

# Panpsychism

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*Contemporary Perspectives*

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OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# Idealism and Panpsychism

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## 16.1 Varieties of Panpsychism

Consciousness is usually considered to be something so new, so different from what it came from, that its emergence appears to be stunning if not miraculous. Philosophers are rather uncomfortable with *miracles*—and *wonder* is felt to be more of a burden than a joy. Thus, the proposition ‘first there was nothing *psychical* in the world, then there was consciousness’ has seemed to many philosophers an assertion that is hard to swallow. Panpsychism comes to the rescue. For panpsychism is the doctrine that *the psychical is ubiquitous in the world*, whether the world is considered synchronically or diachronically, macroscopically or microscopically. According to panpsychism, *there is a psychical aspect to everything*, whether past, present, or future; whether at the micro- or the macrolevel of existence. The great general advantage of this doctrine, if believed, is that it *mitigates*, right away, the discomfiting philosophical wonder one feels at the emergence of ‘concentrated’ consciousness. And perhaps—one is inclined to hope—if developed and integrated with other theories, it would even be able to dispel that wonder entirely. This is the *promise* of panpsychism. The great general *disadvantage* of panpsychism is that, unfortunately, it appears to be far less credible than what it is supposed to help make more rationally comprehensible (if not acceptable): the coming into being of ‘concentrated’ consciousness.

Panpsychism is incompatible with physicalism. This does not mean, however, that it is a form of dualism. There are both dualistic and idealistic forms of panpsychism, just as there are both holistic and atomistic forms of it. Spinoza’s metaphysics (as presented in the *Ethics*) offers an example of *holistic dualistic panpsychism*: the psychical dimension (or ‘attribute’) of God, or Nature, matches God’s physical dimension in all of its parts, is parallel to it throughout.<sup>1</sup> Hume’s metaphysics (as presented in the *Treatise*) offers an example of

*atomistic idealistic panpsychism*: the impressions and ideas that make up everything (from material objects to selves) are purely psychical elements. In contrast to these historical examples, modern panpsychists opt for *atomistic dualistic panpsychism* (though they usually do not use the evil terms 'dualistic' or 'dualism,' and even try to dress it as a form of *monism*). This view says that there is a psychical (or 'proto-psychical') aspect to every elementary particle, and that macroscopic psychical phenomena—such as 'concentrated' consciousness—are attached to (i.e., are a determined function of) those huge, organized aggregations of elementary particles which are the bodies of living animals.<sup>2</sup>

There is a form of panpsychism which is seldom (if ever) explored: *holistic idealistic panpsychism*. In my view, holistic idealistic panpsychism is the best option for a philosopher determined to be a panpsychist. This is so because it is able to avoid defects that the three other forms of panpsychism cannot get rid of.

## 16.2 The Defect of Dualistic Forms of Panpsychism

The defect of dualistic forms of panpsychism is simply this: they do not really solve—or even help to solve—the problem, which they are intended to solve. They do not make dualism more palatable, let alone just as pleasing to the metaphysical mind as monism. Concerning the *holistic* option for dualistic panpsychism: if the dimension of the physical is in its entirety paralleled by the dimension of the psychical (as in Spinoza's philosophy), then this merely makes a riddle universal—pan-enigmatic, so to speak—which beforehand was only local: How is it, *how can it be* that the psychical matches the physical? And concerning the *atomistic* option for dualistic panpsychism: from a rational point of view, it is rather curious that one finds the presence of a psychical aspect in an elementary particle less surprising than the presence of that aspect in a living animal body with a fully developed nervous system.<sup>3</sup> The best option for dualists is, therefore, *not* to become panpsychists, and to remain *emergentists*. Presupposing that dualism is presented as a naturalistic option (which it needn't be, but *can* be), psycho-physical emergentism involves the belief in psycho-physical, or physico-psychical, laws of nature which, if the right circumstances come about, will produce the psychical phenomena (and mainly, of course, consciousness) *automatically*, 'inexorably'—*not* from nothing, but out of *the potentiality of matter* (a reservoir which holds, as we know, countless utterly surprising things).

It is perhaps not amiss to remark, in this context, that *the potentiality of matter* is not an unseen *tiny actuality in microscopic—subatomic—matter*. For example, it is within the potentiality of matter that iron rusts and gives off heat. But neither the iron atoms nor the elementary particles from which they are built rust or give off heat. There simply is no tiny, microscopic actuality from which the big, macroscopic actuality is constituted by appropriate aggregation (in fact, in this case, there *cannot* be such a microscopic actuality). Nevertheless, iron rusts and gives off heat—because it *can* do so (that is, it is within the potentiality of matter) and because the laws of nature *require* it to do so if the right circumstances come about. By the same token, organic tissue brings forth consciousness—because it *can* do so (it is within the potentiality of matter) and because the laws of nature *require* it to do so if the right circumstances (including inner, organizational circumstances) come about. The fact that I am conscious entitles me no more to believe that the atoms of my body or of my nervous system have a tiny bit of consciousness (or ‘proto-consciousness’) attached to them than the fact that this piece of iron gives off heat entitles me to believe that its atoms have a tiny bit of heat attached to them.

