Compositional Subjects

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Realistic physicalism & experience

- How do we accommodate experience (Hard Problem)?
- When more radical alternatives like idealism or mysticism are ruled out, only physicalism remains.
- Emergence - most popular physicalist approach.
  - Complexity problem: When does experience emerge?
- Does realistic physicalism entail panpsychism?
  - Combination problem: How do qualia combine?
- Are these the only alternatives at present?
Panpsychism, Emergence & Physicalism

- Physicalism
  - Panpsychism
    - Combination problem
      - Conservative option
        - Emergence
      - Radical option
        - Reformulate physicalism
  - Emergence
    - Complexity problem
      - Conservative option
        - Panpsychism
Physicalism

- “Everything is physical”: explanatory gap.
- Can physicalism be expanded to accommodate consciousness?
- Why is it accompanied by experience? (Chalmers)
- Forced into speculative ontology because of hard problem.

Source: esa.int
Physicalism = Physicalism + X

- Add ingredient X to physicalism.
- Physicalism should remain physicalism despite X.
- Re-examine panpsychism and emergence in light of new physicalism.
- It is accompanied by experience because X is always accompanied by experience.
A fundamental compositionality

- A counter-intuitive proposal.

- **Assertion**: Physicalism + fundamental compositionality accompanied by experience.

- **Letter but not the spirit of panpsychism**: fundamental but not pan.

- **Spirit but not the letter of emergence**: non-reductive but fundamental.
Compositions versus Combinations

- Fundamental composition of basic elements contrasted with combinations of basic elements.

Fundamental composition accompanied by experience
Phenomenology: Thin Subjects

- Persons and selves as subjects of experience (SoE) (Lowe).
- “A subject of experience is something that exists only if experience exists of which it is a subject” (Strawson).
- “The thinking or the existence of the thought and the existence of my own self are one and the same” (Kant).
- Thin subjects (SESMET): subjects that persist for brief periods of time, a “gappy process” (Strawson).
- mere self in Mahayana Buddhism (Tsongkhapa).
- Notion goes back at least to Frege in the west.
Restricted Compositionality Principle (RCP)

- Kathrin Koslicki’s work.
- RCP: Some objects $m_1, \ldots, m_n$ compose an object $O$, of kind $K$, just in case $m_1, \ldots, m_n$ satisfy the constraints $f_1, \ldots, f_n$ dictated by some formal components, associated with objects of kind, $K$.
- Weak Supplementation Principle.
- Avoid proliferation of *sui generis* relations.
- Relies on ontology of *natural kinds*.
- Material and formal parts of object (composition).
SoE as Natural Kinds

- Restricted compositionality principle requires commitment to ontology of natural kinds.

- SoE as a natural kind term:
  - Appeal to *same-kind relation* between SoE objects.
  - Non-descriptive and does not require rigidity (Koslicki).
  - Requires mechanism for picking out same kind object.

- Intersubjectivity as *mechanism*? Clearly controversial.
  - I see You, Y’All, namaste.
  - Second person as foundation for SoE?
  - Could be wrong but more importantly could also be right.

- SoE in psychology:
  - analogous to species in biology.
  - Different SoE: prehension, sensation, emotion, cognition, visualization.
Subject of Experience (SoE): Sensation


- SoE of sensation: SoEₚ – a sensation natural kind object.

- Intersubjective mechanism: I feel your touch, I see you touch something.

- Formal parts: Relation between physiology (old physical) and new object.

- SoEₛ:
  - composed of low-level material entities.
  - same kind sensation relation between different SoEₛ.
  - When SoEₛ thin subject arises, accompanied by sensation.

- Fundamental Question: Sensation separated from perception, emotion, cognition, visualization - hence SoEₛ?
## Substance vs. Tropes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Tropes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience implies subjects of experience (SoE)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Experience implies incompleteness of physical</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Everything is physical or entailed by the physical (Stoljar)</td>
<td>Physicalism does not imply that microphysicalism is true (Hüttemann)</td>
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<td>SoE are physical (compositions)</td>
<td>Mid-level compositionality principle?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compositions have material and formal parts</td>
<td>Relations between “old” physical properties and experiential properties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal parts require commitment to ontology of natural kinds</td>
<td>Tropes-based natural kinds to help avoid sui generis relations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoE are natural kind objects</td>
<td>Mid-level properties “corresponding” to bundles of experience?</td>
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Objections

1. There is experience (Chalmers).
   - Denied by eliminativists.

2. Experience implies (thin) subjects of experience (Strawson).
   - Denied by materialists and some panpsychists.

3. Everything is physical or entailed by the physical (Stoljar).
   - Denied by interactionist dualists.

4. Physicalism does not imply microphysicalism (Hüttemann).
   - Very controversial and denied by many physicalists.

5. SoE are physical compositions of a certain natural kind (foll. Koslicki).
   - Denied by idealists and property dualists.
Discussion

1. “Why is it accompanied by experience?” (Chalmers).

2. “Everything is physical or entailed by the physical” (Stoljar).

3. “Until more is said it amounts to simply dismissing of... the intuition that the experiential cannot emerge from the non-experiential” (Strawson).


5. Compositionality: “There exists a y the x’s compose if and only if the activity of the x’s compose a life” (van Inwagen).

6. Experience implies a subject of experience (Lowe).

7. Subjects of experience (SoE) are physical compositions of a certain natural kind (following Koslicki).
References

Thank You

We are indebted to Leopold Stubenberg for pointing out Koslicki’s work
All mistakes are of course ours
Objections

• New ingredient merely motivated by subjects of experience.

• Freedom for adding compositions to physicalism not fleshed out.

• Experience epiphenomenal due to causal closure?

• What actually distinguishes compositions from combinations?
Compositions acting on possibilities

• Current quantum field theories: evolution of scalar and vector fields in time.

• Instead we envisage a basic physicalism with a restriction operator on set of possibilities.

• Compositionality: further restriction on possibilities accompanied by experience.

• Physicalism in terms of operators restricting sets of possibilities is almost surely wrong (and goes beyond philosophy).
Substances versus properties

- Approach raises intriguing picture of substance (SoE) linked to properties via compositionality relation.
- Not property or substance dualism but weird hybrid.
- No worry over natural kinds if there is only one kind of substance, namely, SoE.
- Substance introduced only to accommodate experience seems jury rigged.
- May be democratizing Spinoza (matter and mind as properties of single substance/God).