphysical statement. Consequently, the question arises as to whether the potential solution to the mind-body problem is neutral with respect to these positions in the philosophy of mind. It is possible to represent dualism or a non-standard form of physicalism within panpsychism as a meta-view and have a similar understanding of the mind-body problem and its potential solution. Hence, panpsychism can be conceived as a meta-view that provides a unified framework for analyzing the mind-body problem across the aforementioned positions.

Here is the roadmap. In section 2, I will introduce the standard of materialism and dualism as it is typically understood in the philosophy of mind and demonstrate that supporters of these positions only partially address the mind-body problem. Therefore, some propose in the literature that panpsychism offers a position that can adequately respond to the mind-body problem.

In section 3, I will indicate that panpsychism should not be regarded as an alternative to the standards of materialism and dualism. Rather, it should be considered a meta-view that encompasses various positions in the

consistent with perspectives such as absolute idealism or substance dualism (Brüntrup and Jaskolla 2017a, 1).

³ However, it should be noted that this is not in the standard understanding as typically presented in the literature, as I described in footnote 1. More specifically, it refers to Russell's (1927) assumptions outlined in *Analysis of Matter*, which are also discussed in section 4.3. Assuming that being a standard physicalist involves accepting supervenience, Davidson, although a non-reductionist physicalist, qualifies as a physicalist in the standard sense, not in the non-standard sense. Meanwhile, within the framework of non-standard physicalism that draws on Russell's assumptions, one posits the existence of mental properties as 'intrinsic' physical properties at the fundamental level.

philosophy of mind. I will note that the shared meta-metaphysical statement they adopt can be expressed through various ontologies.

I will also describe the combination problem that arises from adopting such a meta-view and point out that this problem results from what I term a bottom-up explanation.

In section 4, I will analyze the metaphysical positions that the bottom-up explanation adopts, illustrating their alignment with panpsychism as a meta-view. I will demonstrate how panpsychism provides a framework for the analysis of solutions to the mind-body problem within each of these positions.

In section 5, I will discuss panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind, emphasizing that the solution to the mind-body problem is neutral of the positions outlined in section 4. Consequently, my conclusion is that instead of elaborating on the aforementioned metaphysical positions in an attempt to find a resolution to the mind-body problem, we should focus our attention on the combination problem as a crucial point in resolving the mind-body problem. I will also note that the proposal to solve the mind-body problem within the framework of panpsychism as a meta-view, and the combination problem, stems from the recognition that physical theories provide us with a limited description of reality. Section 5 will also address potential criticisms of my proposal for panpsychism as a meta-view.

2. The mind-body Problem: the standards of materialism and dualism⁴

In the literature on the mind-body problem, authors often highlight two primary concerns: (a) the problem of phenomenal consciousness⁵ and (b)

⁴ An elementary introduction to the positions in the metaphysics of mind was written by Levin (2022). In the article, I will outline only the standard materialism and the standard dualism in order to demonstrate the difficulties encountered in attempting to resolve the mind-body problem within these positions.

⁵ In my article, when using the term “phenomenal consciousness,” I refer to the concept made famous by Nagel (1974) in his essay “What is it Like to be a Bat?” I

the problem of causality (see Crane 2000, 169; Westphal 2016, 1–12). Regarding issue (a), an ongoing debate centers on the feasibility of reducing mental phenomena to physical states or reducing mental terms to physical terms, which also encompasses a broader attempt to reduce functional and intentional states to physical states.⁶ It turns out that addressing both (a) and (b) is problematic within the standards of materialism and dualism.

I understand standard materialism as the view that all facets of the mind, such as consciousness and thought processes, can be fully explained through physical terms. It asserts that mental states are nothing more than physical states. Historically speaking, materialism has been the dominant position since the 1950s, following the publication of two seminal papers: Feigl's (1958) "The 'Mental' and the 'Physical'" and Smart's (1959) "Sensations and Brain Processes".

However, since the 1970s, there has been a trend in the philosophy of mind opposing materialism, philosophers presenting thought experiments that challenge the possibility of reducing phenomenal states to physical states or terms (Chalmers, 1996; Jackson, 1986; Kripke, 1980; Nagel, 1974).⁷ In other words, critics highlight the difficulties of capturing (a) the phenomenal character of consciousness within the standard materialism.

understand this type of consciousness as the subjective, first-person quality of experiences. According to Nagel, phenomenal consciousness entails that there is something it is like to be a specific organism; it encompasses a subjective character of experience that is inherently accessible only from the first-person perspective. However, in *The View from Nowhere*, Nagel points out that a similar issue was previously addressed by Sprigge and Farell (Nagel 1986, 15).

⁶ In this article, I use "term" when referring to terms from psychological (e.g., "pain") or physical theories (e.g., "C-neuron stimulation"). However, I use "states" in an ontological context to refer to mental states (e.g., beliefs, desires, or sensations of pain) or physical states (e.g., neuronal activity in the brain).

⁷ Significant contributions were made by Nagel's (1974) distinguished essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" and Jackson's (1986) paper "What Mary Didn't Know." Kripke offered a significant critique of materialism in his *Naming and Necessity* (1980) by proposing his modal argument, and Chalmers' (1996) eminent book *The Conscious Mind* reignited the debate by renewing the modal argument in the form of the thought experiment of the Zombie.

