

Public Abstract

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When you gaze at a sunset or taste a peach, there is a subjective *feel* to be had. This subjective “feel” is referred to as the *qualitative character of experience*. My goal is to argue that a certain ontological theory of the qualitative character of experience is more plausible than has been granted.

The theory in question is called panpsychism. Roughly, panpsychists argue that in order to account for the qualitative character of experience, we must take the world to be, at its most fundamental level, “experiential.” In slogan form, panpsychism might be summed up as “If humans are subjects of experience, then electrons are subjects of experience.”

There are three questions that the panpsychist proposal immediately raises. First: Why think that experiential phenomena cannot be novel phenomena but rather must be already present at the most fundamental levels of reality? Second: Precisely how are we to understand the claim that experiential phenomena are present at the fundamental level of reality? Third: Isn't it absurd to think that experiential phenomena are present at the fundamental level of reality—to think that there is something it is like to be an electron? I address each of these three questions in this thesis.