It is evident that the *general* assumption is quite unwarranted, indeed false, that, for *any* predicate F, the being-F of macroscopic actualities that are F is best explained by the organized aggregation of microscopic actualities that are F. Some particular instances of the assumption (regarding *some specific* predicate F or other) are not obviously false but still unwarranted—and positively bizarre if it turns out that those who adopt those instances (into their belief-system) do not even know whether there are microscopic actualities with the (relevant) predicate F and what being F would even mean for microscopic actualities. An *instance* of the above general assumption is, in fact, adopted by atomistic dualistic panpsychists (the mainstream panpsychists): just substitute ‘conscious’—or, alternatively, ‘with a psychical aspect’—for ‘F’. Atomistic dualistic panpsychists freely admit that they do not even know whether there are microscopic actualities with a psychical aspect; that they do not even know what *being with a psychical aspect* (let alone, *being conscious*) would mean for microscopic actualities. However, they are not at all bothered by these, as one would think, *embarrassing* admissions. Their nonchalance may seem surprising, but in fact it is not. For that there are and indeed must be microscopic actualities with consciousness or a psychical aspect is, in the end, a ‘fact’ that atomistic dualistic panpsychists *infer*—via an *inference to the best explanation*. They base this inference on the very assumption (which they take to be an *a priori truth*) that the fact that macroscopic actualities have *consciousness* or a *psychical aspect* is best explained by the organized aggregation of microscopic actualities with consciousness or a psychical aspect.

### 16.3 Idealism—the Other Monism

For those who are uncomfortable with straight dualism, there is a better form of panpsychism than dualistic panpsychism: one can be a panpsychist and abandon dualism altogether. This other view is *panpsychistic idealism*<sup>4</sup>—which designation is, in fact, a tautology, just like ‘unmarried bachelor’ or ‘female mare.’ For how could *idealism*—it is *ontological* idealism we are talking about—*not* be panpsychistic?<sup>5</sup> It is true that idealism is unfashionable these days (a few hundred years ago it ruled the roost, just like physicalism does today); but that should not detain a panpsychist from adopting it—provided, of course, that the arguments against idealism prove insufficient.

In fact, it seems that there are more prejudices against idealism than arguments (thus idealism suffers the same fate as dualism). Here are some of those prejudices: (1) Idealism denies the existence of the physical. (2) Idealism proposes that reality depends in all its aspects on the human will. (3) Idealism entails solipsism. (4) Idealism contradicts the testimony of our senses (are there not things I can bump into?). (5) Idealism is incompatible with science and, to boot, religion. None of these prejudices withstands scrutiny. A mature form of idealism—which can be found, for example, in the works of Edmund Husserl—is compatible with science and religion, does not contradict the testimony of our senses, does not entail solipsism, does not propose that reality depends in all its aspects on the human will, and does not deny the existence of the physical.

The basic onto-epistemological fact that underlies idealism is the fact that

- (I) *the world for us* is in its entirety an object of our consciousness.

Something that does not enter in any way into our consciousness remains *nothing* for us. Adapting one of Wittgenstein’s apothegms, one might also say, the limits of our consciousness mean the limits of our world.<sup>6</sup> This is fairly trivial. An entirely nontrivial ontological thesis of idealism results if one drops in the phrase ‘the world for us’ the words ‘for us,’ obtaining from (I):

- (II) *The world* is in its entirety an object of our consciousness.

This transition from the fairly trivial onto-epistemological thesis to the entirely nontrivial *ontological* thesis is, of course, not a logical inference (since it is not a logical truth that *the world* is identical to *the world for us*); and yet it is not a fallacy, either. It is not a fallacy because one can very well argue that whatever difference there may be between the world and the world for

us, that *difference* is just *nothing* to us. Hence the difference should not be assumed to exist and might as well be assumed *not* to exist—in application of Ockham's Razor in a generalized form (in which that principle also demands that explanations and differentiations should not be multiplied unnecessarily). A skeptic may well point out that *termites*, if they had the intelligence, could argue on this very basis that *the world* is identical to *the world for termites*—and would be utterly wrong (though they would never notice it). But this is a mere dramatization of the previous observation that it is *not* a logical truth that the world is identical to the world *for us*. Although there is no logical or rational compulsion to assume the identity in question, it might, for all we know, be *true*.