On the other hand, those within materialism have doubts about the causal relation (b); they argue that its justification cannot be satisfactorily explained within the standard dualism. Generally speaking, the standard dualism posits that the mind and body are fundamentally distinct entities, meaning that mental states exist independently of physical states.⁸ In this debate the principle of the causal closure of the physical world and the argument of causal overdetermination play crucial roles (Kim, 1993, 1998). According to this argument, for the occurrence of any physical states in the physical world, another physical state is sufficient; there is no need to appeal to a mental state as causally interacting with a physical state.⁹

Consequently, the standards of materialism and dualism only partially address the mind-body problem when understood in the context of (a) and (b). Thus, the choice between materialism and dualism leads to the following dilemma:

Dilemma (Dil.): We can either acknowledge the existence of phenomenal consciousness, which is not reducible to physical states or physical terms, as argued by standard dualism, or we can affirm that causal relations occur solely at the physical level, aligning with the standard materialist stance, while simultaneously reducing phenomenal consciousness to physical states.

It can therefore be seen that, on the basis of the core tenets of standards of materialism and dualism, an adequate resolution to the mind-body problem appears unachievable. The differences between materialism and dualism in their attempts to address the mind-body problem described above can be summarized as follows:

⁸ When referring to the standard dualism, I primarily mean substance dualism, which posits the existence of two distinct entities. Substance dualism is difficult to reconcile with panpsychism. Panpsychism aims to integrate the mental and the physical. The literature also discusses property panpsychism, which, as demonstrated by the example of naturalistic dualism in section 4.1, fits within the framework of panpsychism as a meta-view outlined in section 3.

⁹ The principle of the causal closure of the physical world served Kim (1993, 1998) in arguing against non-reductive physicalism, but it can also be used against the assumptions of dualism.

Standard materialism. Its proponents argue that phenomenal consciousness can be reduced to physical states or terms from physical theory.

Advantage: An explanation of the causal relationship between mental state and physical state is obtained.

Disadvantage: It reduces the role of phenomenal consciousness.¹⁰

Standard dualism. Its representatives argue that phenomenal consciousness is irreducible to physical states or terms from physics.

Advantage: This position preserves phenomenal consciousness as something that actually exists and cannot be reduced to physical states or terms from physics theory.

Disadvantage: There is a difficulty in adequately explaining the causal relations between mental states and physical states.

Consequently, in light of the difficulties that standards of materialism and dualism encounter in resolving the mind-body problem, panpsychism has recently attracted renewed academic interest.¹¹ The works of philosophers such as Goff (2017a, 2019) and Skrbina (2017), as well as edited volumes by Blamauer (2011a), Brüntrup and Jaskolla (2017b), Goff and Moran (2022), and Seager (2020), serve to illustrate this trend. In the next section of this article, I will describe the motivations from the literature that support panpsychism as an alternative to the standards of materialism and dualism.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that some materialists would not consider this a disadvantage. For instance, Chalmers (2003) delineates distinctions within materialism. A type-A materialist contends that reductive explanations sufficiently account for all things that require explanation. On the other hand, a type-B materialist is prepared to accept an epistemic gap, as highlighted by anti-reductive arguments (Chalmers, 1996; Jackson, 1986; Kripke, 1980; Nagel, 1974), though this acknowledgment does not imply an ontological gap, since reality is fundamentally physical in nature. Consequently, the interpretation of the mind-body problem proposed in this article may be accepted only by certain materialists who believe there is a problem with the existence of phenomenal consciousness.

¹¹ Panpsychism appears to have a longer tradition than materialism and dualism, having been present in philosophy for 2,600 years. Skrbina (2017) wrote a brilliant monograph on the history of panpsychism and its contemporary challenges.

*2.1. Panpsychism as an alternative for the standards
of materialism and dualism*

One philosopher who has considered the panpsychism position as a notable alternative to the standards of materialism and dualism in recent years is Chalmers, who wrote in his article “The Combination Problem for Panpsychism” (2017a, 179):¹²

... that it promises to share advantages of both materialism and dualism and the disadvantages of neither. In particular, it can respect both the epistemological intuitions that motivate dualism and the causal intuitions that motivate physicalism.

The epistemological intuitions behind the aforementioned acceptance indicate that mental states are fundamental and irreducible. Thus, some proponents within the panpsychism position argue for the inclusion of phenomenal consciousness in the physical world (Chalmers, 2017b; Strawson, 2008b). From an ontological perspective, this forms the basis for the argument that, as mental states are considered fundamental and irreducible, they can participate in causal relations with physical states (Rosenberg 1996, 2004, 2017).

In the philosophical literature, the motivations for adopting panpsychism based on these grounds are termed “the explanatory argument for panpsychism” (Roelofs 2019, 14-15).¹³ If proponents of the standard materialism cannot account for the complex phenomenology of living organisms solely in terms of matter, then it must be assumed that mental components already exist at the fundamental level of physical reality, either integrated with it or constituting its internal nature—otherwise we cannot

¹² In this passage, he refers to his article “Panpsychism and panprotopsychism” (2017b); in the article, he employs Hegelian argumentation for panpsychism, specifically pointing out that panpsychism is a synthesis of the thesis of materialism and the antithesis of dualism.

¹³ Roelofs describes physicalism as the most common version of naturalism, which he understands as the position that there is one type of stuff that is regulated by fundamental laws. For him, among others, panpsychists would be anti-physicalist naturalists. He concludes that consciousness is a fundamental property of reality, similar to mass.

explain how conscious mind came to exist. Therefore, from an explanatory perspective, panpsychism provides a useful position.

