

IF MATTER MATTERS:
NAVIGATING THE MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF PANPSYCHISM

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri, Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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July 2015

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IF MATTER MATTERS:

NAVIGATING THE MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF PANPSYCHISM

presented by E. Alexander Howe,

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Andrew Melnyk
Professor Peter Vallentyne
Professor Kurt Gray

Thank you to Rob and to Jay for opening my eyes to the paths available to me, and for demonstrating some enjoyable ways that one might walk them.

Acknowledgements

To begin, I would like to thank my colleagues—students and professors alike—in the philosophy department at University of Missouri for, on so many occasions, allowing me to bend their ears to discuss the experiential lives of electrons. The feedback that I received across so many informal discussions resulted in a greatly improved thesis. Particular thanks is owed to the members of my MA committee: Professors Andrew Melnyk, Peter Vallentyne, and Kurt Gray.

I would also like to express my particular gratitude to Adam Koszela, Marcellus Braxton, Joshua Smart, and Kyle Rindahl not just for their time and their support throughout the process of developing this thesis, but also for the roles that each of them has played in keeping me both sane and motivated.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my loved ones, whose patience and understanding has not gone unnoticed.

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Chapter 1— Motivating Panpsychism

When you gaze at a sunset or taste a peach, there is a subjective *feel* to be had. That is, there is *something it is like*, for you, to undergo certain of your mental states. Call this experiential phenomenon—this *feel*—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 qualitative character of experience is, supposedly, unique. Nearly all mental phenomena, such as our thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, memory, attention, and more can be plausibly accounted for within a physicalist framework. However, some argue that the qualitative character of experience (a.k.a., “consciousness”) is a mental phenomenon that physicalism cannot account for. Roughly stated, the problem is supposed to be that physicalism understands the world to be, at its most fundamental level, “physical”, where “physical” is understood as entailing “non-experiential.” Some who object to physicalism claim that we cannot account for the qualitative character of experience—an experiential phenomenon—in terms of anything that is non-experiential. As such, if we are to account for the qualitative character of experience, then we must take the world to be, at its most fundamental level, “experiential.” Such a theory is known as *panpsychism*.

Panpsychism therefore is a theory—or family of theories—of the qualitative character of experience. According to panpsychism, we cannot explain higher-order experiential phenomena, such as what it feels like as a human to eat a peach, in terms of

lower-order phenomena unless there is already experientiality present in those lower-order phenomena. In slogan form, panpsychism might be summed up as “If humans are subjects of experience, then electrons are subjects of experience.”¹

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: 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?²

I address each of these questions in this thesis. Chapter 1 focuses on presenting the motivation for taking experiential phenomena to be fundamental and also on clarifying what it means to say that experiential phenomena exist at the fundamental of reality. In doing so, I show that panpsychism is committed to the claim that there are occurrently experiential phenomena associated with the fundamental constituents of the

¹ Understood in this way, panpsychism accepts what Stephen Mumford (2006) has called the “micro-reductive explanatory model that has sought lower levels of explanation for higher-level phenomena.” See Mumford (2006), 479. Sam Coleman has independently referred to this paradigm as “smallism,” which he defines as “the view that all facts are determined by the facts about the smallest things, those existing at the lowest ‘level’ of ontology.” See Coleman (2006) 40-41. Thus, the panpsychist agrees with the physicalist that a proper account of a human body will be given in terms of the microphysical particles that constitute that body. The panpsychist also agrees with the physicalist that a proper account of the experiential phenomena associated with that human body will be given in terms of the microphysical particles that constitute that body. However, the panpsychist will insist, *contra* the physicalist, that this latter account may only be successful if we take those microphysical particles to already be “fundamentally experiential.”

² There is a fourth question: How does taking experiential phenomena to be present at the fundamental level of reality help to explain the experiential phenomena that we know to be present at higher levels of reality? This is referred to as *the combination problem*. Roughly, the idea is that while one can clearly account for a Lego building in terms of little Lego pieces, it is not clear how one is supposed to account for a human-sized experience in terms of a bunch of electron-sized experiences. I set this problem aside. For more on the combination problem, see Goff (2006), Goff (forthcoming-a), Goff (forthcoming-b), Montero (forthcoming), Chalmers (forthcoming), and Coleman (2014).

world. In Chapter 2, I develop an objection to panpsychism based on the apparent absurdity of this commitment. Finally, in Chapter 3, I show how panpsychism may deal with this objection.

Chapter 1 proceeds as follows: In Sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, I present three sequential arguments in favor of a particular version of panpsychism. Each argument is meant to build on and clarify the conclusion of the preceding section. In Section 1.4, I lay out the upshots of this version of panpsychism, as well as its most counterintuitive implication. I conclude in Section 1.5 by rehearsing a number of intuitive objections against panpsychism on the basis of its apparently implausible commitment to there being *something it is like* to be an electron. I argue that none of standard intuitive objections on offer are particularly compelling, which sets me up for developing a more compelling objection in Chapter 2.

§1.1: Reconstructing “The Physical” as “Fundamentally Experiential”

In this section, I rehearse Galen Strawson’s argument in favor of panpsychism. Strawson’s argument operates at a high level of generality, so in the subsequent two sections, I will further develop the best version of panpsychism. Nonetheless, it is instructive to rehearse Strawson’s objection to physicalism and in favor of panpsychism.

Strawson understands physicalism as the thesis that all real, concrete phenomena are physical phenomena. He then assumes the truth of what is sometimes called the “micro-reductive research agenda” according to which all higher-level phenomena in the

world are to be accounted for ultimately in terms of lower-level phenomena.³ On the assumption that there is a “ground level” of reality consisting of fundamental particles of which there is nothing smaller, then all higher-level phenomena are to be accounted for in terms of these fundamental particles.⁴ From here, Strawson observes that the experiential phenomena with which we are acquainted in our own mental lives are real, concrete phenomena. We may call these experiential phenomena “macroexperiences.” Given our assumptions, it follows that macroexperiences must be accounted for in terms of the fundamental constituents of the world. There are, however, two ways that we might conceive of these fundamental particles. Either we take them to be “fundamentally non-experiential” or else we take them to be “fundamentally experiential.” Strawson’s argument is that we must take these fundamental particles to be “fundamentally experiential” because no ontological dependence relation can hold between something that is “fundamentally non-experiential” and something that is “fundamentally experiential.”

In order to better grasp Strawson’s argument, we must understand why he thinks that something “fundamentally experiential” cannot ontologically depend on something “fundamentally non-experiential.” And in order to understand this, we must understand what he means by “fundamentally experiential” and also by “ontological dependence.” I will address the second question, here, but will save a deeper treatment of the first question for Section 1.3.

³ Sam Coleman has referred to this as “smallism.” See Coleman (2006).

⁴ Perhaps in conjunction with the laws of nature and/or bridge laws and/or ontological dependence relations.

Our current task, then, is to understand the relevant sort of ontological dependence and why it cannot hold between the fundamentally experiential and the fundamentally non-experiential. On this, Strawson offers the following:

If it really is true that Y is emergent from X then it must be the case that Y is in some sense wholly dependent on X and X alone, so that all features of Y trace intelligibly back to x (where ‘intelligible’ is a metaphysical rather than an epistemic notion). *Emergence can’t be brute.*⁵ (original emphasis)

While Strawson employs the term “emergence,” it seems as though we best take him to be referring to any ontological dependence relation according to which a novel higher-level phenomenon arises from lower-level phenomena, rather than understanding him as referring to just the specific relation that “emergence” is typically understood as picking out.⁶ This charitable interpretation is supported by Strawson’s comment that:

In order to discuss [the question at hand] I am going to take it that any position that combines [the view that experiential phenomena are real, concrete phenomena] with [the view that the ultimate constituents of the world are fundamentally non-experiential] must invoke some notion of emergence, whether or not it chooses to use that word.⁷

⁵ Strawson (2006b), 18.

⁶ Indeed, it seems as though Strawson’s very claim is that emergence as it is typically understood is impossible. See Wyss (2012) for more (and for an opposing view).

⁷ Strawson (2006b), 12-13.

So, the focus of Strawson's argument is *novelty*. His claim is that certain sorts of novelty are possible while others are not, and that this will depend on what sort of things the lower-level phenomena are and what sort of thing the higher-level, *novel*, phenomena is.

Macroexperiences must be *novel* if we understand the ultimate constituents of the world as being fundamentally non-experiential. The idea would be that there is no experientiality at the level of the fundamental particles, but under suitable conditions, experientiality emerges. Strawson claims that this sort of novelty is "brute" and impossible. He contrasts it with the sort of novelty that is involved in the case of liquidity. Liquidity is a property had by a system of entities, none of which individually possess the property of liquidity. Liquidity is a novel phenomenon because there is no liquidity at the level of H₂O molecules (or their subatomic constituents), but under suitable conditions, liquidity emerges.

Strawson argues that there is a difference in the sort of *novelty* involved in the case of liquidity than in the case of experientiality (so long as we take the ultimate constituents of the world to be "fundamentally non-experiential"). First, take the case of liquidity. *Being liquid* is a paradigmatic physical property (or P-type property) in the sense that it is what Chalmers' would call a "structural-functional" property. I take this to mean that an appropriate definite description employing only structural and/or functional terms can successfully denote the property in question, or, alternatively, that a full characterization of what it is to have the property can be given employing only structural and/or functional terms. Likewise, the properties that liquidity emerges from are all

paradigmatic P-type properties. In this way, the novelty of liquidity is a benign sort of novelty: it is a case of a P-type property being wholly dependent on P-type properties.

The case of macroexperiences would be different. If we take the fundamental constituents of the world to be “fundamentally non-experiential,” then we can rewrite “P-type properties” as “~E-type properties.” However, a macroexperience is an E-type property. Thus, the sort of novelty involved in the case of macroexperiences is an E-type property emerging from ~E-type properties. Contrast this with liquidity, which is a P-type property emerging from P-type properties. Strawson claims that the *latter* sort of novelty is possible—that ontological dependence relations can hold between such things. However, he claims that the former sort of novelty is impossible.

Strawson maintains that the former sort of emergence—so called “brute emergence”—is illegitimate for three reasons. First, because it is supposed to be incoherent (as he takes himself to have argued in the passage quoted above). Second because if it were possible, then somethingness could be wholly ontologically dependent on nothingness (and nothing more) and the concrete could be wholly ontologically dependent on the abstract. Because neither of these sorts of emergence are possible—they cannot be since there is too deep an ontological divide between the two sorts of thing—neither is the emergence that would be involved in macroexperiences emerging from fundamentally non-experiential fundamental particles. Third, Strawson rejects “brute emergence” because it would be a miracle every time it occurs. It would be a miracle in the sense that there would be nothing about the emergent base in virtue of which the emergent phenomenon emerged. And he notes that as odd as it seems to say that every instantiation of a human-sized experiential property is a miracle, what is even stranger is

that because macroexperiences apparently occur with regularity, these miracles would be “lawlike miracles,” which seems like a contradiction in terms.⁸

Because “brute emergence” is impossible, we must instead understand the fundamental constituents of the world as being “fundamentally experiential.” By doing so, the emergence of a macroexperience from the fundamental particles will be a case of an E-type property emerging from E-type properties. While the macroexperience would be novel, such novelty is of an acceptable variety.