Nevertheless, the credibility of idealism can be greatly increased if one makes the transition from *us* to *all conscious beings*. Then the basic onto-epistemological fact is this: *the world for the conscious beings* is in its entirety an object of the consciousness of the conscious beings. And the ontological thesis of ontological idealism most likely to be true results if one replaces 'the world for the conscious beings' by 'the world': *the world* is in its entirety an object of the consciousness of the conscious beings. This ontological thesis does not follow logically from the onto-epistemological thesis, but the transition can be justified on the basis of the *justifiable*—but certainly not logically required—identification of *the world* with *the world for the conscious beings*. But note: while this latter identification avoids the implausibility of idealism that results if it is wedded to a particular conscious perspective (producing the *solipsism* of the *I*-perspective,<sup>7</sup> or the *anthropocentrism* of the *we*-perspective<sup>8</sup>), it brings to the fore another problem. This problem is already present, though not obvious, when we speak of *our consciousness*; it is, however, rather apparent when we speak of *the consciousness of the conscious beings*. Is there such a thing as *the consciousness of the conscious beings*?<sup>9</sup> If idealism is to have chance, this expression, taken in some appropriate sense, must have a referent, since the world is certainly not in its entirety an object of the consciousness of *each* conscious being, or of the consciousness of *each* of us, or of *my* consciousness. It remains to be seen (see section 7) whether the problem of whether there is a *united* consciousness transcending the perspectives of particular subjects of consciousness, a consciousness that is *all-encompassing* in some appropriate sense, has a satisfactory positive solution.

It is already clear at this point that not every form of idealism is as plausible as every other. David Hume's idealism—an instance of atomistic idealistic panpsychism—is certainly an idealism of the less plausible sort. The objections against it are, at the same time, objections against the form of panpsychism it instantiates.

## 16.4 Why Atomistic Idealistic Panpsychism Is Unsatisfactory

Hume's peculiar idealism had a long aftermath, which is known as *phenomenalism*, a philosophical movement still very much alive even in the first decades of the twentieth century. There were several attempts to build a world from more or less atomistically conceived psychical elements, 'sense-data' as they came to be called. These attempts failed. Hume, in effect, *knew* that they would fail, although he himself does not speak of failure. What one cannot reconstruct on the basis of one's favored ontology (not even after serious effort) is usually considered an illusion (rather than an indicator of a defect in one's favored ontology). For Hume, then, both external objects and inner selves are ultimately *illusions*, inconsistencies with a semblance of existence. In Hume's view, Nature forces us, when we do not do philosophy, to accept what is, allegedly, rationally impossible: that external objects and inner selves exist *and* are persistent individuals *and* are (numerically) identically present *in their entirety* at every moment of their existence.<sup>10</sup> The truth is that neither external objects nor inner selves can be satisfactorily reconstructed on the basis of a sense-data ontology. It is in accounting for these items that phenomenalism *fails* (though phenomenologists like Hume will not speak of *failures that have to be admitted*, but of *illusions that have been, finally, revealed*).

Thus, *atomistic* idealistic panpsychism has an insoluble composition problem. The aggregation and organization of sense-data, however complex, is not going to yield our familiar experiences of external objects or of ourselves, since it is already incapable of yielding what these experiences are *of*: external objects and ourselves.<sup>11</sup> The only way out is to *eliminate* (more properly speaking: to *deny the existence of*) these objects, with the accompanying *wholesale 'illusionizing'* of the experiences that seem to be directed at them. These are truly desperate measures. The better choice is to give up *atomistic* idealistic panpsychism.

## 16.5 Husserlian Idealism

Suppose the *basic* totality of actual being—the *world* in one sense of the word—consists of certain psychical events, of (*conscious*) *experiences* broadly speaking: perceptions, feelings, imaginings, remembrances, thoughts, volitions, and so on. All experiences belong to the basic totality of actual being, and *only* experiences belong to it.

This does not mean that everything is an experience.<sup>12</sup> Experiences usually have a bipolar structure: one of the two poles is the subject pole, the other is the object pole. At the subject pole is an experiencing subject, at the object pole is the object which is—or the entirety of the objects which are—being experienced *in* the experience.<sup>13</sup> There may be experiences that lack an object pole and therefore an object. There is certainly no experience that lacks a subject pole; for all experiences have a subject, in fact (or so it seems), *precisely one* subject. If an experience has *an* object—let me define *the* object of an experience (for *all* cases where an experience has an object) as the entirety of the objects that are being experienced *in* it<sup>14</sup>—then all that that object *is in the experience* is found within the experience, is intrinsic to it. And yet the experience's object is not a part of the experience; for another experience (occurring perhaps much earlier or later) may have—and often *in fact* has—the very same object. Nor is the subject of an experience a part of it; for very different and temporally separated experiences may have—and often do have—the very same subject (literally *the same*: what is asserted is *not* that the subjects of the experiences are 'really' different, but temporal counterparts of each other, so that one can say *in a sense* that they are 'the same').<sup>15</sup> Both the object and the subject of an experience are intrinsically determined by the experience (in other words, they intrinsically supervene on it). They are *inseparable* from it in the sense that the experience *cannot* ('cannot' taken in the strictest sense) exist without them as *that* experience. But, to repeat, they are not parts of it.