Goff has also considered panpsychism to be an important alternative to both standards of materialism and dualism in discussions concerning the nature of the mind. In his article “The Case for Panpsychism” (2017b), he points out that:¹⁴

Panpsychism offers the hope of an extremely elegant and unified picture of the world. In contrast to substance dualism (the view that the universe consists of two kinds of substance, matter and mind), panpsychism does not involve minds popping into existence as certain forms of complex life emerge, or else a soul descending from an immaterial realm at the moment of conception. Rather, it claims that human beings are nothing more than complex arrangements of components that are already present in basic matter. The only way in which panpsychism differs from physicalism is that the basic components of the material world also involve very basic forms of consciousness, from which the more complex conscious experience of humans and other animals derives (Goff 2017b).

In light of these considerations, some philosophers view panpsychism as an important alternative in debates about the mind, attempting to resolve problems arising from the assumptions inherent in the standards of materialism and dualism. From this perspective, human beings and other living organisms are seen as complex arrangements of components that contain mental elements at the fundamental level. This position obviates the need for both reductionism and theories of radical emergence in nature. Radical emergence proposes that emergent states are fundamentally unpredictable and irreducible to their components. Thus, mental states would have to emerge from a system that does not inherently contain mental elements.¹⁵

¹⁴ The article is available on the website of the philosophical magazine *Philosophy Now*: https://philosophynow.org/issues/121/The_Case_For_Panpsychism

¹⁵ In discussions on panpsychism, the argument against the occurrence of radical emergence within the metaphysics of mind debates is referred to as “the anti-emergence argument.” I discuss this in section 4.3.

According to Goff, the assumptions described above suggest that panpsychism offers an elegant and unified picture of the world, combining the advantages of both materialism and dualism.

Thus, proponents of panpsychism offer an explanation for the existence of phenomenal consciousness, addressing problem (a), which the standard materialism struggles with in its own stance. Therefore, panpsychism does not endorse reductionism, as it recognizes genuinely existing mental states within its worldview. Panpsychists also clarify the occurrence of causal relationships between mental and physical states, thereby addressing issue (b), which standard dualism faces. Referring to Aristotle's principle of the golden mean, it can be asserted that it provides us with a middle path. Consequently, it can be argued that within panpsychism, a resolution to the mind-body problem (Dil.) may be achieved.

In the next section of the article, I will offer a definition of panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind. Moreover, I will formulate a meta-metaphysical statement, which I maintain should be adopted by philosophers who guide different philosophical perspectives within panpsychism as a meta-view.

3. Panpsychism as a meta-view: terminological preliminaries

In this paper, I propose a definition of panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind:

Definition: Panpsychism is a meta-view within which it is posited that mental items exist at the fundamental level of reality, and due to their fundamental and irreducible nature, they enter into causal relationships with physical items.

In the aforementioned definition, the term “items” is used to emphasize that various ontologies can articulate the definition—namely, that at the fundamental level of reality, the components constituting reality may consist of properties, aspects, or events.

Thus, within panpsychism, there is allowance for an ontology of properties, which posits that fundamental reality is composed of elements that possess mental properties. Alternatively, an ontology of aspects may be

adopted, indicating that aspects constitute the fundamental level of reality. In the philosophy of mind, aspects are conceived as the manifestation of a given item, which can include both mental and physical aspects. In other words, if we have an elementary particle (e.g., an atom), it is accompanied by a mental counterpart by virtue of logical necessity. Therefore, there is a strong connection between the physical and the mental. Furthermore, an ontology of events can be considered as a model to describe the fundamental level of reality.

For this definition of panpsychism as a meta-view, it is important to emphasize the distinction between mental items at the fundamental level of reality and the developed mental life of humans or other living beings at a higher level of reality. Beliefs such as “Joe Biden is the President of the U.S.A.” are not attributed to mental properties, aspects, or events constituted at the fundamental level. Nevertheless, such beliefs can be attributed to humans, as can phenomenal states (e.g., pain) experienced by both humans and other living organisms (e.g., dolphins).

However, for beliefs or phenomenal states to occur at the higher level of reality, there must be mental properties, aspects, or events at the fundamental level, as their appropriate composition produces the complex mental life of humans and other living organisms. In the context of panpsychism, the fundamental level of reality described above is also characterized as “smallism” (Coleman 2006). According to this view, entities are attributed specific states because they are composed of smaller items. For example, the nature and structure of a chair can be attributed to its composition of smaller components, such as atoms.

I argue that those who accept panpsychism as a meta-view ought to adopt the following meta-metaphysical statement in their metaphysical stance:

The meta-metaphysical statement (MS): The complex mental life of humans and other living organisms at a higher level of reality cannot fail to be composed of parts that lack mental items, and these elements constitute the fundamental level of reality.

In MS, “items” can be expressed using different ontologies within panpsychism as a meta-view. It can be said that the fundamental level of reality consists of mental properties, aspects, or events, which give rise to conscious minds only when appropriately constituted at higher levels of

reality. In other words, panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind is neutral with regard to the ontology adopted.

In the following section, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages within panpsychism as a meta-view as a proposition for solving the mind-body problem.

3.1. Panpsychism as a meta-view: the mind-body problem

In this article, I argue that panpsychism is not a stance that offers an alternative to materialism and dualism, but rather a meta-view that provides a framework for different positions in the philosophy of mind. Therefore, I believe that other positions also offer similar resolutions to the mind-body problem.