Strawson’s argument from “brute emergence” concludes that we must construe “physical” not as “fundamentally non-experiential” but rather as “fundamentally experiential.” This conclusion supports panpsychism very generally. However, Strawson’s argument neglects to develop what it means to say that “physical stuff” is “fundamentally experiential.”⁹ In the next two sections, I will further develop this claim.

§1.2: What Does “Fundamentally Experiential” Mean?

In the previous section, I presented Galen Strawson’s argument from brute emergence, which concludes that we must understand the fundamental constituents of the world as being “fundamentally experiential.” I will proceed on the assumption that those fundamental particles the existence of which physics posits are the fundamental constituents of the world. In this section, I will present David Chalmers’ conceivability

⁸ See Strawson (2006b) 12-24 for his development of these objections.

⁹ Indeed, Strawson (2006) suggests that the ultimate constituents of the world are fundamentally experiential in the sense that they are simultaneously both intrinsically physical and intrinsically experiential. Coleman (2006) gives good *negative* reason why this conception of “fundamentally experiential” would actually be inconsistent with the argument from brute emergence. However, there are also good *positive* reasons for adopting an alternative interpretation according to which the fundamental particles are intrinsically only experiential. See the next footnote, for more.

argument, which suggests a particular understanding of what it means to say that the fundamental particles of physics are fundamentally experiential.¹⁰

By way of an overview: David Chalmers' conceivability argument against physicalism concludes that either physicalism is false or else there is more to being a fundamental particle than having the properties that physics ascribes to fundamental particles. The first disjunct of the conclusion of Chalmers' argument has no positively-informative upshot—all it says is that physicalism is false. I opt to instead focus on the second disjunct. According to the second disjunct of the conclusion of the conceivability argument: (i) there is more to being, say, an electron, in the actual world, than having the properties that physics ascribes to electrons, and, (ii) whatever this “something more” is, it accounts for the experiential phenomena familiar to us in our own human mental lives. The second disjunct therefore also shows physicalism to be false,¹¹ but it does so informatively: It suggests how we may modify our theory of the qualitative character of experience so as to avoid the force of the conceivability argument. And when we combine (ii) with Strawson's argument from “brute emergence,” we may conclude that fundamental particles possess experiential properties in addition to the physical properties

¹⁰ We may also arrive at the interpretation of Strawson's conclusion that is suggested by Chalmers' conceivability argument just by focusing on Strawson's argument, itself. There are two available interpretations of Strawson's conclusion: ultimates are intrinsically experiential *and* intrinsically physical or else ultimates are just intrinsically experiential. Coleman (2006) gives good reason why the first option is inconsistent with the argument from brute emergence. In addition to this, I claim there are positive reasons for preferring the second interpretation over the first. The first interpretation will face trilemma of either violating causal closure or being committed to epiphenomenalism or being committed to systematic overdetermination. The second interpretation avoids all of these by making the causal powers of physics the causal powers of microexperiential properties.

¹¹ The physicalist does not understand “physical” to include “experiential.” The most common conception of “physical” is the theory-based conception, and given that the properties being ascribed to fundamental particles in the second disjunct of Chalmers' conclusion are *ex hypothesi* not properties predicated of them by physical theory, they will not be physical properties.

ascribed to them by physics. It is in this sense that the fundamental constituents of the world are “fundamentally experiential.”

I will now rehearse Chalmers’ conceivability argument against physicalism. I proceed by first presenting physicalism and then presenting Chalmers’ conceivability argument.

§1.2.1: Physicalism

An acceptable rough approximation of physicalism puts the theory in terms of *supervenience*. Supervenience is an ontological dependence relationship that can be minimally analyzed as follows: E-properties supervene on P-properties just in case, metaphysically, there can be no difference in respect to E-properties without there being a difference in P-properties. Casting physicalism in terms of supervenience yields the following:

Physicalism: Every property is either a property of fundamental physics (call these “microphysical properties”) or else supervenes on microphysical properties.

On this view, our best fundamental physics identifies some set of fundamental properties, such as mass, charge, and spin. We may then refer to the members of this set as *microphysical properties*.¹² The idea is that every property in the world either just is a microphysical property or else supervenes on microphysical properties. For example:

¹² Note that the micro/macro distinction here concerns not relative size but rather variability of realization.

stipulate that two chairs fail to differ in respect to their microphysical properties. It is metaphysically impossible for one chair to have the property of “weighing exactly ten pounds on earth” while its microphysical duplicate has the property of “weighing exactly thirty-seven pounds on earth.” It is in this sense that the property of “weighing exactly ten pounds on earth” supervenes on microphysical properties and thus is a physical property.

Properties such as “weighing exactly ten pounds on earth” do not present problems for physicalism. Rather, the problems (allegedly) arise in regard to physicalism’s treatment of the qualitative character of experience, or what I will call “experiential properties.” Take, for example, the experiential property of what it is like for a human subject to taste a peach. According to physicalism, this experiential property supervenes on microphysical properties. Thus, if there is something it is like for me (environmentally situated as I am)¹³ to bite into a peach, then there cannot fail to be something it is like for my microphysical duplicate (comparably situated) to bite into a peach. It is this feature of physicalism that the conceivability argument seeks to exploit.

§1.2.2: The Conceivability Argument Against Physicalism

David Chalmers’ (now infamous) conceivability argument purports to show that physicalism is false because it is metaphysically possible for a microphysical duplicate of our world in which the actual laws of physics hold, to fail to instantiate any experiential properties. In this subsection, I first show how the conceivability argument is meant to

¹³ This qualification is meant to make the claim at hand consistent with theories of mind that are externalist regarding mental states.

refute physicalism, and then I show how the conceivability can be revised so that it provides positive support for panpsychism.¹⁴

In its naïve form, Chalmers' conceivability argument against physicalism runs as follows:

Naïve Conceivability Argument

(P1) P&~E is conceivable.

(P2) If P&~E is conceivable, then P&~E is metaphysically possible.

(P3) If P&~E is metaphysically possible, then physicalism is false

(C1) Physicalism is false.

In the foregoing argument, P stands for the conjunction of all the microphysical facts of our world and E stands for some or other experiential property. The first premise claims that we can ideally conceive of a microphysical duplicate of our world in which the laws of nature hold but where some-or-other experiential property fails to be instantiated. The second premise moves from conceivability to possibility, which is permitted by 2D semantics (more on this, below). Finally, the third premise says that the possibility of P&~E entails the falsity of physicalism, because E is a property that can fail to supervene on microphysical properties. Thus, physicalism is false.

The second premise of the conceivability argument is the crucial premise of that argument. The second premise relies on Chalmers' two-dimensional (2D) semantics. Chalmers' 2D semantics presents a framework such that, under certain circumstances,

¹⁴ In what follows, I am rehearsing Chalmers' argument as he gives it in Chalmers (2010) 141-154.

conceivability (or, epistemic possibility) entails metaphysical possibility. This occurs when the concepts employed in conceiving of a state of affairs have coincident *primary intensions* and *secondary intensions*. The primary intension of a concept corresponds to conceivability, whereas the secondary intension of a concept corresponds to possibility. Roughly, the primary intension of a concept corresponds to the “role” associated with the thing that the concept is about. As Chalmers puts it, “[T]he primary intension of 'mass' picks out whatever property plays the mass-role.” To illustrate: the concept water (henceforth, <water>) is about water, and the “role” that is associated with water is something like being the clear, wet, and tasteless stuff that falls from the sky and fills the lakes and oceans. What matters in regard to the primary intension of a concept is not what *actually* plays the relevant role, but rather that the role is played. So, to conceive of water being something other than H₂O is just to think of the role associated with water being played by something other than H₂O (such as XYZ).

By contrast, the secondary intension of a concept roughly corresponds to the thing that “plays” the associated “role” in the actual world. Continuing with the water example, physical science tells us that the thing that actually plays the role associated with water is H₂O. So, while we can conceive of water being something other than H₂O, this does not entail that water can metaphysically be anything other than H₂O, as this would require that H₂O fail to be identical with H₂O.

Under 2D semantics, conceivability entails possibility only when the primary and secondary intensions of the concepts involved coincide. Roughly, this coincidence happens when there is nothing more to being the thing that a concept is about than

playing the associated role. We may call concepts whose primary and secondary intensions coincide *semantically stable*.¹⁵

In order for Premise Two of the conceivability argument to be true, the concepts involved in P and in E must all be semantically stable. E stands for some or other experiential property, and so the associated concept would be a phenomenal concept. It is plausible that phenomenal concepts are semantically stable. For example, the primary intension of our phenomenal concept of pain is something like *the thing that feels like this*, whereas the secondary intension is also *the thing that feels like this*. What this idea amounts to is that there is nothing more to being pain than playing the aforementioned role (i.e., being the thing that feels like this).

P, on the other hand, stands for the conjunction of all microphysical facts. The concepts associated with P are microphysical concepts, which are our concepts of the microphysical properties mass, spin, and charge. We may refer to these microphysical concepts as <mass>, <spin>, and <charge>. Are microphysical concepts semantically stable? Of course, there are two options: they are either semantically stable or else they are not. Take <mass> as an exemplar. <Mass> is semantically stable just in case there is nothing more to being mass than playing the “mass role.” Chalmers describes the mass role as “resisting acceleration in certain ways, being subject to mutual attraction in a certain way, and so on”¹⁶ Alternatively, <mass> is not semantically stable just in case there is something more to being mass than playing the mass role.

¹⁵ I use “semantically stable” following Laura Schroeter’s presentation of Chalmers’ argument. Schroeter, in turn, is following George Bealer (2000). Note that Chalmers’ prefers a tweak on Bealer’s notion and so instead employs the term “semantically neutral.” See David Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 203-205.

¹⁶ Chalmers (2010), 150.

While the (phenomenal) concept associated with E is semantically stable, it is not clear whether the (microphysical) concepts associated with P are, also. If they are, then the naïve conceivability argument goes through as rehearsed above and physicalism is false because it is possible for experiential properties to supervene on microphysical properties. On the other hand, if microphysical concepts are *not* semantically stable, then premise two of naïve conceivability will no longer hold and the argument will fail. However, the failure of Premise Two in this case is illuminating: Because E remains semantically stable, what we see is that although the conceivability of $P \& \sim E$ does not entail the possibility of $P \& \sim E$, this entailment can only fail in virtue of whatever actually plays the various roles associated with microphysical properties. That is, experiential facts hold not in virtue of the playing of the roles associated with microphysical properties, but rather in virtue of what actually plays those roles.

Revising the conceivability argument in this way allows us to conclude that the physicalist is caught in a dilemma. If there is nothing more to being a microphysical property than playing the associated role, then microphysical concepts are semantically stable and physicalism is false. On the other hand, if there is something more to being a microphysical property than playing the associated role, then whatever it is, in the actual world, that plays the roles associated with the various microphysical properties accounts for the experiential phenomena familiar to us in our own human mental lives. As I noted earlier, I prefer to accept the second disjunct of the conclusion because it, rather than the first disjunct, suggests a positive upshot to the conceivability argument.