Every actual entity is an experience, or a *subject of experience* (that is, a subject of some experience), or an *object of experience* (that is, an object of some experience).<sup>16</sup> At this point, and in the light of the previous two paragraphs, it should be clear that the metaphysical view presented in this section is (a) a form of ontological idealism (and hence of panpsychism, since every ontological idealism is *ipso facto* a form of panpsychism), and (b) that it promises to avoid the central shortcoming of Humeian idealism and phenomenalism. There seems to be room for external objects and inner selves in this *other* idealistic view—the inspiration of which is Husserlian phenomenology ('Phenomenology,' in short), as should be apparent to everyone who has come across that area of philosophy.<sup>17</sup> This other view can be characterized as a form of idealism (therefore, of panpsychism), which pays due respect to *experiential subjectivity* and *experiential intentionality* (usually called 'phenomenal intentionality'), the intentionality of (and *in*) experience.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the fragmentation of experience into tiny bits, into sense-data, which we find in *atomistic* forms of idealism, leads to the irretrievable loss of the subject-centeredness and object-directedness of experience. And therewith—presupposing idealism—it leads to the irretrievable loss of inner

selves and external objects. This is so because the atomistic fragmentation of experience annihilates the polar, usually bipolar, structure of experience(s), which is a universal trait of all experience(s). (No wonder Hume was blind to intentionality.)

But so far there is only *the promise* that the Humeian nihilism about inner selves and external objects can be avoided in an idealistic ontological setting that is different from Hume's.<sup>19</sup> On the way to showing that the view I have begun to describe does not just promise but also delivers, a crucial distinction must be made between what the object of an experience *is in the experience*, and what an object of an experience *is* (simpliciter). The distinction is familiar: it is the distinction between *appearance* and *reality* (more precisely, between the appearance of a thing, and the reality of it). In an idealistic setting, this distinction cannot be made in terms of mental representation and misrepresentation, for, in idealism, *all* of objective reality is 'in here,' rather than 'out there' to be represented or misrepresented 'in here.' The distinction must instead be made in terms of coherence and incoherence, harmony and disharmony, in ever widening experiential contexts, ever lengthening stretches of experience.

Thus, what an object of experience *is* is identical to what it *is in the totality of all experiences*, and is not necessarily (in fact, is usually not) identical to what it is in *this* particular experience (of which it is an object), or in *this* other particular experience. Let X be an object of experience. In the same way that the local context of an experience of which X is an object intrinsically determines what X is in that experience, so the global context of the totality of all experiences intrinsically determines what X is in that totality, that is, what X *is* (simpliciter). What X is locally (in an experience) may differ considerably from what X is globally (in the totality of all experiences). This is the Husserlian idealistic rendering of the distinction between *appearance* and *reality*. And if we ask ourselves how we *actually* make this distinction (we all make it), then it turns out that we do not do so in the way that the official representationalist epistemology of realism would seem to require. We *do not* do so by comparing a mental representation of X, and of how X is, with X *itself*, and with how X *really is*. (In fact, if mental representation were the basic cognitive relation we have to X, then X itself and how it really is would have to be inaccessible to us; we could then access only the mental representation of X, and *how X is* only as X is mentally represented to be, not as it really is in itself.) Rather, we put the appearances of X in the wider, and ever widening, context of our further experiences, which procedure is in perfect harmony with the epistemology of Husserlian idealism.<sup>20</sup> An object of experience that remains *stable* in this wider context emerges, by and by, as an objective reality with such-and-such objective properties.<sup>21</sup>

## 16.6 A Difficulty for Husserlian Idealism

There is a difficulty with the Husserlian idealistic way of distinguishing between appearance and (objective) reality: Different experiences may have—and often have in fact—the same subject of experience, but it certainly does not appear to be the case that *all* experiences have the same subject of experience. After all, there are *my* experiences and there are *your* experiences. I am not the subject of your experiences (or so it seems to me), and you are not the subject of my experiences (or so it seems to you). But if not all experiences have the same subject of experience, then the totality of all experiences is not itself an experience—but only a collection of experiences. This seems not only to contradict the Husserlian idealistic tenet (see the previous section) that every actual entity is an experience, or a subject of experience, or an object of experience,<sup>22</sup> it *also* makes it difficult to conceive of contextualization—described in the previous section—as the ‘maker of objective reality.’ For a plurality of subjects of experience seems to render contextualization unfeasible. As long as experiences have the same subject, the contextualization of experiences has to straddle merely temporal separation. Over time, the experiences of one and the same subject come together in a fairly comprehensive totality which is itself an experience: the subject’s stream of consciousness, which will contain many ultimate determinations—that is, determinations that are ultimate *for the subject*—of what an object is as opposed to what it *seems to be* (or, in other words, *is in a particular, local experience* of the subject). But the contextualization of experiences—which aims at the determination of objective reality (or, put differently, objective truth) in the form of stable content—cannot stop here. It must become *intersubjective*, must go from one subject’s stream of consciousness to another’s. And precisely this seems impossible. Each subject’s stream of consciousness appears to be a closed world in itself (one feels reminded of Leibniz’s ‘windowless monads’). It is true that other subjects of experience and their experiences figure as objects, in, for example, *my* experiences; but they do so only in an indirect and—in comparison to the access I enjoy to myself and my experiences—in a very impoverished manner. (There is no direct perceiving by me of other subjects and their experiences, let alone of how they experience *me and my experiences*.)