I will now present how, within the framework of panpsychism as a meta-view, the mind-body problem can be addressed.

Panpsychism as a meta-view. This approach posits that the complex mental life of human beings and other living organisms can be explained in terms of a fundamental level where the components of reality contain mental items.

Advantage: Phenomenal mental consciousness is assumed actually to exist; at the same time, an explanation is provided for the causal relations between mental and physical items.

Disadvantage: How can distributed mental items at a fundamental level of reality produce the complex mental life of human beings and other living organisms at a higher level of reality?

Therefore, guided by D, which frames panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind, we should provide the aforementioned response to the mind-body problem. Nevertheless, in addressing both problems (a) and (b), guided by D and MS, an issue arises, which I describe as a disadvantage—the combination problem (Seager 1995, 283).¹⁶ Consequently, various positions in the philosophy of mind encounter the same problem. In the next section, I will outline this issue.

¹⁶ Historically, James (1890) first articulated this issue in *The Principles of Psychology*. However, Seager (1995) referred to it as “the combination problem.”

3.2. *The combination problem*

The combination problem is a challenge highlighted in the literature in which panpsychists must answer how mental items, which are simple, singular, and distributed at the fundamental level of reality, can combine to produce the complex mental lives of human beings and other living organisms at a higher level of reality (see Goff et al., 2022). For instance, Searle (2005), a prominent figure in the philosophy of mind known for his influential stance on biological naturalism, conveyed his apprehensions about panpsychism and the combination problem as follows:

Aside from its inherent implausibility, pan-psychism has the additional demerit of being incoherent. I do not see any way that it can cope with the problem of the unity of consciousness. Consciousness is not spread out like jam on a piece of bread, but rather, it comes in discrete units. If the thermostat is conscious, how about the parts of the thermostat? Is there a separate consciousness to each screw? Each molecule? If so, how does their consciousness relate to the consciousness of the whole thermostat? (Searle 2005, 150).

It is worth noting that the growing interest in panpsychism has sparked discussions about the combination problem and its potential solutions (e.g., Coleman 2006, 2012, 2014, 2017; Goff 2009a, 2009b, 2017c; Roelofs 2019, 2020; Rosenberg 2004; Seager 2010, 2017). Nevertheless, in the article I will refer to Chalmers' paper "The Combination Problem for Panpsychism," where he presents a framework for contemporary debates regarding the combination problem. He distinguishes three forms of this problem in discussions about the mind (Chalmers 2017a, 182–185):¹⁷

- (i) The subject combination problem.
- (ii) The quality combination problem.
- (iii) The structure combination problem.

¹⁷ Other distinctions of the problem of combination found in the literature include Coleman's "internal" and "bridging" categories (Coleman 2017), Goff's "from above" and "from below" distinctions (Goff 2017c), and Roelofs' "hard" and "easy" problems (Roelofs 2020).

According to Chalmers, a comprehensive understanding of how mental life is produced requires addressing all variations of the combination problem (Chalmers 2017a, 184).

Problem (i) pertains to explaining how scattered micro-subjects combine to form a single macro-subject. This challenge can be illustrated using the metaphor of Lego bricks. The appropriate assembly of Lego bricks, each representing simple elements, results in a cohesive structure, such as a Lego brick-built building. Roelofs (2020) has contended that the “subject” problem of combination is the “hard” problem in panpsychism, while other variations represent “easy” problems that may be resolved through “phenomenological analyses,” focusing the subject’s attention on its own internal experiences (Roelofs 2020, 246).

Coleman (2014) explains the difficulties associated with (i) by indicating that subjects cannot combine because individual perspectives exclude one another. Specifically, it would lead to contradictions if one subject believes A while another believes not-A, and when they combine into a new subject, they would have to believe both A and not-A or the subjectivity of one of them would not contribute to the new subject. This presents a dilemma that needs to be resolved within (i).

On the other hand, Coleman (2012) also points out that the combination problem results from an assumption regarding the existence of subjects of experience and the conception of unity in terms of aggregates and constituent parts. He employs the “model metaphor” of the palette to describe this problem: just as colors are mixed on a painter’s palette, a complex phenomenology of experience is formed from individual impressions (Coleman 2012, 157). He addresses the problem of combination in form (ii), where it is necessary to explain how a complex palette of phenomenal experiences (macro-qualities) arises from simple qualities (micro-qualities).

Issue (iii) pertains to Russell’s (1927) stance on the philosophy of mind as presented in its source form, neutral monism.¹⁸ If physical and phenomenal properties are deemed to represent the same reality, which we comprehend precisely through these properties, then it is presupposed that their structures are isomorphic. Yet, the macro-phenomenal structure is richer

¹⁸ It is worth noting that this argument against Russell’s monism was articulated by Stoljar (2001) in his article “Two Conceptions of the Physical.”

and more phenomenologically complex than the micro-structure. Given this, macro- and micro-structures should be viewed as incommensurable. Such a perspective leans more toward a version of dualism, since, from this standpoint, we could argue that we are discussing two distinct structures that are not reducible to one another.

Thus, in addressing the combination problem, one must provide a complex response, such as detailing how (i) micro-subjects constitute macro-subjects. They must also elucidate (ii) how individual experiences combine to give rise to the complex phenomenology of the human organism and other animals. Additionally, they are required to address (iii), how a rich macro-phenomenal structure arises from a micro-phenomenal structure.