Accepting the second disjunct of the conclusion of the conceivability argument, we may further conclude that there is some property of fundamental particles, other than

their microphysical properties, that is responsible for upwardly determining macroexperiential properties. However, this property must be a property other than the properties ascribed to fundamental particles by physics. As such, it will not be a physical property.¹⁷ The most natural candidate is that it is an experiential property.¹⁸ I will develop this idea in the subsequent section.

To recap: In the previous section, I showed how Strawson’s “brute emergence” argument concludes that we must understand the fundamental constituents of the world as being “fundamentally experiential.” In this section, I presented Chalmers’ conceivability argument and showed how it suggests a specific way that we might understand what it means for the fundamental constituents of the world to be “fundamentally experiential.” Specifically, I suggested that in addition to possessing the microphysical properties ascribed to them by physics, fundamental particles also possess experiential properties. In the next section, I will expand on this idea by examining what relationship holds between the fundamental particles, the properties of those particles ascribed to them by physics, and the experiential properties ascribed to them by panpsychism.

§1.3: Microphysical Properties and their Grounds

So far I have motivated panpsychism by presenting Strawson’s argument from “brute emergence” and then building on his conclusion by presenting Chalmers’ conceivability

¹⁷ I take a theory-based view of what it is to be physical on which a property is a physical property just in case it is posited by physics.

¹⁸ Or, alternatively, what Chalmers’ calls a proto-experiential property. However, a proto-experiential properties are, by definition, non-experiential and so Strawson’s argument from “brute emergence” rules them out.

argument. The conclusion that was drawn from Chalmers' conceivability argument is that there is more to the fundamental particles of the actual world than their possessing the properties attributed to them by physics. In this section, I will further build on the conclusion Chalmers' conclusion by introducing considerations from an independent debate that has so far been undertaken by metaphysicians who are uninterested in the ramifications for an ontological theory of the qualitative character of experience. In doing so, I will suggest how we ought to understand the sense in which there is "something more" to the fundamental particles.

The relevant metaphysical debate regards the whether all dispositional properties possessed by an object must be grounded in categorical properties possessed by those same objects. Call this the "grounding debate." The relevance of the grounding debate to the present project is as follows: Chalmers' argument suggests that fundamental particles possess experiential properties in addition to the microphysical properties attributed to them by physics. The microphysical properties of fundamental particles are plausibly all dispositional properties. So, if the grounding debate gives us reason to think that all dispositional properties are grounded by categorical bases, then we might plausibly identify experiential properties as the categorical bases of microphysical properties. On the other hand, if we the grounding debate gives us reason to think that microphysical properties are ungrounded dispositional properties, this will count against the panpsychist's claim that fundamental particles possess experiential properties in addition to the microphysical properties attributed to them by physics.

I turn now to rehearsing the *argument from science*, which is the strongest argument in favor of microphysical properties being ungrounded dispositions. I will

argue that the argument from science generally fails to conclude that microphysical properties are ungrounded dispositions and specifically that it fails to rule out the possibility that microphysical properties have experiential properties as their categorical bases.

Proponents of “ungrounded dispositions” argue that any dispositional property of an object can only be grounded by some “lower-level” feature of that same object. They then argue that the fundamental particles are characterized dispositionally by physics. Because our empirical methods suggest that these fundamental particles are simple, they lack any “lower-level” that could ground the dispositional properties attributed to them by physics. Thus, it is concluded, there are ungrounded dispositions. Formally, this argument—called the Argument from Science—is given by Stephen Mumford as follows:¹⁹

The Argument from Science

P1. There are subatomic particles that are simple.

P2. That which is simple has no lower-level components or properties.

P3. The properties of subatomic particles are (all) dispositional.

P4. The grounds of a dispositional property can be found only among the lower-level components or properties of that of which it is a property.

C1. The dispositional properties of subatomic particles have no ground.

¹⁹ Mumford (2006) 479. I have removed the second and ultimate conclusion, as it is irrelevant in the present context.

However, the argument from science faces the dilemma of either being unsound or invalid. The reason is the tension between P1 and P2 and the ambiguity in the notion of “simplicity” employed in each premise.

Simplicity in P2 is defined as lacking both lower-level components *and* lacking lower-level properties. Indeed, Mumford claims that this definition of simplicity is “an analytic, necessary truth.”²⁰ Corresponding to each conjunct of this definition of simplicity, we may therefore distinguish between *part-simplicity* and *property-simplicity*. To be simple, a particle must be both part-simple and property-simple. The part-simplicity of fundamental particles is a straightforward matter. Physics does seem warranted in taking at least certain particles to be simple because repeatedly smashing them together has failed to uncover any underlying physical structure, even at energy levels far higher than our best theories predict we would find such internal structure, were it to exist.²¹

Property-simplicity, however, is not so straightforward. While it is an *empirical physical* question whether an object is part-simple, it is a *metaphysical* question whether an object is property-simple. The reason is this: Empirical methods in physics can, broadly speaking, discover only two sorts of properties: structural properties and dispositional properties.²² A structural property is to be understood as the property of *having such and such internal structure*. Empirical methods in physics discover structural properties by smashing things together and thereby uncovering internal structures within

²⁰ Mumford (2006), 473.

²¹ Molnar (2003) 133.

²² We may be more tolerant in the properties to which other branches of empirical study commit us to, as such branches may appeal to pragmatic considerations. However, we expect our best physics to fit the way the world really is.

at least one of the objects being smashed together. Dispositional properties, on the other hand, are discovered employing empirical methods in physics which involve applying a stimulus and observing a response. So, for example, if we empirically examine a sort of vase by manufacturing several thousand of them and dropping them all from a given height, our empirical investigation will warrant our predicating only two general sorts of properties of vases: that they are fragile and that they composed of relatively weakly-bound parts. The first property is dispositional and the second property is structural. However, an entity might fail to be property-simple not in virtue of having a lower-level structural property nor in virtue of having a lower-level dispositional property, which are the only properties that empirical methods in physics can discover.²³ Insofar as there are properties that are both non-structural and non-dispositional, empirical methods in physics are insufficient for establishing property-simplicity. An entity can fail to be property-simple by possessing a lower-level categorical property that is inaccessible to the empirical methods of physics. I will develop this idea, below.

The argument from science fails because P2 requires both part-simplicity and property-simplicity, but the empirical support for P1 can only establish part-simplicity regarding fundamental particles. It is a metaphysical question rather than an empirical physical question whether fundamental particles possess lower-level categorical properties that ground the dispositional properties attributed to those fundamental particles by physics.

It is the failure of the argument from science that provides independent support for Chalmers' proposal that we attribute experiential properties to fundamental particles.

²³ Of course, if the dispositional property was grounded in a lower-level dispositional property, this would simply push the question at hand back one level.

But more than this, the specific way in which the argument from science fails illuminates the relationship that would hold between fundamental particles, their microphysical properties, and their experiential properties on the version of panpsychism that we are developing. In objecting to the argument from science, I granted that there are fundamental particles which are part-simple. I also granted that that grounding holds between dispositional properties of objects and intrinsic, lower-level categorical properties of those same objects. As such, the view which I have argued for in my rejection of the argument from science is one on which microphysical properties are dispositional properties of fundamental particles that are grounded by some empirically-inaccessible categorical property possessed by those same particles.²⁴

This set of requirements, and particularly the inaccessibility requirement, might raise some concern because it sounds as though we must be positing some quasi-mystical “essence” of these fundamental particles. However, experiential properties seem to be ideal candidates for being the categorical bases of the dispositional microphysical properties. For one, we know from our own possession of experiential properties (i.e., from our acquaintance with our experiences) that such properties have a nature that is not exhausted by their functional characterization—this nature is “what it feels like” to have them. For another, experiential properties satisfy the requirement that the categorical bases of microphysical properties be relevantly inaccessible to physics without being

²⁴ By “empirically-inaccessible” I mean to say that this is a property on which physics would have to be silent—a property that physics could not attribute. So, inaccessible to the empirical methods of physics, but perhaps accessible by empirical methods in other scientific domains.

problematically mysterious. Indeed, it is hard to imagine anything that we have a better pretheoretic grasp of than experiential properties.²⁵

I propose that we posit experiential properties as being the categorical bases of microphysical properties. Because these experiential properties would be both (i) maximally simple (more on this, below) and (ii) the categorical bases of microphysical properties, I propose we refer to them as “microexperiential properties.” In positing the existence of these microexperiential properties in order to account for the experiential properties with which we are acquainted in our everyday lives (call these “macroexperiential properties), we will satisfy Strawson’s claim that we must understand “the physical” as being “fundamentally experiential.” We will also satisfy Chalmers’ claim that there is something about the fundamental particles of the actual world other than their microphysical properties that accounts for the experiential properties that we are familiar with in our own mental lives. Finally, in doing so, we are supported by independent considerations from the metaphysical debate regarding the grounding of dispositions.

In the next section, I will further develop this proposal. Specifically, I will show how the resulting version of panpsychism has attractive causal implications, and also how the resulting version of panpsychism has strongly counterintuitive implications regarding the experiential lives of fundamental particles.

²⁵ Note however that the (micro)experiential properties that are, on this proposal, the categorical properties that act as the grounds of microphysical properties would be *radically different* from any familiar human (macro)experiential property. The similarity would be exhausted by sheer qualitiveness—by the sheer fact that there would be *something it is like* to possess such a (micro)experiential property.

§1.4: Panpsychism’s Core Commitment

So far, I have motivated a version of panpsychism that takes experiential properties to be the categorical bases of microphysical properties.²⁶ In this section, my primary aim is to show how this version of panpsychism is committed to there being *something it is like* to be a fundamental particle. In the remainder of this thesis, this counterintuitive implication will be my focus.

First, let’s rehearse the upshots of panpsychism as I have developed it. I have suggested that we ought to take experiential properties to be the categorical bases of microphysical properties.²⁷ It is widely-accepted across various debates that the microphysical properties—i.e., mass, spin, and charge—are dispositional properties.²⁸ So one upshot of panpsychism is that it stakes out a plausible position in the debate regarding whether or not all dispositions are grounded. Another upshot of panpsychism is that it is consistent with Chalmers’ conceivability argument. Another upshot of panpsychism is that it avoids any commitment to so-called “brute emergence.”

Additionally, by taking microphysical properties to be dispositional properties and their grounding properties to be experiential properties, panpsychism respects the intuition that there is a strong ontological divide between the physical and the experiential. This is because the dispositional/categorical divide is quite sharp.

²⁶ Note that this version of panpsychism is a version of what Alter & Nagasawa (2012) call “Russellian Monism.”

²⁷ I leave it open whether the categorical base of a given microphysical property is a single experiential property or else a complex of experiential properties.

²⁸ Setting aside the philosophers of mind who take this to be the case: In the debate on the grounding of dispositions, virtually all positions accept that microphysical properties are dispositional properties. In the debate on scientific realism and specifically structuralism about physics, the same is true. Also, the claim has a long and varied history.