*My experiences* (or *yours*) are an utterly insufficient basis for obtaining *objective reality* from experience (we are all convinced of this; this is why solipsism seems so ridiculous). What is needed is the totality of *all* experiences, not just the totality of the experiences of this or that subject. But, unfortunately, the totality of all experiences seems to be of no help either. For that totality is like a huge reservoir, which cannot be tapped—*unless* it were the totality of the experiences of *one* subject.

Is there no way out? Ignore for a moment the assumption we all endorse (if we are in our right minds) and *suppose* that there is *just one* subject of experience. If there is just one subject of experience, then all experiences have the same subject of experience. The immediate benefit of this supposal is that the totality of all experiences is itself an experience—an experience whose object is itself a totality, namely, the whole of objective reality. Thus, the experience which is the totality of all experiences, *the world* in one sense of the word, has the whole of objective reality, *the world* in another sense of the word, as its object of experience (as its “intentional correlate,” as Husserl would say). So far, so good. But *who* can believe that there is just one subject of experience? Doubtless, I would have to be identical to that subject, since, doubtless, I am the subject of experience of some experiences (*mine*); and you would have to be identical to it, too, since you too are the subject of experience of some experiences (*yours*). And therefore we are identical to each other—which is absurd. Or should it be the case after all that the only subject of experience, the subject of experience of all experiences, is *I*?

There must be a better way out than accepting solipsism. Let us recapitulate. Above I distinguished between what an object of experience *is in an experience* (of which it is an object) and what that object *is*, which latter phrase Husserlian idealism takes to mean the following: what that object *is in the totality of all experiences*. A more explicit way of making—in accordance with Husserlian idealism—the same distinction is to say that one must distinguish between what an object of experience *is in an experience for the subject of that experience*, and what that object *is*, which latter phrase Husserlian idealism takes to mean: what that object *is in the totality of all experiences for the subject of that totality*. This implies that the totality of all experiences is itself an experience and that it has a subject. But it prejudices nothing about the way in which *that* subject is related to *me* (or you).

## 16.7 A Solution to the Difficulty

The situation described in the last paragraph of the previous section invites the following manner of theorizing. Let us give up the proposition that every experience has *precisely one* subject, though certainly not the proposition that every experience has *a* subject. Let us accept, instead, the proposition that every experience has, intrinsic to it, precisely one *transcendental subject* (but *not* necessarily precisely one *subject*). In fact, every experience has one and the same transcendental subject, which Husserlian idealists simply call, aptly enough, *the transcendental subject*. Thus, there is no obstacle to assuming that the totality of all experiences is an experience (i.e., an experience of the transcendental subject, as are all experiences).

The transcendental subject is not only the transcendental subject of that total experience, but also *the subject (tout court)* of it. Other experiences, however, not only have precisely one transcendental subject; they also have, in addition to it, precisely one *manifest* subject (also intrinsic to them), so that they have *two* subjects in total and one cannot speak of *the subject of the experience*. In all of *my* experiences, the transcendental subject (which is also the transcendental subject of my experiences) has a local projection, which is *I*, the manifest subject of *my* experiences. In all of *your* experiences, the transcendental subject (which is also the transcendental subject of your experiences) again has a local projection, which is *you*, the manifest subject of *your* experiences. The manifest subject of your experiences and the manifest subject of my experiences are different, but the transcendental subject of your experiences and the transcendental subject of mine are the same.<sup>23</sup> This latter fact unites the two experiences into one experience—an experience belonging not to me or you, but to the transcendental subject.