Therefore, solving both problems (a) and (b), and consequently Dil., within panpsychism as a meta-view, is not straightforward. In the next part of the article, I will describe how the combination problem stems from what I term a bottom-up explanation, which is accepted within different positions in the philosophy of mind. I argue that these positions are in alignment with the panpsychist perspective outlined in section 3. Thus, I will show how these positions fit within the framework provided by panpsychism as a meta-view. I will also indicate that, based on these stances, one must confront the combination problem.

4. Bottom-up explanation and panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind

The combination problem arises from adopting what I have referred to as a bottom-up explanation. To express the intuitions behind acceptance of the meta-metaphysical statement presented in MS—namely, to explain the production of complex mental life in human beings and other living organisms—one must accept that the fundamental level of reality also contains mental items. In the literature, four models of bottom-up explanation can be identified in the philosophy of mind. Each model is based on a different ontology. These models attempt to explain how complex mental life is produced at a higher level from some mental items at the fundamental level of reality:

- (M₁) In addition to the existence of fundamental physical properties, fundamental mental properties exist.
- (M₂) Every fundamental constituent of reality has both a mental and a physical aspect.
- (M₃) Every fundamental constituent of reality has both mental and physical properties.
- (M₄) Mental events are fundamental, and there are no other beings at this level of reality.

Therefore, various ontologies, such as properties, aspects, or events, can be adopted to express the MS. Consequently, different bottom-up explanatory models (M₁–M₄) are assumed within various positions in the philosophy of mind.

4.1. Chalmers' naturalistic dualism

In the context of M₁, property dualism can be adopted, for example, which posits two types of property: mental and physical. Chalmers' naturalistic dualism is a contemporary example of property dualism. He delineates this position in his seminal work, *The Conscious Mind* (1996). While he acknowledges the principle of causal closure of the physical world, he argues, based on non-reductive reasoning such as his version of the conceivability argument, that there is not an *a priori* relationship between physical and phenomenal properties. This implies that laws grounded in physical theories fall short in fully explaining the conscious mind. Thus, to formulate a comprehensive theory of consciousness, Chalmers suggests the existence of new fundamental properties and laws separate from the laws of physics. He posits that mental properties should be viewed as fundamental properties similar to physical properties like mass or force.

Chalmers brands his viewpoint naturalistic, aligning it with the principle of causal closure of the physical world. Within this position, he suggests that phenomenal states might hold an epiphenomenal status. Importantly, to address the challenges associated with epiphenomenalism, Chalmers turns to the panpsychist perspective. He references Rosenberg's (1996) proposition, emphasizing that the mere presence of experience might enable causal relationships, and hints that addressing epiphenomenalism could introduce the counterintuitive concept of panpsychism (Chalmers 1996, 152).

However, Chalmers (1996, 297–299) also addresses the issue of panpsychism in his book in the context of his double-aspect principle of information. Within this approach, he examines “information” in relation to Shannon’s concept (1948) as something that possesses both a physical and a phenomenal aspect. This refers to the double-aspect principle, which may be a consequence of the principle of structural coherence he adopts, dealing with the correspondence between subjective phenomenal states and states of consciousness (e.g., attention).¹⁹ In this manner, he analyses the issue of panpsychism as an answer to the hard problem of consciousness:

The view that there is experience whenever there is causal interaction is counterintuitive. But it is a view that can grow surprisingly satisfying with reflection, making consciousness better integrated into the natural order. If the view is correct, consciousness does not come in sudden jagged spikes, with isolated complex systems arbitrarily producing rich conscious experiences. Rather, it is a more uniform property of the universe, with very simple systems having very simple phenomenology, and complex systems having complex phenomenology. This makes consciousness less “special” in some ways, and so more reasonable (Chalmers 1996, 298).

In the above quotation, the so-called continuity argument is discussed, which posits that if lower forms of life possess certain, albeit most elementary, phenomenal experiences, it can be expected that consciousness as such is present, albeit to varying degrees, in all forms of life. This leads to a position suggesting that mental items might be fundamental and ubiquitous.²⁰

Thus, in his philosophy, Chalmers examines M_1 , property dualism (naturalistic dualism), or M_2 , the dual-aspect theory (the double-aspect principle and the principle of structural coherence), within the broader context of panpsychism. Under these circumstances, panpsychism could serve as a meta-view from which Chalmers seems to explore the adoption of the

¹⁹ Chalmers (1995) also discusses these principles in his seminal article “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness.” However, this article does not address the issue of panpsychism.

²⁰ Therefore, some argue that if evolution is to proceed smoothly, consciousness must have been present in some form from the very beginning (e.g., James, 1890).

MS and refers to it as a possible approach to addressing the mind-body problems (a) and (b), thereby offering a potential resolution for the dilemma (Dil.). However, as mentioned, by adhering to these assumptions, we encounter the combination problem.²¹

4.2. Nagel's remarks on the dual-aspect theory

While Chalmers is often credited with popularizing panpsychism in debates on the mind during the 1990s, that it is worth noting the arguments for panpsychism currently discussed in contemporary metaphysics of mind were presented by Nagel in his 1979 essay "Panpsychism".

In this essay, Nagel (1979) argued that panpsychism could be one option for addressing the mind-body problem. It is important to note that the paper has already outlined the combination problem, which he understood as (i) the subject combination problem. He describes the difficulty of conceiving how mental states in complex organisms could arise from the proto-mental properties of dead matter. He points out this problem as follows:

Yet they would have to be recomplable to form different points of view, for not only can a single organism have different experiences, but its matter can be recombined to form other organisms with totally different forms of experience (Nagel 1979, 94).