Finally, by taking experiential properties to be the categorical bases of microphysical properties, panpsychism achieves a number of causal desiderata. First, it is consistent with the causal closure of physics. Second, it accomplishes this while also avoiding epiphenomenalism. Third, it also accomplishes this while avoiding a commitment to systematic overdetermination. It achieves these desiderata because on this version of panpsychism, the causal powers of physics just are the causal powers of experiential properties.

So much for the positive features of panpsychism. Let's now turn to its counterintuitive implications. First, it is important to note that Strawson's argument from "brute emergence" commits this version of panpsychism to the *Subject Thesis*. According to the Subject Thesis, there can be no experience without a subject of that experience. Thus, by positing that the intrinsic grounds of microphysical properties are experiential properties, the panpsychist is committed to their being *something it is like* for a fundamental bit of matter.

To reject the Subject Thesis would be to say that the intrinsic grounds of microphysical properties are subjectless experiences that are poised to be experienced by something under the right conditions (if it all). But that just makes the intrinsic grounds not really experiential properties at all, but rather properties that are disposed to occasion true experiential properties under the right conditions, which just is what a proto-experiential property is. Because a proto-experiential property is, by definition, a property that is not experiential, a version of panpsychism that appealed to protoexperiential properties would run afoul of "brute emergence."

We may now see that the version of panpsychism that I have developed is committed to what I will call the Core Commitment. I call it this because it is the commitment that will be my focus in the remainder of this thesis. Also, I call it this because I take it that any version of panpsychism will be committed to something relevantly like it, and thus will face the objections that I develop regarding it.

The so-called Core Commitment is given as follows:

The Core Commitment: The fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties.

Note that the Core Commitment should be understood as saying that all and not just some fundamental bits of matter possess experiential properties. To adopt a view on which only some such bits of matter are fundamentally experiential in this sense is poorly motivated because it is unnecessary for *avoiding* a commitment to the claim that all composite entities, such as rocks and clouds, are experiential (i.e., that they possess macroexperiential properties). It is unnecessary because it is open to the panpsychist to adopt independently plausible principles that permit systems like human organisms to be experiential without permitting systems like rocks to be experiential. Moreover, a view on which only some fundamental constituents possess experiential properties is implausible in virtue of being incompatible with the apparent recombining of the fundamental constituents of the world. The view implies that swapping sufficiently many of my component bits of matter with the component bits of a rock would render me non-experiential.

I take the apparent intuitive implausibility of the Core Commitment to be the initial most pressing issue for panpsychism, as it is accessible to the non-specialist and even to the layperson. I call this intuitive implausibility the “intuitive objection” to panpsychism, and in the remainder of this thesis, the intuitive objection is my focus. If the intuitive objection can be shown to not carry weight, this would count strongly in favor of panpsychism, because panpsychism avoids the conceivability argument, avoids the problem of “brute emergence,” is consistent with the causal closure of physics, and raises no causal overdetermination issues. If the intuitive objection carries no weight, then panpsychism presents a serious alternative to physicalism. So, I now turn our focus to the intuitive objection. In the next section, I rehearse some standard versions and suggest that they are not particularly powerful. I do this in order to set up Chapter 2, in which I will attempt to present a novel version of the intuitive objection, which I take to be the objection’s strongest formulation.

§1.5: The Intuitive Objection to Panpsychism

We may now consider what I call the “Intuitive Objection” to panpsychism. The Intuitive Objection just is the gut-level reaction that we²⁹ tend to have to the proposal that all of the ultimate constituents of the world—“ultimates”—possess experiential properties. Indeed, how could there be *something it is like* to be a fundamental bit of matter? My aim with

²⁹ We (atheistic?) western philosophers of the last one or two hundred years.

the present section is to show that it is more difficult to develop a compelling version of the intuitive objection than one might initially think.

§1.5.1: “Just not the right sort of things...”

The most natural way to develop the Intuitive Objection is *analogical*. Analogical variants of the intuitive objection start from our own (human) case and select some feature that we have that ultimates do not have, from which it is concluded that ultimates are not experiential. There are two tests that analogical objections must pass. First, the objection must identify a feature that is “just right”—that is, a feature that excludes all and only those things that we pretheoretically want to exclude and that includes all and only those things that we pretheoretically want to include. We may call this the “goldilocks test”: A successful analogical objection must identify a “goldilocks” feature that is possessed by all of the “right” things but none of the “wrong” things.

To illustrate the goldilocks test, consider *higher-order thoughts (HOTs)*. HOTs fail this test because many non-human mammals are subjects of experience, but lack HOTs.³⁰ Alternatively, a feature might fail the goldilocks test in the other direction. It may be a feature possessed by systems to which we do not pretheoretically wish to countenance as conscious. Examples of this might be *representational capacities* or *complexity* or even *information-integration*, which are possessed by very large systems

³⁰ For more on a HOT theory that embraces the entailment that non-human animals are not conscious, see Carruthers’ (1992), (1999), and (2004). For a reply to Carruthers’ position, see DeGrazia (1996), 112-115.

such as the Internet and the stock market. With pitfalls on either side, the goldilocks test is not easily passed.

The second test that any analogical objection will have to pass is the *plausibility test*. We may reasonably ask of any analogical variant, “Why is this feature important?” In many cases, there is no plausible answer. Language capacity is one classic example that fails the plausibility test.³¹ However, more nuanced analogical objections also fail the plausibility test. For example, Sam Coleman claims in passing that having representations “of one’s insides and outsides” is “certainly” a necessary condition for being a subject of experience. However, the mere observation that humans are subjects of experience and that humans have representational capacities, and indeed that the character of our experiences seems sensitive to representational features, is insufficient to show that representational capacities are *necessary* for being a subject of experience. At best, it merely shows that experience is sensitive to representational capacities. A significant shortcoming of any analogical variant is that the feature taken to be crucial will be a mere stipulation that, in some cases, is implausible on its face.

If there is a feature that can pass both the goldilocks test and the plausibility test, I do not know what it is. But even if we were able to identify a feature that did pass this test, we would not be warranted in concluding with great certainty that ultimates lack experientiality. Consider: the analogical version of the intuitive objection could be developed either as a deductive argument or as an inductive argument. In its deductive form, it would be something like:

³¹ See Searle (1994) for an extended treatment.

P1) Feature F is necessary for experientiality

P2) Ultimates lack F.

C1) Therefore, ultimates are not experiential.

However, whatever value of F we select, P1 will simply be too contestable to merit judging this argument sound. Alternatively, the analogical version of the intuitive argument might be developed as an inductive argument of the form:

*P1) All experiential subjects have features X, Y, and Z.

*P2) No ultimate has features X, Y, or Z.

*C1) Probably, no ultimate is an experiential subject.

But even this conclusion is unwarranted. *P1 is too strong, as written. A more perspicuous formulation would be something like “All *familiar* experiential subjects” or “All experiential subjects *like us*.”

At best, the analogical version of the intuitive objection can conclude that microexperiential properties, if they exist, must be in some sense *radically different* from our own human macroexperiential properties. For example, we could conclude that the “qualitative field” associated with the possession of microexperiential properties is drastically impoverished relative to the qualitative field associated with the possession of macroexperiential properties like ours. We might conclude that this qualitative field would not, in the case of ultimates, be sensitive to representations, to conceptualization,

or to cognition, generally. But we could not conclude that there is no qualitative field whatsoever. As Gregg Rosenberg argues:

When we speak of the qualitative field of some other, noncognitive, system, we are obviously not attributing to it the qualities of our own experiences. We are not attributing little pangs of pain or experiences of tiny blue dots to noncognitive systems. Whatever we are attributing, it is not any kind of feeling with which we can empathize. We are supposing that there are experienced qualities that share some essence with the qualities of our experience.³²

So, when the panpsychist attributes the possession of experiential properties to the fundamental bits of the world, these experiential properties are like our own only in barest essence—that is, only insofar as there is *something it is like* to possess them.

§1.5.2: “*But that is incoherent!*”

There is concern that the foregoing response to the analogical version of the intuitive objection borders on incoherency. It sounds as though what the panpsychist is attributing to ultimates are experiences to which our concept <experience> does not apply. However, this is too strong. What the panpsychist is attributing to ultimates is a sort of

³² Rosenberg (2004), 95. Also, Chalmers (2004), 160-161.

experientiality that shares some minimal essence with our own familiar experientiality.

Rosenberg and Chalmers both claim:

The best way to conceive of those qualitative fields is via a mental place holder for the solution to the analogy problem, “Y is to system X as experience is to the human mind,” which sets up Y as a qualitative experience that we know might exist, but which we cannot concretely imagine.³³

However, I think a better way to put things is that all the panpsychist is claiming in regard to *what it is like* to be an ultimate is simply that there is *something it is like* to be an ultimate—no more and no less.

The “incoherence” objector may push back, however. She may claim that what makes the Core Commitment so intuitively absurd is that the very attribution conditions for our predicate “is experiential” involve things like language capacity, or the disposition to exhibit certain behaviors, or the possession of similar neurobiology, or the possession of complex information processing, or any number of similar things. Insofar as no such feature is possessed by an ultimate, we find it absurd to predicate experientiality to ultimates.³⁴ Call this the “attribution conditions objection.”

The first response to the attribution conditions objection is to note that while “human experience” and “ultimate experience” would be radically different, they would

³³ Rosenberg (2004), 94. Also, Chalmers (2004), 160-161.

³⁴ Relevant considerations might include similar neurobiology, similar behavior, verbal reports, similar cognitive capacities, etc. Thanks to Robert Francescotti for making me aware of this objection.

be the same in some important essential way. Our first-person *non-essential* attribution conditions for “is experiential” may involve the complexity and richness of our own experience.³⁵ However, these features of our experience are non-essential. If we home in on the first-person *essential* feature of our phenomenal experience, our access to the essential features does not reveal anything that gives us reason to believe that the essential feature(s) cannot be instantiated in an ultimate constituent of the world. The essential feature of our experience is its bare “qualitativeness”—the fact that it *feels* a certain way from the inside. The richness and complexity of our own experience is inessential to our attribution conditions of the maximally simple predicate “is experiential.” It is this bare “qualitativeness” that is being posited at the level of ultimates, and the attribution conditions of the predicate, properly specified, do not, in fact warrant rejecting that ultimates are experiential subjects.³⁶

But assume I am wrong and ultimates do not satisfy our attribution conditions for the predicate “is experiential.” The second response to the attribution conditions objection is to say “So what?” While this variant of the intuitive objection might explain *why* we find the Core Commitment of panpsychism highly counterintuitive, it remains a weak objection. In fact, as an objection against panpsychism, the attribution conditions objection provides its own undoing. The attribution conditions objection explains *why* we find the Core Commitment counterintuitive while at the same time failing to support any conclusions regarding the (im)possibility of the Core Commitment being true in fact.

³⁵ DeGrazia refers to these as “sensory properties.”