These steps of theorizing are not mere arbitrary tricks for fabricating a way out of the difficulty. The transcendental subject is *not* a theoretical invention, a mere postulate; it has a place in the *phenomenological description* of experience. *Some*—though certainly not all—manifest subjects of experience can *approach*, and to a certain degree even *approximate*, the transcendental subject of their experiences, that is, the transcendental subject (*tout court*). They are capable of distancing themselves in a certain manner from their immediate individual experiences. And to the extent that they *actually* distance themselves from them, which is to say: put their experiences in context, are critical of them, correct them in the pursuit of *objectivity* (taken to be the synchronic and diachronic coherency, harmony, unity of *all* experiences with respect to objects of experience)—to that extent the manifest subjects of experience approach the transcendental subject, draw nearer to its point of view, perhaps come even *near* to it, in which case the transcendental subject is being approximated. In other words, there is in the experience of such manifest subjects—*phenomenally manifest* in their streams of consciousness—such a thing as the *proto-objective* point of view. The proto-objective point of view does not afford ‘the view from nowhere’ (to use the title of Thomas Nagel’s famous book); the view from nowhere is an impossibility (not even the point of view of the transcendental subject affords a view from nowhere). The proto-objective point of view is still *subjective*, it is still the point of view of a manifest subject of experience, but of a manifest subject that distances itself from itself (so to speak) and *approaches* the transcendental subject. This self-distancing in approaching the transcendental subject is conspicuous in a question which we all feel has something to it but which—understood entirely literally, with no implicit orientation away from *myself* toward *the transcendental subject*—is just absurd (as

course of experiences by the course of physical events suggests that no such attempt will succeed. A tentative reversal of the preferred explanatory direction seems worthwhile (if I may make a modest suggestion).

A reversal of this direction is mandatory *on the fundamental level* if Husserlian idealism is adopted as the basic metaphysical stance. Consider, then, *explaining*—under the presupposition of Husserlian idealism, *on the fundamental level*—the course of physical events by the course of experiences. It is important to bear in mind that *this* explaining is something entirely different from what is practiced, almost unthinkingly, in all empirical sciences, which is this: the *justifying* of hypotheses about physical events on the basis of our experiences and, so-called, *inferences to the best explanation*. For the aim of a Husserlian explanation is *not* to come to accept—as rationally as possible—certain hypotheses about physical events because those hypotheses contribute (or seem to contribute) to a best *causal* explanation of our experiences in terms of physical events; its aim is to *fundamentally explain the physical events* in terms of experiences. In pursuing this latter aim, there is—under the presupposition of Husserlian idealism—*no role whatsoever* for causation to play (*whereas* causation plays an *implicit* but central role in the *justificatory* inference-to-the-best-explanation procedure just described; and *whereas* causation must play an *explicit* and central role if the goal is to *explain* the course of experiences by the course of physical events). In Husserlian idealism, and in the *fundamental* explanation of physical events by experiences,<sup>29</sup> the all-important hub is not causation but *intentionality*.

Doing without causation, at least on the fundamental level, is liberation. This is seen most conspicuously in the fundamental explanation of the mind-body relation. The wherewithal of this explanation is constituted by the intrinsic contents of our experiences of material objects, our experiences being taken separately and also in comparison, in other words: in their contextual juxtaposition to each other. The vehicle of the explanation of the mind-body relation is intrinsic determination (see section 5): my body intrinsically supervenes on my experiences. So do all other material objects I experience. However, in the case of my body, the intrinsic determination via my experiences is *special*. An object of experience is *my* body because, in addition to being experienced by others and me in the ways in which other material objects are experienced by others and me, it is also an (*intrinsic*) object of my experiences in a *special* way, in which it is not the object of the experiences of other subjects. That special way has many characteristics, but the three most salient ones are the following: (i) intimate experiential nearness of the object, (ii) immediate experiential control of the object, (iii) *matching* tactile experiences of (regions of) the object.

If I have the tactile experience of touching a region on the surface of the material object I call 'my body,' then I simultaneously have the tactile experience

of being touched in precisely that region (and if the touch is accompanied by pressure, then the experience also reaches *below* that surface-region, goes deeper down); with other bodies, I do not have these matching experiences. In fact, I can outwardly delimit *my* body as that body which is the substratum of *matching* (in the sense just described) tactile experiences of *mine*. Note that a part of my body begins to feel to me just like any other material object (with *that* particular type of surface) if, with respect to that part, the matching of my tactile experiences fails to occur—say, because of local anesthesia, or because my arm has gone to sleep. And that feeling, that experience of *otherness*, is greatly consolidated if I experience—say, because my arm has gone to sleep—the absence of immediate control of that part *in addition* to the absence of matching tactile experiences with respect to that part. I can, at a given time, identify some (not all) prominent *parts of my body* as being those material objects which I experience at that time to be in my immediate control. The experience of immediate control is characterized by the experiential fusion of *willing* and *fulfillment*: neither time, nor effort, nor instruments interpose, in the experience, between the two.

The most important aspect of the *my-body* experience (which, in its totality, is what makes a body *my* body) is the experience—mainly nonvisual, to a lesser degree also visual—of the intimate nearness of the object. The subject experiences itself to be *in* a material object, to be *housed* by it—by a material object which is such that there is no other material object that also houses the subject and is nearer to the subject. Note that within the compass of my body—this region of inner warmth—the nearness has degrees: my hands I experience as being nearer to me than my feet, my eyelids as being nearer to me than my nose, my tongue as being nearer to me than my eyelids, etc. But none of these parts that I experience as mine do I experience as *housing* me. I am housed by the whole thing that those parts belong to, the region around the stomach being like the hearth of the house, exuding warmth.