Hence, it seems that he implicitly postulates the MS within the panpsychism he delineates.

In his influential book *The View from Nowhere* (1986), Nagel discusses panpsychism, emphasizing that it emerges from adopting the double-aspect theory (Nagel 1986, 49).²² However, it seems more accurate to say that Nagel adopts the framework of panpsychism to engage with the dual-aspect theory more profoundly. This theory strives to integrate both subjective

²¹ The article on how property dualism leads to panpsychism was written by Blamauer (2011b). In the article, he references Chalmers but does not discuss his views in the context of the combination problem as it had not been developed at that time.

²² Nagel wrote about panpsychism as a consequence of the dual-aspect theory, which he describes as having the "odor of something put together in the metaphysical laboratory" (Nagel 1986, 49).

and objective issues, encompassing first-person and third-person perspectives, as well as mental and physical aspects. This position presupposes M_2 , and consequently MS . Therefore, such a theory should also address the combination problem.

What is puzzling, however, is that in his works, Nagel sometimes writes about proto-mental properties and at other times about panpsychism (Nagel, 1979, 1986, 2012), as if he does not distinguish between these two positions in his philosophy.²³ Another criticism of Nagel's philosophy of mind is that his approach provides an answer to problem (a) but lacks a properly formulated theory of mental causation (b) in relation to the mind-body problem.

4.3. Strawson's physicalist panpsychism

Regarding M_3 , it is worth noting two important works by Strawson: "Real Materialism" (2008a [2003]) and "Realistic Monism" (2008b). In these papers, he emphasizes the realism of the mental within the physicalism. According to Strawson, to be a realist materialist, one must recognize that experiential being constitutes the intrinsic nature of physical beings. In the literature, this argument is known as the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism. Furthermore, a significant motivation for adopting the panpsychist perspective is its critique of theories based on radical emergence. This argument is called the anti-emergence argument. One would present this argument in relate to the paper "Realistic monism" in the form of a question: how can one explain the experiential from something that is non-experiential?²⁴ Strawson concludes this way: "the existence of every real

²³ Thus, panprotopsychism is a position that states that at the foundational level, proto-mental properties exist, but these properties are potential, and only through their specific organization does a conscious mind emerge at higher levels. It is also worth noting that panprotopsychism can be endorsed by both neutral monists (Chalmers 1996, 2003) and proponents of physicalism (Strawson 2008b).

²⁴ However, it is important to emphasize that in the context of M_3 , Strawson (2008a [2003]) suggests replacing "mental" and "physical" with "experiential" and "non-experiential." According to him, this division between mental and physical leads to a debate between materialism and dualism.

concrete thing involves experiential being even if it also involves non-experiential being” (Strawson, 2008b, 57).

In “Real Materialism,” Strawson refers to Russell’s (1927) view as it is presented in the book *Analysis of Matter*, where Russell emphasizes the use of mathematical apparatus in physics. According to Russell, this leads to the conclusion that physics does not provide a complete description of reality. When referring to physical theories, we are merely describing the mathematical dimensions of physical being and focusing solely on the structure of physical reality. Consequently, within physical theories, we do not attribute any characteristics to the intrinsic nature of physical being. However, when we assume that certain physical states are identical to mental states, we gain direct familiarity with their intrinsic nature through our own experiences.

Thus, our understanding of the physical may appear entirely different from what it truly is. Therefore, Strawson’s redefinition of the term ‘materialism’ in his work “Realistic materialist” has the potential to lead to the consideration of panpsychism or panexperientialism²⁵ as plausible options in discussions about the mind (Strawson, 2008b, 71).

Hence, it can be inferred that Strawson’s perspectives are in line with the M_3 model. The fact that a given component of reality is made up of experiential and non-experiential properties can be put in terms of the division into intrinsic and extrinsic properties, or non-structural and structural properties. The experiential would be an intrinsic or non-structural property, whereas the non-experiential would be an extrinsic or structural property.

It can therefore be concluded that, on the basis of his philosophy, Strawson adopts the meta-metaphysical statement MS while trying to resolve Dil. It can be posited that experiential properties (a), which may be considered as intrinsic or non-structural properties, would play a causal role (b). One can argue, within Strawson’s position, that intrinsic properties enter into causal relationships with extrinsic properties. Rejecting the possibility of a

²⁵ The stance of panexperientialism states that everything that exists experiences or has the ability to experience (Skrbina 2017, 16). It is worth noting that Chalmers and Strawson treat panexperientialism as synonymous with panpsychism (Chalmers 2017b, 19; Strawson, 2015, 201). Panexperientialism was also adopted and defended by Griffin (1997, 1998). See section 4.4.

causal role for experiential properties would be tantamount to denying their irreducible and fundamental nature.

However, when confronted with the combination problem, Strawson regards it as a trivial problem that does not present any significant challenges (Strawson, 2017b, 100). What is more, he even admits that he does not know what a potential solution to this problem would look like.

Nevertheless, I have outlined the development of Strawson's position, which he recently termed "physicalist panpsychism" (2017a, 2020). It seems that panpsychism as a meta-view provides a framework within which what I refer to as non-standard physicalism—termed "physicalist panpsychism" by Strawson—integrates experiential and non-experiential properties.