³⁶ To quote Gregg Rosenberg, our concept of “experience” is tolerantly open-ended in such a way that there are no conceptual barriers to extending the boundaries of experientiality either down to the level of the fundamental bits of matter or out to large systems such as stock markets. See Rosenberg (2004), 85.

§1.5.3 Toward A Stronger Objection

Ultimately, what the analogical and non-analogical variants of the intuitive objection are latching onto are *inessential* features of experientiality. These are features that we can plausibly deny are necessary or relevant in the case of the microexperiential properties which the panpsychist claims populate the world. A strong version of the intuitive objection needs to latch onto some *essential* feature of experiential properties. And I think there may be such a feature.

Insofar as experiential properties are experienced, they seem to *matter*. That is, experiential properties seem to have *moral value*, and the intuitive ramifications of this fact suggest a much stronger version of the intuitive objection.³⁷ If this variant of the intuitive objection cannot be overcome, then panpsychism is an elegant theory that comes at a big intuitive cost. But if this objection *can* be overcome, then panpsychism is an attractive theory of consciousness that avoids the conceivability argument and avoids the brute emergence objection and that is consistent with the causal closure of physics and that does not face problems of causal overdetermination, all at minimal cost. I turn now to developing the objection from moral ruin.

³⁷ The reader who remains unconvinced by my dismissal of the variants of the intuitive objections rehearsed in Section 1.6 may choose to view my next chapter as merely *adding* to the problems faced by panpsychism!

Chapter 2 — Moral Ruin Lurking

In the previous chapter, I presented and attempted to motivate an ontological theory of consciousness called panpsychism. It holds (i) that the microphysical properties attributed to fundamental particles by physics are all dispositional properties, and (ii) that the categorical bases of these dispositional properties are “microexperiential” properties that are possessed by those same fundamental particles. In the previous chapter, I rehearsed the upshots of panpsychism but, noted that it is a theory that many find intuitively absurd. The reason for this is what I called the theory’s Core Commitment:

The Core Commitment: The fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties.

The Core Commitment sounds strange, and in the final section of the last chapter, I rehearsed a number of possible variants of the “intuitive objection” to panpsychism that target the Core Commitment. There, I argued that none of the variants rehearsed are particularly strong.

In this chapter, I present what I take to be the strongest variant of the intuitive objection: one that some have noted in passing but that has not yet been developed in the literature.³⁸ I call this the *objection from moral ruin*, which runs as follows:

The Objection from Moral Ruin

P1. If panpsychism is true, then all fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties. (Core Commitment)

P2. At least some experiential properties, in being possessed, ground certain moral obligations to their possessors. (Valence Conjecture)

C1. If panpsychism is true, then we have moral obligations to at least some fundamental constituents of the world.

P3. We have no moral obligations to any fundamental constituents of the world.

C2. Panpsychism is not true.

With Premise 1 having been addressed in Chapter 1, the focus of the present chapter is to defend Premises 2 and 3.

In Section 2.1, I discuss some preliminary problems with conceptualizing the experiential lives of fundamental particles. In Section 2.2, I turn to defending the Valence Conjecture—i.e., Premise 2 of the objection from moral ruin. I conclude in Section 2.3 by supporting Premise 3, and by examining what the objection from morally ruinous

³⁸ Chalmers (2014).

consequences entails for the panpsychist. I also argue that the obvious responses available to the panpsychist are undesirable, so in Chapter 3, I will suggest a more satisfactory means by which panpsychism can avoid the objection from moral ruin.

§2.1: The Experiential Lives of Particles

Before I support Premises 2 and 3 of the objection from moral ruin, there are some preliminary considerations to address. Other researches sympathetic to panpsychism have noted the theory's potential moral ramifications, at least in passing. However, the issue has not, to my knowledge, been critically examined. In the present chapter, I attempt to motivate why one might think that panpsychism's core commitment implies problematic moral ramifications *solely in virtue of the Core Commitment*.

Some versions of panpsychism—we may call them “liberal” versions—claim that experiential properties do not just pervade the fundamental level of the world, but that they also are possessed by innumerable non-cognitive, non-fundamental entities such as rocks and thermostats, in addition to being possessed by humans and other mammals. However, such claims are not essential to panpsychism, as it is open to the panpsychist to adopt principles according to which the experiential properties that are the intrinsic grounds of microphysical properties—call these “microexperiential properties”—only occasion “macroexperiential” properties under relatively rarified circumstances. On such versions of the theory—call them “minimalist” versions—panpsychism is only committed to the existence of all of the intuitively familiar “macroexperiential”

properties, such as those possessed by humans and some non-human animals, and the existence of the “microexperiential” properties possessed by the fundamental constituents of the world. Because panpsychism is *essentially* committed to the existence of microexperiential properties, I constrain the present discussion to the potential moral ramifications of that commitment. If moral problems exist for the “minimalist” panpsychist, then *a fortiori* they exist for the “liberal” panpsychist.

Note that it is significantly more plausible that problematic moral issues arise for what I am calling “liberal” versions of panpsychism than it is that problematic moral issues arise for what I am calling “minimalist” versions of panpsychism.³⁹ The reason is this: Recall that the panpsychist claims that microphysical properties are dispositional properties and that dispositional properties entail the existence of categorical bases and that the categorical bases of the microphysical properties are experiential properties. It is not clear whether these microexperiential properties can change, as this would amount to the categorical bases of dispositional properties changing. Granted the dispositional properties in question would be the microphysical properties and therefore so long as the dispositions remained unaffected, changes in their categorical bases would not violate the conservation of mass and energy, it nonetheless may seem odd that the categorical bases could change, especially in virtue of events that humans can precipitate. Insofar as “ought” implies “can,” moral problems will not arise in virtue of the Core Commitment if

³⁹ At least insofar as the Core Commitment is concerned. But even minimalist accounts may have difficulty developing plausible principles according to which systems like the Internet are not countenanced as experiential. As such, the minimalist panpsychist might nonetheless face implausible moral ramifications, just in the “other direction” than I am currently interested in.

microexperiential properties cannot change. (But note that even if they cannot change, something similar to the objection from moral ruin will still go through.⁴⁰)

However, it is at least not *obvious* that it would be impossible for such categorical bases to change, and so I will rehearse the objection from moral ruin on the assumption that they can, as this will pose the greatest threat to panpsychism. If panpsychism can overcome this strongest construal of the objection, then all the better for panpsychism. In the remainder of this thesis, I proceed under the assumption that human actions can affect these experiential properties in the sense that, for example, breaking a glass might affect all of the experiential properties of the fundamental entities that constituted that glass.

§2.2: Supporting the Valence Conjecture

In the present section, I argue that microexperiential properties ground certain interpersonal obligations, and hence that the Valence Conjecture—Premise 2 of the objection from moral ruin—is true. An interpersonal obligation concerns what a moral agent may do to a moral patient in virtue of facts about that moral patient. The relevant sense of grounding that I have in mind is as follows: X grounds Y iff Y holds ultimately at least partially in virtue of X. So, to say that a microexperiential property grounds a moral obligation is to say that the moral obligation holds at least partially in virtue of the

⁴⁰ If panpsychism is true, then all fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties. At least some experiential properties, in being possessed, constitute objectively valenced states of affairs. Ergo, if panpsychism is true, then the world may be radically different—value-wise—than we could imagine. For example, there might be innumerable pain-like experiences occurring right now and forever.

experiential property. So, in order to argue that microexperiential properties ground interpersonal prohibitions, I need to argue that microexperiential properties stand in a certain relation to the ultimate constituents of the world (i.e., “ultimates”) which possess them such that those ultimates are properly thought of as being *moral patients*. But in order to argue that ultimates are moral patients, I need to first determine what moral patiency amounts to.

§2.2.1: Particles as Patients and A Preliminary Problem

One way for an entity to be a moral patient is for that entity to be an entity with a *subjective welfare*—i.e., to be an entity such that things can go better or worse from that entity’s point of view. If we understand moral patiency in this way, then we can adopt the language of *interests* to refer to things that stand in certain relations to a patient’s subjective welfare.⁴¹ So, for example, a patient capable of feeling pain will have an *interest* in not feeling pain. Similarly, a patient capable of making autonomous decisions—where the making of such decisions, regardless of their consequences, is an activity that makes things go better for the patient from the patient’s point of view—will have an *interest* in making autonomous decisions.

We know from our own human case that being a subject capable of possessing at least certain experiential properties is apparently sufficient to have certain interests, such as the interest in not feeling pain. According to panpsychism, ultimates stand in the same

⁴¹ The notion of “interests” in this context should not be over-intellectualized such that it implies the capacity of a thing to “be interested in.”

sort of relation to experiential properties that we do insofar as we are subjects of experience. Also, we cannot rule out that at least some microexperiential properties are relevantly akin to the sorts of “macroexperiential” properties that we know are sufficient to ground interests on the part of the property-bearer. As such, we may provisionally conclude that the fundamental constituents of the world also have a subjective welfare and hence are moral patients.

Two objections to the foregoing conclusion immediately come to mind. First, all we know from our human experience is that at least *some* experiential properties, in being possessed, affect our subjective welfare. It may be the case that no microexperiential property is a member of the set of experiential properties that affect an entity’s subjective welfare and so microexperiential properties do not ground moral obligations to ultimates. While this point is well taken, it cannot, at this stage, be of any help to the panpsychist in avoiding the objection from moral ruin. Even if in fact no microexperiential property is a member of the set of experiential properties that affect an entity’s subjective welfare, to endorse that claim without principled reason for doing so is unacceptably *ad hoc*.⁴² Second, it may be that the moral value of apparently relevant experiential properties may not lie whatsoever in the experiential property itself, but rather wholly in some feature of the subject of the experience—some capacity—such as its ability to reflect on its own experiences.⁴³ On this line of thinking, it does not matter not if microexperiential properties are similar to apparently morally relevant human-sized experiences (i.e.,

⁴² The unacceptability of such an *ad hoc* insistence is defended in Section 2.4.

⁴³ Peter Carruthers argues that such self-awareness is necessary. For an extended counter-argument against Carruthers, see DeGrazia (1996), 112-115.

“macroexperiences”) because such macroexperiences are morally relevant wholly in virtue of something about the *subject* of the experience.

This objection might go one of two ways. First, one might simply object that experiential properties do not themselves matter, but rather the subjects of experiential properties matter. However, this simple form of the objection would fail to block the present argument in support of the Valence Conjecture given the panpsychist’s commitment to the Subject Thesis, which says that there can be no experience without a subject.

To strengthen this objection, one might press the point and object that in addition to the value not lying wholly in the experiential property itself, the value requires certain *capacities* on the part of the subject, capacities beyond just the mere capacity to be a subject of experience. If these capacities are not possessed by an ultimate, then microexperiential properties will not ground interpersonal prohibitions. Call this the “Special Capacities Objection.”

However, it is not clear that there are any such extra capacities that are required on the part of a subject of experience in order for experiences to be valuable—whether that value lies on the side of the experience, the side of the subject, or in the relation between the two. Reflecting on our own human case, it seems that *qua* subjects—and *just* subjects—at least some experiences are simply given to us without recourse to additional capacities. Such experiences simply feel a certain way, including good or bad, full stop. If this is correct, then insofar as the panpsychist holds the Subject Thesis, it follows that ultimates can experience things that matter to them: things that affect how things are

going from their point of view. The only relevant capacity is the capacity to possess experiential properties.