## 16.11 An Objection

What is offered in section 10 is a mere sketch of how Husserlian idealism—a form of *intentionalistic* idealism and of holistic idealistic panpsychism—proposes to solve the mind-body problem *without recourse to any notion of causation*. However, enough was said to elicit an objection. What about the (living) brain and the entire (living) nervous system? In Husserlian idealism, they appear to be *pointless*—do they not?—in total neglect of their true importance. The answer to this objection is this: brain and nervous system, too, are objects of experience, but, typically, *not* of experiences of the subject to whose body

they belong, and, typically, *only in an indirect way* objects of the experiences of *other subjects*. The claim that brain and nervous system belong to a subject's body is indirect, and not a claim that is justified already on the *fundamental* level: beside the indispensable (but in itself insufficient) fact of bodily attachment (which also obtains for *hairs and nails*, and is, in that case, rather easily ascertained), their claim to belong to a subject's body rests on the fact that experience, if systematically explored, reveals that brain and nervous system are—far from being pointless—in a very comprehensive and detailed way *causally relevant and vital* for a subject's consciousness and, indeed, for its existence as a manifest subject.

Nothing in this contradicts Husserlian idealism. In fact, experience reveals that many material objects (i.e., *material objects of experience*) are causally relevant and vital to the consciousness and existence of a manifest subject; the obvious example is the surrounding air (i.e., the by and large well-proportioned gaseous mixture of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide).<sup>30</sup> This is simply the contingent way the world is; if the world is conceived of in an idealistic manner, that contingent way has not changed. Why should it?

Note, finally, that the demand that idealism ought to make some sort of deep sense of the contingent dependencies (of existence)—*of us* on our brains and hearts, on the surrounding air, on eating and drinking, on the right temperature, and so forth—is unjustified. If idealism does not make more sense of these dependencies than other views, then this does not count against it. (Note that the presently considered objection is different from the one in the first paragraph of this section.) Idealism ought not to be expected to eliminate *facta bruta*—because no metaphysical stance can.

## Notes

1. Neutral monism is traditionally connected with Spinoza. This is, strictly speaking, false. The nature of the *one substance* Spinoza postulates—of the *deus sive natura*—is *not* neutral; rather, it is *all-encompassing*, the physical and the psychical being just two of its infinitely many dimensions (or “attributes,” as Spinoza says).
2. Modern panpsychism is an invention of the nineteenth century. An early criticism of it can be found in James (1890/1950). In chapter 6 of *The Principles of Psychology*, William James attacks what he polemically calls “the mind-stuff theory” (he also speaks of “mind-dust”); his description leaves no doubt that it is *atomistic dualistic panpsychism* which he attacks, although he does not use this designation. James nicely sums up the motivation behind modern panpsychism (he calls it “*atomistic hylozoism*”; James 1890/1950, 149), which is precisely the inability to accept (discontinuous, “jumpy”) *emergence*:

If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things. . . . Each atom of the nebula. . . must have had an original atom of consciousness linked with it; and, just as the material atoms have formed bodies and brains by massing themselves together, so the mental atoms, by an analogous process of aggregation, have fused into those larger consciousnesses

which we know in ourselves and suppose to exist in our fellow-animals... [T]here must be an infinite number of degrees of consciousness, following the degrees of complication and aggregation of the primordial mind-dust. (James 1890/1950, 149–50.)