4.4. *Sprigge's idealist panpsychism*

In this context (M₄), I will discuss the idealism of Sprigge, which can be understood as an attempt to integrate panpsychism with absolute idealism (McHenry 2010). Sprigge argued for a version of absolute idealism based on the panpsychist perspective, according to which reality consists of bits of experience combined into a coherent whole. He explored the framework of panpsychism as suitable for tackling the mind-body problem and delineating the nature of noumena in his book *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (1983).

When explaining Sprigge's views, it is worthwhile incorporating the differentiation between appearance and reality, which was introduced by the prominent British idealist Bradley (1893 [1969]). This differentiation elucidates that the physical world, described structurally, is only the world of appearance, while the true reality exists behind it—that is, experience (see McHenry 2010).

According to Sprigge, experience is directly known by us. Strawson puts forth a similar argument regarding the intrinsic nature of physical beings, as previously mentioned.²⁶ Additionally, it should be highlighted that Sprigge's philosophical beliefs align closely with process philosophy.²⁷

²⁶ It is noteworthy that Strawson cites Sprigge as a proponent of physical pure panpsychism (Strawson 2020, 319).

²⁷ It should be noted that Strawson's philosophy of mind also leans toward a process philosophy (Strawson 2017b).

In his philosophy, Sprigge also delves into the ontology of events, which is typical among representatives of process philosophy. At a fundamental level, events might constitute an experience and form a larger whole. Whitehead²⁸ is widely regarded as the foremost representative of process philosophy and as a leading panpsychist in twentieth-century philosophy,²⁹ but his pupil, Hartshorne (1950), brought this position into the mainstream (Skrbina 2017, 228),³⁰ representing the perspective of “psychicalism” (Hartshorne, 1977).³¹ However, Griffin (1997, 1998), in reference to the philosophers mentioned above, posited that experience exists at the fundamental level of reality; he believed that the most suitable term for this is “panexperientialism”.³²

Within Sprigge’s idealism, it is worth noting that the metaphysical system aimed at synthesizing panpsychism and absolute idealism falls under category M₄. One might argue that this system is based on a meta-metaphysical statement MS. Furthermore, one can expect that based on idealistic panpsychism, we will address Dil. And, consequently, address (a) and (b). However, it also grapples with the combination problem, which may

²⁸ It is pertinent to highlight that Whitehead authored *Science and the Modern World* (1925), wherein he advocated a metaphysical perspective distinct from the tenets of reductive materialism and dualism.

²⁹ It is worth noting that Whitehead himself did not use the term “panpsychism” in his philosophy. Cobb (2008) writes about this, introducing the term “panpsychism” in the entry “occasion of experience.”

³⁰ It is worth mentioning that he wrote an encyclopedia article regarding “panpsychism” in the published work *Philosophical Systems* (Hartshorne 1950, 442–453).

³¹ Also, in 1977, Hartshorne presented an argument for panpsychism in a significant article titled “Physics and Psychics: The Place of Mind in Nature.” In this work, the terms “psychical monism” and “psychicalism” were proposed by Hartshorne to describe “panpsychism.” Of the two proposals, it is “psychicalism” that has become widely accepted in philosophical jargon. Hartshorne intended “psychicalism” to be the opposite of the reductive physicalism that was popular at that time. In discussions about consciousness, he presented a third perspective, one that lies between reductive materialism and dualism.

³² Griffin preferred the term “panexperientialism” over traditional terms such as “panpsychism” or “psychicalism.” He justified this terminological proposal by saying that the term “psyche” suggests a higher form of experience (Griffin 1998, 78). Griffin defended a position he referred to as “panexperiential physicalism.”

surface in Sprigge's philosophy, too, when he states that the whole consists of bits of experience. According to Sprigge, the whole of experience is constructed from these "bits of experience"—hence idealist panpsychism.

5. Panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind: three crucial points

I have discussed the above stances within the framework provided by panpsychism as a meta-view. Consequently, it can be assumed that these positions propose a similar solution to the mind-body problem—namely, that at the fundamental level of reality, mental items exist. That these mental items are irreducible and exist at a fundamental level allows some proponents of panpsychism to argue that they can be causally effective. Within this framework, one can attempt to address issues (a) and (b) while simultaneously resolving the dilemma (Dil.). In reference to the frameworks of panpsychism as a meta-view, one can evaluate whether these positions provide an adequate response to the mind-body problem. Therefore, the proposal to solve the mind-body problem is itself neutral with respect to these positions.

Perhaps instead of elaborating these positions further and seeking answers in relation to naturalistic dualism, dual-aspect theory, non-standard physicalism, and idealism, it would be better to address the crucial problem for such a proposed solution to the mind-body problem: the combination problem.

It is important to comprehend how mental items, which are simple, singular, and distributed at the fundamental level of reality, can combine to produce the complex mental lives of human beings and other living organisms at a higher level of reality. The key to solving the mind-body problem lies in the combination problem. It can be proposed that the positions guided by the assumptions of panpsychism are merely labels that name the same approach to the mind-body problem but have the same metaphysical problem: the combination problem.

In this section, I will present three crucial points that follow from adopting panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind.

(1) The solution to the mind-body problem is neutral. One can be a naturalistic dualist (property dualism), a proponent of the dual-aspect theory, a follower of non-standard physicalism, or an idealist and adopt a similar solution to the mind-body problem as outlined in section 3.1. Nevertheless, such a solution leads to the combination problem described in section 3.2., which also appears to be a problem shared by various positions in the philosophy of mind. This may indicate that these metaphysical positions are merely labels suggesting the same solution to the mind-body problem. Therefore, the solution is neutral concerning the different and seemingly contradictory positions.