I will continue pressing the intuition that extra capacities beyond just the mere capacity to be a subject of experience are not required for experiences to affect a subject in ways that matter to that subject. Consider the case of a typical human infant. An infant has a woefully small conceptual set, lacks the capacity to reflect on her own experiences, lacks the capacity to reason or to deliberate, lacks the capacity to develop long-term memories, lacks the capacity to plan ahead, etc. Despite lacking all of these capacities, the human infant is a subject of experience, and this fact is sufficient for the infant to enjoy certain protections corresponding to the interests that the infant has in virtue of how certain things can affect her subjective welfare. Whatever extra capacities the Special Capacities Objection might wish to appeal to in blocking my argument that microexperiential properties ground interpersonal prohibitions do not seem to be possessed by an infant, and yet an infant is surely a moral patient.

To this point, it might be objected that a human infant is a moral patient in virtue of its “personhood” and not in virtue of its sentience. This would be mistaken. Such a “personhood” account would have to appeal to either species membership or to certain mental capacities. However, an infant does not occurrently possess the relevant mental capacities, and so in order to extend moral patiency to the infant, the capacities appeal would have to be an appeal to the potential of an infant to develop the relevant capacities.

Neither the species membership nor the capacities appeal can be successful in enfranchising an infant. Regarding the first appeal, species membership is a morally arbitrary feature. Membership in a given species is a trivial characteristic of a creature

that tracks a similarity relation that holds between that creature's genetic makeup and the genetic makeup of other creatures. But mere genetic makeup of a creature is not relevant to whether that creature is morally relevant for its own sake. It is plausible that a *Homo sapiens* who has little or no brain activity, and no possibility of regaining more brain activity, is not a moral patient. It is implausible that a *Homo sapiens* would be a moral patient, but an alien lifeform with all of the exact same cognitive capacities as that *Homo sapiens* would not be. The mere fact of species membership is not relevant to whether a creature is a moral patient, because moral patiency requires mattering *for one's own sake*.

Regarding the capacities appeal, the gap between potentially possessing morally relevant capacities and actually possessing them is too large. Moreover, even if mere potentiality were a morally relevant feature and could enfranchise the typical human infant, an appeal to potentiality would nonetheless fail to enfranchise the *genetically* cognitively disabled sentient human. A personhood account could only enfranchise such a person by appealing to species membership, and species membership simply is not plausibly relevant to whether an entity is a moral patient.

The Special Capacities Objection therefore faces a dilemma. Either her her account is sufficiently open ended that she enfranchises all sentient creatures, such as the infant, or else her account fails to enfranchise all such creatures. If the latter, than her account of moral patiency is to be rejected on grounds of implausibility. If the former, then her account is consistent with my argument that microexperiential properties ground interpersonal prohibitions.

With this initial objection addressed, we are warranted in concluding that the fundamental bits of matter are, on the panpsychist theory, moral patients. So far, we are

proceeding on the assumption that, for all we know, some microexperiences are relevantly akin to macroexperiences such as “pain.” We are operating under this assumption absent principled reason to think otherwise.⁴⁴ However, even granting this much, a problem for my argument remains. I turn now to addressing a stronger objection to my claim that fundamental particles are moral patients.

§2.2.2: *A More Serious Problem Case*

So far I have addressed to preliminary objects to the conclusion of the objection of moral ruin, which is that on panpsychism, the ultimate constituents of the world are moral patients. There is, however, a more serious objection to this conclusion.

As noted above, we are now assuming that ultimates, or “microsubjects,” have a subjective welfare and that they are therefore candidates for moral patiency. However, there is an important difference between microsubjects and typical human or non-human animal “macrosubjects.” Let us adopt the following notation: a typical macrosubject such as a dog possess *unified sentience*, where unified sentience refers to the capacity to be a subject of experience in addition to having cognitive capacities such as memory that are sufficient for psychological unity over time. By contrast, a microsubject possesses merely

⁴⁴ However, in Chapter 3, I will develop a reason to think that no microexperience is relevantly akin to the aforementioned sorts of macroexperiences.

bare sentience in the sense that, although it is capable of being a subject of experience, its sequential experiences are not psychologically unified.⁴⁵

Now, consider some typical dog, Rover. Assume that at time T1, I kick Rover in the face and that at T2 I rub Rover's belly. In performing these two actions, I have first reduced Rover's welfare and then I have increased it. Both experiences were had by the same experiential subject, and so both experiences affected how things were going from that subject's point of view. Microsubjects do not operate the same way. There is no psychological unity across changes in microexperiential properties. So, when I "kick" an ultimate at T1 and "rub its belly" at T2, there is not a single subject of experience who has undergone a variation in welfare. Rather, there are two *relevantly disconnected* experiential subjects, S1 and S2, the first which was subject only to my "kicking" activity and the second which was subject only to my "belly-rubbing" activity. While it is easy to see how a the dog might be a moral patient in virtue of possessing experiential properties, as the sequential possession of different experiential properties will correspond to changes in its subjective welfare, it is less clear how a *barely sentient* entity might be a moral patient in this same sense. In the absence of psychological unity, the sequential possession of different experiential properties does not constitute a *change* in subjective welfare for the ultimate.

⁴⁵ Note that this objection can be seen as a version of the "Special Capacities Objection" from Section 2.2.1. As such, one might respond to it in the same way that I responded in that section. I offer an alternative response for the following reason: In the Section 2.2.1 "Special Capacities Objection", the "plus" was the presence of some further mental capacity such as self-awareness. I have the strong intuition that no such capacity is necessary for being a morally-relevant subject of experience. However, in this second version of the objection, the "plus" is psychological unity, or (mental) persistence over time. It is not as strongly intuitive to me that psychological unity is unnecessary for being a moral patient as it is strongly intuitive to me that self-awareness (or some such capacity) is unnecessary.

Some have argued that a sentient entity who is incapable of experiencing a variation in subjective welfare cannot be a moral patient.⁴⁶ The idea is presumably based on the “ought implies can” intuition: If it is impossible for the content of a single subject’s experience to change, then it seems as though we cannot have obligations toward that subject. If correct, this claim suggests that barely sentient entities are not moral patients. However, this argument overlooks an important distinction between performing an action that modifies an entity’s subjective welfare as opposed from performing an action that brings into existence an entity with a certain subjective welfare.

In order to expand on the foregoing distinction, consider the creature that Jeff McMahan describes:

Imagine a sentient creature whose mental life consists of a stream of consciousness without any psychological connections.[...] It is not self-conscious and has no conception of the future. Not only does it have no memory or foresight, it also has no psychological architecture to carry forward: no structure of beliefs, desires, attitudes, dispositions, or traits of character.⁴⁷

Call this creature the “disunified creature.” McMahan reports the intuition that the described entity is not a moral patient.⁴⁸ However, when referring to the disunified

⁴⁶ Bernstein (1998), 23.

⁴⁷ McMahan (2002), 75.

⁴⁸ McMahan (2002), 475.

creature as *an* entity, we need to be careful. The disunified creature *qua* physical entity is a single, persisting entity. The same is not true of the disunified creature *qua* subject of experience. The disunified creature's series of experience is "gappy" or "chunked up" in a manner corresponding to each distinct experience, and each distinct experience has its own relevantly distinct subject. So, while in the case of the disunified creature there *is* a single persistent *physical* entity, the stream of experiences is neither continuous, nor are all of the experiences in the series possessed by the same subject. Contrast this with the case of a typical human. A typical human is also a single, persisting entity. However, in the typical human case, the series of experiences is continuous, not gappy, and every experience in that series is had by a single subject.

An ultimate considered as a persisting entity might not be a moral patient in virtue of it not having an associated single, persistent subject of experience that undergoes changes in subjective welfare. However, it seems plausible that the ultimate's (relevantly gappy) temporal parts *are* (each) moral patients. Say we take some ultimate U and we alternate between "kicking" it and "rubbing its belly." Refer to each temporal part of U using a numeric subscript and use as the relevant measure of time whatever duration is necessary for each experience to occur, so the first kick at T_0 causes a "kicking" experience at time T_1 , at which time the first belly rub interrupts, causing a "belling rubbing" experience at T_2 , and so on. U_1 is the subject at T_1 , U_2 at T_2 , and so on. My claim is that while the lack of psychological unity precludes U from being a moral patient, it is nonetheless plausible to think that U_1 , U_2 , U_3 , and so on are each moral patients. Despite U_1 's experiential existence being generated by and wholly consisting in a pain-like experience, surely U_1 nonetheless has an interest in not having such an

experience. If so, then this interest grounds an obligation on moral agents to refrain from performing relevant performing actions, such as “kicking” an ultimate.

However, things get murky here because in the case of U’s temporal parts, the entity to which I am attributing interests does not exist at the time of the relevant activity. It is hard to see how my ϕ -ing at T_0 (and ceasing to ϕ by T_1) can interpersonally wrong an entity that in some important sense does not exist until T_1 . For an analogous case that blows things up to a more familiar size, imagine a brilliant scientist who has performed exhaustive research and has developed a means by which he can spontaneously create a fully formed adult fox. He sets things up so that all he has to do is press a single button and the fox will spring into existence. The only catch is that for whatever reason, the fox will be in agonizing pain for its entire life, however long that may be.⁴⁹ Now, imagine that the scientist presses the button. Despite the fact that the fox does not exist at the time of the button pressing, it is my intuition that pressing the button constitutes not just an *impersonal* wrong, but rather an *interpersonal* wronging. So, it is possible for an act to interpersonally wrong an entity that does not exist at the time that the act is perpetrated. We may therefore owe moral obligations to fundamental particles despite the fact that their relevant temporal parts to whom those obligations are owed do not yet exist.

If my foregoing arguments are sound, then microexperiential properties ground *interpersonal* obligations and the Valence Conjecture is supported. With the Valence Conjecture—Premise 2 of the objection from moral ruin—defended, we may turn to defending Premise 3 of the objection from moral ruin. Premise 3 claims that we have no moral obligations to the ultimate constituents of the world. I defend Premise 3 in the next

⁴⁹ We may wish to stipulate that it was *impossible* for the scientist to produce the fox in any other way other than such that the fox would be in unending, invariable agonizing pain.

section by showing what absurd implications follow if Premise 3 is false. If Premise 3 is, like Premise 2, true, then panpsychism faces moral ruin.

§2.3: Facing Moral Ruin

In the previous section, I supported Premise 2 of the objection from moral ruin by arguing that microexperiential properties ground interpersonal obligations owed to fundamental particles. In this section, I will argue in support of Premise 3, which states that we, in fact, do not owe any obligations to fundamental particles.

First, recall that the objection from moral ruin is a version of the intuitive objection against panpsychism. The intuitive objection, I have claimed, just is the gut-level reaction that we have when entertaining the idea that there is *something it is like* to be a fundamental particle. In this section, I aim only to develop the full force of the apparent absurdity of thinking that we owe obligations to fundamental particles.