3. As William James fittingly remarks: "The fact is that discontinuity comes in if a new nature comes in at all. . . . The girl in 'Midshipman Easy' could not excuse the illegitimacy of her child by saying, 'it was a very small one'" (James 1890/1950, 149).
4. If one rejects dualism, then there are three basic (but further differentiable) options (if one wants to position oneself at all): physicalism, neutral monism, and idealism. For a *panpsychist* in the proper sense of the word (that is, if the expression 'psychist' in 'panpsychist' is to be taken seriously), physicalism and neutral monism are out of the question; for the *psychical* (in the proper sense of the word) is not physical, and it is not something neutral between the physical and the psychical, either.
5. Panpsychism, on the other hand, can very well be *not* idealistic (as we have seen). The first who spoke of 'idealistic panpsychism' appears to have been William James, using the word for a, broadly speaking, monadological metaphysics (Lamberth 1997, 249). But the designation was not an appropriate one: Lamberth notes that the position that James called "idealistic panpsychism"—and which Lamberth calls "strong panpsychism"—"retains a fundamental mind/matter dualism" (Lamberth 1997, 249). Curiously, James does not use the word "panpsychism" in the chapter of *The Principles of Psychology* (see endnote 2) which plainly addresses what modern thinkers consider to be *panpsychism* (Lamberth does not mention the chapter). Curiously too (in view of the criticism voiced in that chapter), James seems to have accepted a form of panpsychism after all, and *not* an idealistic one (see Lamberth 1997, 248–53).
6. "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (*Tractatus*, 5.6).
7. That is, the world is the world *for me*.
8. That is, the world is the world *for us*.
9. Is there even such a thing as *our* consciousness? There is a correlative problem: it is far from obvious that the singular terms 'the world for us,' 'the world for the conscious beings' designate anything.
10. On this matter see Meixner (2002).
11. The only thing that saves atomistic *dualistic* panpsychism from the same catastrophe seems to be its inherent lack of clarity. The psychical specks that (allegedly) sit on the atoms that compose a nervous system are not sense data. It is not known what they are; but as long as it is not known what they are, there is room for the hope that the aggregation and organization—i.e., the composition—of the atoms-*cum*-psyche will yield, ipso facto, the experiences of external objects and of ourselves.
12. Consider an analogy: Wittgenstein defined the world as the totality of *facts* (cf. the beginning of the *Tractatus*); it does not follow—nor did Wittgenstein assume—that everything is a fact, i.e., an obtaining state of affairs.
13. *In a sense*, also the experience is being experienced but not *in* the experience. Either it is experienced in another (so-called reflexive) experience, or experiencing an experience simply means *having it*.
14. Thus, even if an experience has several objects, one can speak of *the* object of the experience. One must only keep in mind that *the* object of an experience may consist of several objects of it. (This is the way the phrase 'the object of experience X' is understood here.)
15. On the idea of temporal counterparts see Meixner (2002).
16. Note that the 'or' in this statement is not an *exclusive* 'or' (an 'either. . .or. . .'). In fact, many experiences and subjects of experience are also objects of experience. Most objects of experience are, however, neither experiences nor subjects of experience. And a subject of experience is *never* (in fact, *cannot ever be*) an experience (and vice versa).
17. A good introduction is provided by Zahavi (2003) and Smith (2003). I speak of *Husserlian*, not of *Husserl's*, idealism, since the idealistic position I develop departs in certain respects from Husserl's. Husserl attempted to fulfill the exigencies of phenomenological foundationalism *and* to steer clear of solipsism (see Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*). I neither

- believe that accepting phenomenological foundationalism is a good idea, nor that solipsism can be entirely avoided if one does proceed on the basis of phenomenological foundationalism. Phenomenological foundationalism forces one to consider *the other (person)* as a sort of outgrowth of oneself, as being constituted within oneself. But the other person is *not* an outgrowth of oneself. For a detailed criticism along these lines cf. Meixner (2003); concerning Husserl's idealism see Meixner (2010).
18. On Husserlian intentionality see Meixner (2006) and Meixner (2010).
  19. I am *not* saying that everybody wants to avoid these nihilisms. On the contrary, nihilism regarding inner selves is downright *fashionable* these days (and has been attractive for many philosophers for a long time).
  20. Clearly, the rationale of this *putting into context* is, again, *comparison* for the purpose of determining what is objectively real and what is not. But it is a kind of comparison that is very different from the kind of comparison that has just been described (in the main text): it does not cross the borders of immanence.
  21. *Representationalist realists* are confronted with the absurd situation that they cannot help practicing contextualization, although, from their point of view, it is far from obvious *why* contextualization should help us find out about objective reality.
  22. However, one can avoid this particular problem by stipulating that, by the word 'entity,' one always means a single, at least minimally unified item, not a plurality or collection.
  23. It is instructive to reread sections 5 and 6 in the light of interpreting 'the subject of' either as 'the *transcendental* subject of' or as 'the *manifest* subject of.' Both interpretations are (knowingly) conflated in those sections.
  24. It is sometimes argued that the undeniable success of science requires for its explanation the truth of realism. But if the success of science requires for its explanation the truth of realism, then it cannot be the truth of *metaphysical* realism. For it is not required for the success of science (let alone for the explanation of that success) that there be objects that are not objects of any experience.
  25. Another Husserlian expression is rather more familiar: *intentionality*. The many ways of being given are the many ways of *intentionality*.
  26. It goes without saying (but I say it nevertheless): the spatial metaphors in the parenthesis that this endnote refers to must not be taken literally.
  27. I am referring primarily to Christian theism since this is the only theism of which I have sufficient knowledge.
  28. This is the English translation of the useful German phrase *Sein und Sosein*.
  29. Husserlian idealism can accommodate the cognitive activities spoken about in parentheses in the previous sentence of the main text—and the idea of causation that is central to those cognitive activities, and the realism which those activities presuppose—as higher-order activities and constructions (i.e., as derivatives). However, in this accommodating, matters are no longer considered with respect to *the fundamental level* of explanation.
  30. This example also shows that not even the inexorable necessity of a material item for the existence of a manifest subject is, in itself, sufficient for including that item in the subject's body.

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