(2) The combination problem is the most significant. Therefore, instead of focusing on solving the mind-body problem within a particular metaphysical system, we should rather focus on solving the combination problem. It is the most important metaphysical problem within panpsychism as a meta-view. Its resolution is crucial in solving the mind-body problem.

It is also important to highlight another crucial point of panpsychism as a meta-view: that the physical theories offer only a limited description of reality.³³ The adoption of M₁–M₄ in the previously discussed positions stems from this point. Without this point, Chalmers would not have formulated naturalistic dualism, Nagel would not have analyzed dual-aspect theory, Strawson would not have developed panpsychist physicalism, Sprigge would not have articulated idealistic panpsychism and would not have sought to define the true nature of reality.

Therefore, the proposed solution to the mind-body problem in section 3 must assume that mental items exist at the fundamental level of reality.

³³ Another issue to explore is that the arguments for adopting panpsychism that are commonly discussed in the literature are independent of the specific positions within the panpsychist framework. In other words, the arguments mentioned in this paper, such as the continuity argument (e.g., Chalmers, James), the anti-emergence argument (e.g., Strawson), or the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism (e.g., Sprigge, Strawson) can be developed independently of the ontological and metaphysical position adopted within panpsychism. A valuable contribution to the literature on the types of argument for panpsychism is provided by Jarocki (2023).

(3) Physical theories offer a limited description of reality.³⁴

Thus, to resolve the mind-body problem, one must adopt the framework proposed by panpsychism as a meta-view, which assumes that mental items exist at the fundamental level of reality.

Consequently, it can be inferred that the described combination problem (2) also stems from point (3). If we believed that physics provides a comprehensive description of reality at the fundamental level, it would be unnecessary to discuss the combination problem, which arises from a bottom-up explanation.

5.1. Some critical remarks

One might ask whether I am treating panpsychism too broadly in this article. As mentioned in the introduction, panpsychism is typically understood as a metaphysical position in which mentality is considered fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. However, if this description is taken literally, it might imply that everything in existence, from atoms to the Taj Mahal, possesses a mind, consciousness, or experiences. However, contemporary panpsychists engaged in debates about the mind do not endorse such a view. Panpsychism understood in this way becomes caricatured.

Thus, in my proposal definition (D), I suggest separating the fundamental level, consisting of mental items, from which their appropriate composition allows for the production of conscious minds in human beings and other living organisms at a higher level. In this paper, I propose understanding panpsychism as a meta-view, emphasizing a bottom-up explanation and the MS. So, I believe we are faced with an alternative: either we consider panpsychism as a meta-view encompassing various positions, or we adopt a radical version of panpsychism in which everything that exists, from the Taj Mahal to atoms, possesses mental life.

On the other hand, in such a broadly understood panpsychism, the distinction between various positions in the metaphysics of mind may become

³⁴ The limitations of physics in explaining phenomenal consciousness are excellently described by Goff (2019). Historically, this issue was previously highlighted by Edgington (1928) and as mentioned in section 4.3 by Russell (1927).

blurred. As noted in section 5, these are perhaps not distinct metaphysical positions but merely labels suggesting the same solution to the mind-body problem (1). How I argue this problem can be addressed in a similar manner regardless of the adopted ontology and metaphysical positions, including naturalistic dualism, double aspect theory, physicalist panpsychism, or idealism. Therefore, instead of elaborating on various metaphysical systems, we should focus, as I suggest, on finding a comprehensive solution to the combination problem (2) (i)–(iii).

It is also pertinent to question whether panpsychism, as a meta-view, aligns with contemporary science. I have noted that within this meta-view, it is (3) proclaimed that physics has its limitations in describing reality. I will reference Hempel's dilemma,³⁵ within which we may ask, "Which physics?" (Hempel 1969). Are we addressing physical theories in their contemporary form or in a future form? Assuming the contemporary form, this stance is erroneous because contemporary physical theories might be proven false in several decades or centuries. On the other hand, in a future form, physical theories will be fundamentally different from today's and may encompass phenomena not assumed or explained by current physical theories. Consequently, it can be argued that panpsychism, as a meta-view, may not only provide a framework for understanding and potentially resolving the mind-body problem but also prove to be a framework for future science.

6. Conclusion

In the article, I offer an understanding of panpsychism as a meta-view in the philosophy of mind rather than as a position competing with others in the field. Using examples from the literature, I have discussed the positions of Chalmers' naturalistic dualism, Strawson's panpsychist physicalism, Sprigge's idealist panpsychism, and Nagel's remarks on the dual-aspect theory. Consequently, I suggest that these positions can all be accommodated within the panpsychism meta-view, as panpsychism does not inherently contradict any of them. Thus, these positions may be explored within

³⁵ Accordance to the Hempel's dilemma, the thesis of physicalism is either false or empty.

the framework of panpsychism as a meta-view in addressing the mind-body problem. Therefore, I have indicated that the positions discussed in section 4 should represent different labels for a similar solution to the mind-body problem. Hence, rather than elaborating on distinct metaphysical positions, it may be more beneficial to focus on a comprehensive solution to the combination problem (2) (i)–(iii), as this is the problem that impedes adequate resolution of the mind-body problem. I have also pointed out that within the framework of panpsychism as a meta-view, it should be maintained that physics has its limitations and does not adequately describe reality.

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