Of course, because the objection from moral ruin is meant to be an *argumentum a visceris*,⁵⁰ an available response is to simply bite the bullet and claim that we do, in fact, owe moral obligations to fundamental particles. I do not think that this is a good response, however. First of all, we all share a very strong intuition that we do not owe obligations to fundamental particles, and this intuition should not be rejected lightly. Second of all, biting the bullet makes panpsychism significantly less attractive from the perspective of theory choice. That is, if we assume that both physicalism and

⁵⁰ To borrow Galen Strawson's term. (See Strawson (2006), 17.)

panpsychism are on roughly equal footing in regard to how well they account for the qualitative character of experience, and if only one of these theories commits us to the moral significance of fundamental particles, this fact makes the other option more attractive. Third of all, we should only bite the bullet if our best theory commits us to doing so. Recall that the objection from moral ruin, and specifically Premise 2, goes through on the assumption that we cannot rule out that microexperiences are akin to pains rather than being akin to, say, smellings. In the next chapter, I will argue that the possibility of developing a principled reason for ruling out that any microexperience is morally significant lies in the correct theory of the *affective character of experience*. Roughly, the affective character of experience is the occurrent (un)pleasantness of the experience. If the best theory of affect commits us to all microexperiences being morally relevant, then perhaps we ought to bite the bullet regarding the objection from moral ruin. But if the best theory of affect does *not* commit us to this, then it would be premature to bite the bullet, just yet.

I turn now to developing the full force of the apparent absurdity of the idea that we owe moral obligations to fundamental particles. For illustration, consider that the typical human being is composed of 7×10^{27} atoms. Each atom is, in turn, composed of further subatomic particles. Thus, the number of microexperiential property instantiations in a single human being is a number with more than two-dozen digits. Multiply this number by the billions of humans on the planet and the number of digits increases to more than three-dozen digits. Next, factor in every non-human animal and their constitutive fundamental particles. Do the same for all of Earth's flora. Then, consider the constitutive fundamental particles of every non-living feature of the planet, including the

planet itself. Having taken stock of the number of fundamental particles on our planet, do the same for all of the other bodies in our solar system. Continue on doing this for every body in the Milky Way Galaxy. Finally, take whatever number you get, with however many digits it has, and add to it the sum totals of the remaining 100,000,000,000 galaxies in the observable universe. Call this number N . N represents the number of microexperiential property instances to which the panpsychist is committed. Whatever sort of moral obligations microexperiential properties ground, so long as the strength of those moral obligations is non-zero, the fact that there will be N entities that each ground such obligations is sufficient to motivate a *reductio* against panpsychism.⁵¹

The absurdity of the moral implications of panpsychism is as follows: First, we can never know whether, in performing any or other action, we are violating innumerable moral obligations. As such, morality becomes an impossible project, at least for epistemically non-ideal entities such as us. For example, it may be that every time I turn my head slightly to the left, I violate countless moral prohibitions placed on my actions by most of the local microphysical properties in my nose, half a dozen of the microphysical properties in your left foot, thirty of the microphysical properties in the passing breeze, and fourteen trillion of the microphysical properties right around the middle of the Andromeda Galaxy. Or perhaps when I stub my toe on the floor joint between my living room and my kitchen, I bring about innumerable valuable states of affairs in all of the microphysical properties of this planet's fourteen largest humpback

⁵¹ Note that it is the size of N that also renders the point moot whether microexperiential properties can change. Even if they cannot, it could not be ruled out that panpsychism entails that there may well be N subjects undergoing valenced experiences which cannot change. This is like being committed to the existence of N ceaselessly-screaming infants or N ceaselessly-orgasming adults. Surely, we must think, the world is not like *that* at the fundamental level.

whales, in which case I wonder whether I am not morally obligated to stub my toe more often. And more locally, it may well be that when a man kisses his husband, this man violates all of the obligations that he owes to the fundamental particles that compose his husband.

But imagine that we could know *that* our actions are violating moral prohibitions. We still need to know which actions, what prohibitions, how many prohibitions, and how strong they are. And even if we knew all of these things, we would still lack principles for adjudicating between conflicts between middle-level experiential properties and microexperiential properties. For example, imagine that I knew that beating you mercilessly would cause great pleasure in more than ninety percent of the microphysical properties in the Carina Nebula and thirty-four percent of the microphysical properties in the northern hemisphere of the sun. What am I to do? How am I to adjudicate between your claim to be free from undue harm and the claims of the aforementioned microphysical properties to feel pleasure (or, alternatively, the weight of the objective value of their pleasures)? But imagine that there were some fact of the matter about how to adjudicate between the aforementioned competing claims. Even if there were, we would lack access to it, and so could not justifiably adopt any such principles.

The foregoing problems are general moral problems. However, I think they have special force in the present context. For one, the range of possibilities just seems absurd. For another, we pretheoretically think that at *most*, all and only “animals” are moral patients. While it is hard to know where we ought to draw the cutoff point for what qualifies as an “animal,” suppose we err (massively) on the side of caution and say that there are one quadrillion animals. The number of moral patients contained in a *single*

typical human body is more than twelve orders of magnitude larger than the number of animals. Given the sheer numbers involved, the moral problems in the present context seem to have special force. Moreover, the moral problems would seem to be less tractable. For example, while it may be difficult to know how to adjudicate between the moral claims of a non-human animal and the moral claims of a human, it is especially difficult in the case of fundamental particles versus humans. At least in the case of animals, we have tools such as rudimentary communication, overt signs of behavior, and/or similar neurobiology to help guide us. In the case of fundamental particles, we have none of this. This problem is compounded by the fact that in the case of particles, the only grasp we have of what their experiences are *like* is as follows:

“The best way to conceive of those qualitative fields is via a mental place holder for the solution to the analogy problem, “Y is to system X as experience is to the human mind,” which sets up Y as a qualitative experience that we know might exist, but which we cannot concretely imagine.⁵²

For these reasons, I think that the problems listed above in regard to what follows if we take fundamental particles to be moral patients, despite being general moral problems, do have a special force.

⁵² Rosenberg (2004), 94. Also, Chalmers (2004), 160-161.

Now, to avoid the aforementioned problems, perhaps we could just stipulate that morality is a human project restricted only to macro-level experiential properties and that it does not enfranchise micro-level experiential properties. Or, alternatively, we might just stipulate that even N “micro-obligations” can never add up to outweigh a single human or animal whim, no matter how fleeting, so that even N-many prohibitions could never be sufficiently weighty to require any middle-level entity to alter its behavior in any way. For example, even if your ϕ -ing would cause N “micro-pain” states to be instantiated, the mere fact that you, a middle-level entity has even the slightest interest, the slightest whim to ϕ is sufficient to override the N “micro-prohibitions.”

The problem in either of these cases is that we have no positive reason to think that they are true. Moreover, even if we did adopt (or develop) them, the panpsychist would not miss the brunt of the *reductio*, as adopting them would constitute a massive revision to moral theorizing. That is, to recognize the existence of N moral patients but to not enfranchise them merely by fiat amounts to a significant revision of morality. Likewise, adopting a principle such that even N “micro-prohibitions” can never practically affect a middle-level moral agent such as a human, or that N “micro-prohibitions” can never outweigh a single middle-level “macro-prohibition,” no matter how weak, is also massively revisionary. In either case the panpsychist faces implications that are strongly intuitively absurd. Insofar as panpsychism aims to present an attractive alternative to physicalism, these implications are best avoided. Premise 3—the claim that we owe no moral obligations to the ultimate constituents of the world—is supported, and the objection from moral ruin has been defended.

Of course, as noted, the panpsychist might at this point concede the point and simply bite the bullet.⁵³ Biting the bullet is not an acceptable response, however, insofar as one is interested in convincing other philosophers that panpsychism is worth their time and scholarly attention *because* it offers a number of attractive theoretical features at a *low cost*. The moral implications just rehearsed are very much a high cost, and to simply bite the bullet is to just concede the high cost and report a willingness to pay it.

In the next chapter, I want to offer an alternative response to the objection from moral ruin that does not require biting the bullet and that allows the panpsychist to not abandon her theory. That is, I want to suggest how the panpsychist can avoid the objection from moral ruin while still avoiding the conceivability argument, while still avoiding “brute emergence,” while still affirming the Subject Thesis, and while still achieving the two causal desiderata of panpsychism. I turn now to presenting this alternative.

⁵³ This was Philip Goff’s response in email correspondence.

Chapter 3 — The Significance of Experience

In the previous chapter, I presented what I take to be the strongest version of the “intuitive objection” to panpsychism, which I called the objection from moral ruin. According to the objection from moral ruin, the panpsychist’s commitment to the claim that the fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties implies that we owe moral obligations to those fundamental bits of matter, which is absurd. I concluded the previous chapter by noting a few responses that the panpsychist might give to the objection from moral ruin, and I argued that none of them are satisfactory.

The best response for the panpsychist is to say that no microexperiential property has moral significance, but in the absence of principled reasons for thinking this is the case, she cannot do so.⁵⁴ However, if there are independently plausible principled reasons to think that no microexperience is morally valenced, then the objection from moral ruin can legitimately be avoided and panpsychism will thereby have avoided the most powerful form of the intuitive objection. If panpsychism can accomplish this feat, that would suggest that it is a more viable ontological theory of consciousness than has been granted.

In the present chapter, I try to offer such a principled means by which microexperiential properties can be shown to lack moral significance. More specifically, I

⁵⁴ It also would not fully avoid the force of the intuitive objection, as it would amount to a major revision of our understanding of morality.

argue that no microexperiential property is a member of the set of valenced experiential properties. I do this by distinguishing two types of experiential properties associated with the qualitative character of experience and arguing that one type, and not the other, is morally relevant. This allows the panpsychist to identify microexperiential properties with the type of experiential properties which are not valenced.⁵⁵

In Section 3.1, I distinguish between what may be called the *affective* character of experience and the *phenomenal* character of experience. In Section 3.2, I argue that the affective character of an experience is not wholly determined by the phenomenal character of that experience. In order to show why this fact is significant, I first argue in Section 3.3 that the affective character is the uniquely morally relevant feature of experience. Finally, in Section 3.4, I show how these considerations allow the panpsychist to avoid the objection from moral ruin. I conclude in Section 3.5 by stating the significance of what I have argued.

§3.1: Parsing the Qualitative Character of Experience

Let us begin by adopting the following terminology regarding features of our experiences: The *qualitative character* of an experience is to be understood as the totality of *what it is like* to undergo the experience. The *phenomenal character* of an experience is to be understood as the (modality-specific?) distinctive feel associated with the

⁵⁵ The valenced experiential properties are to then be understood as second-order properties that are occasioned in more rarified circumstances, such as when the non-valenced experiential properties are arranged human-wise.

experience.⁵⁶ Finally, the *affective* character of an experience is to be understood as the occurrent (un)pleasantness associated with the experience. To illustrate the distinction between phenomenal character and affective character, consider the following: An orgasm feels nice. Hearing the Wiener Philharmoniker also feels nice. Hearing a screaming infant, however, does not. We may say that the experience of having an orgasm and the experience of hearing the Wiener Philharmoniker are *phenomenally* dissimilar but *affectively* similar experiences. Likewise, hearing the Philharmoniker might be seen as being *phenomenally* similar to hearing a screaming infant, but *affectively* dissimilar.⁵⁷

Presumably, phenomenal character and affective character jointly comprise the qualitative character. Let us use the letters Q, P, and A to symbolize the qualitative, phenomenal, and affective character of experience, respectively. Using this notation, we can symbolize the foregoing point as follows: **Q=P+A**. However, affect is, I will argue in Section 3.3 the morally relevant feature of the qualitative character of experience. So, our present project is to determine the relation between the phenomenal character and the affective character of an experience. Externalist theories of affect claim that an experience has the affective character that it does in virtue of something external to the

⁵⁶ “Phenomenal character” is a bit of an unfortunate term. I have heard this feature of experience referred to as the “sensory core” and also as the “sensory-discriminative” component of pain. However, such terms are unable to generalize to the context of negatively valenced *emotional* (i.e., non-perceptual) states. As such, I have opted to employ the unfortunate term “phenomenal character” and to give it a stipulative definition.

⁵⁷ Regarding phenomenal character, note that the relevant similarity measure would intuitively hold at the level of types, rather than at the level of tokens. There is a sense in which the phenomenal character associated with smelling a petunia differs from the phenomenal character associated with smelling a pot of coffee. So, for the sake of ease, we might restrict our discussion to *sensory* pleasures and thus mark off different phenomenal types according to different sensory modalities. Any “smelling” experience would be a token of the smelling-type, and any “hearing” experience would be a token of the hearing-type. So, we can say that all smellings are phenomenally similar, while every smelling is phenomenally dissimilar to every hearing.

experience (i.e., $Q=P+A$; $P+X \Rightarrow A$). Internalist theories of affect say that an experience has the affective character that it does in virtue of something internal to the experience (i.e., $Q=P+A$; $P \Rightarrow A$).

On the face of things, it seems that externalism can help panpsychism, while internalism cannot. If externalism is correct, then the mere having of an experience is insufficient for that experience to have an affective character: something more is needed, such as that experience playing a certain role in the subject's mental economy. Given the sheer simplicity of an ultimate, there is no such mental economy and so whatever "something more" is required for an experience to have affective character, an ultimate will lack it. Thus, if externalism is correct, then despite the fundamental bits of matter being subjects of experience, their experiences will not matter morally. On the other hand, if internalism is correct, then the mere having of an experience is, or can be sufficient for that experience having the affective character that it does. Thus, we will have no principled reason to say that no microexperience is affectively similar to macroexperiences such as pleasures and pains, and the objection from moral ruin will go through.

I will argue in the next section that, properly clarified, both theories are in fact consistent with each other, and I will then develop an account of affect such that no microexperience will have affective character. Insofar as it is the affective character of experience and not the phenomenal character that is morally relevant, this suggests that panpsychism can avoid the objection from moral ruin. I turn now to a clarification and unification of the two theories.

§3.2: Unification Through Clarification

In order to evaluate these two theories of affect—internalism and externalism—we must first get clear on the term “experience.” When the externalist claims that what makes an experience a pleasant one is something external to the experience and the internalist claims that what makes an experience a pleasant one is something internal to the experience, what are they saying? It is unclear whether by “experience” they are referring to the totality of the felt experience (i.e., they are referring to qualitative character) or to the modality-specific *feel*, such as just the bare sensation of a perceptual experience as presented through the sense organs and prior, perhaps, to sophisticated conceptualization (i.e., they are referring to phenomenal character). So, we may distinguish “experience” understood in the broad sense as qualitative character (call this Q-experience) from “experience” understood in the narrow sense as phenomenal character (call this P-experience). With this distinction, we may unify the internalist and externalist accounts.

§3.2.1: *Internalism about Affect*

To begin this attempt at unification, first consider the internalist theory of affect. In its simplest form, it can be stated as follows:

Internalist Theory of Affect 1 (ITAI): An experience is a pleasure iff the experience has some intrinsic feature F, where it is in virtue of F that the experience is a pleasure.

For the sake of charity, I will interpret the instance of “experience” in the analysandum as “Q-experience.” The question then is how to interpret the term “experience” in the analysans. Stuart Rachels’ defense of internalism makes clear that what the internalist has in mind for the analysans is P-experience. He writes:

“On this view, it is an intrinsic, nonrelational fact about certain experiences that they are unpleasant. *Unpleasantness, on this view, supervenes on qualia: there cannot be a change in unpleasure intensity without a change in qualia.*”⁵⁸ (emphasis added)

This suggests that internalism is to be formulated as follows:

ITA2: A Q-experience is a pleasure iff the associated P-experience has some intrinsic feature of *feeling pleasant*.

So, a pleasure is a Q-experience consisting of an intrinsically pleasant-feeling P-experience. Note that on *ITA2*, $Q=P+A$, but A is either a component of P or else is wholly determined by, and supervenient on, P.

The problem with *ITA2* is that it makes the affective character of a given experience a brute fact. That is, a pleasure just is a P-experience that, as matter of brute fact, *just does* have the intrinsic feature of feeling pleasant. It therefore sheds no light on the nature of affect. Additionally, it fails to explain some

⁵⁸ Rachels (2000), 195.

features of affectively pleasant experiences. Murat Aydede (2014) lists a number of these features, but most germane to the present discussion are:

Motivation: Pleasant sensations are intrinsically motivating in that they *all by themselves* provide *motivating* (albeit defeasible) reasons for their subjects.

and

Opposite Valences: Unpleasantness is opposite of pleasantness.⁵⁹

Regarding *Motivation*, *ITA2* is unable to explain why affectively pleasant experiences motivate us except by stipulating it as a brute feature of the nature of pleasantness (which in turn just is a brute feature of certain P-experiences). Regarding *Opposite Valences*, *ITA2* is unable to explain why the affective character of an unpleasant experience is the opposite of the affective character of a pleasant experience. Once again, the internalist must simply stipulate that it is a brute feature of the nature of pleasantness that it has the opposite valence of unpleasantness. So, all affect is a felt-quality, but some of these felt-qualities just are of the opposite valence from some other of these felt-qualities. On *ITA2*, all of the observed features of pleasures are brute.

There is an additional problem for *ITA2*. Consider the following phenomena: as a child, I did not find the taste of coffee to be pleasant, but as an adult I do. Conversely, as an adult, I do not find the taste of soda to be pleasant, but as a teenager I did. Similarly, sitting in traffic yesterday, I did not find the sound of car horns to be grating, but today I

⁵⁹ Aydede (2014), 123-5.

did. For the internalist, a change in affect entails a change in P-experience. Duplicates of a given P-experience cannot differ in respect to their affective character, because the affective character is an intrinsic feature of the P-experience. If we focus on just perceptual experiences such as those mentioned in the examples just given, then the phenomenal character is the perceptual sensation associated with the experience, as given via the relevant perceptual modality. What *ITA2* entails, then, is that my *perceptual* experience of coffee as a child is different from my *perceptual* experience of coffee, now. But this just seems wrong. The sensation—the P-experience—has not changed, rather my “response” to it has. The P-experience is registered through my relevant sensory modalities in just the same way as an adult as it did as a child, and what is responsible for the change in felt pleasantness is something external to the P-experience, itself. But if the internalist is correct, then in the coffee case, my *perceptual* experiences were different, and same with the soda case. Similarly, my perceptual experience when hearing the car horns in traffic yesterday were entirely different from my perceptual experiences when hearing the car horns in traffic, today. This just does not seem to be the correct answer. For one, surely, one speaks truly when one says something like “the taste has not changed, I just no longer like it.” For another, surely our P-experiences, such as our perceptual experiences as provided through our various sensory modalities, are not all *sui generis* phenomena in the way entailed by *ITA2*.

A third problem for internalism is that its core motivating intuition fails to count uniquely in its favor. To see why, consider the following claim from Rachels:

When you twist your ankle or jam your finger, the experience itself seems to hurt; the unpleasantness seems to be right there in it. Don't just think about this in the abstract; examine your unpleasures. Introspection, though fallible, provides evidence for [internalism].⁶⁰

The problem is that this intuitive appeal is consistent with a rejection of *ITA2*, where *ITA2* claims that the felt unpleasantness of the experience of jamming your finger is an intrinsic feature of the P-experience. Indeed, the intuition being appealed to is consistent with the claim that the felt unpleasantness is an intrinsic feature of the Q-experience of jamming your finger. The fact that it *feels* unpleasant when one jams one's finger merely shows that the qualitative character associated with the experience of jamming one's finger includes a felt negative affective character. But it is consistent with this observed fact that the felt unpleasantness is at least partially determined by something independent of the relevant P-experience.

Internalism as stated in *ITA2* is to be rejected. It fails to provide informative answers to our observations regarding the nature of pleasantness, it gives the intuitively wrong answer in regard to phenomena such as acquired taste, it renders P-experiences to be counterintuitively *sui generis*, and its motivating intuition is consistent with alternative theories. But from these problems, we can draw the lesson that the affective character of experience has a phenomenological reality in the subject of a pleasure. That is, all pleasures *feel* pleasant. Thus, the kernel of truth in internalism is that a pleasure is a Q-experience constituted by a P-experience and a positive A-experience. Pleasures are

⁶⁰ Rachels (2000), 196.

intrinsically pleasant because that affect—the pleasantness—partially constitutes the sort of qualitative character which we refer to as being a pleasure.

Let us now turn to clarifying externalism. Externalism can informatively account for what makes an experience pleasant, why pleasant experiences motivate us, and why pleasures and unpleasures have opposite valences. Also, it gives us the correct answers in regard to the phenomenon of acquired taste. And finally, if clarified, it can be made consistent with the internalist intuition that the pleasantness of an experience is “right there in it.”

§3.2.2: *Externalism about Affect*

The externalist theory of affect, in its simplest form, can be (ambiguously) stated as follows:

Externalist Theory of Affect 1 (ETA1): An experience is a pleasure iff the experience meets external conditions X.

On this formulation, *desire theory* about affect is externalist. According to desire theory, the external condition that an experience must satisfy is being the target of a desire (or appropriate “pro-attitude.” *Causal role* theories of affect can also be interpreted as externalist on this formulation. According to such a theory, the external condition that an experience must satisfy is playing a certain causal role in the subject’s mental economy.

But *ETA1* requires clarification in light of the ambiguity of the term “experience.” Perhaps the most careful formulation of externalism comes from Chris Heathwood, which is given as follows:

a sensation S, occurring at time t, is a sensory pleasure at t iff the subject of S desires, intrinsically and *de re*, at t, of S, that it be occurring at t.⁶¹

Heathwood’s analysis suggests that what the externalist has in mind is as follows:

ETA2: A P-experience is a pleasure iff the P-experience meets external conditions X.

According to *ETA2*, to be a pleasure just is to be a P-experience meets some condition that is external to that P-experience. On this view, the affective character—the pleasantness—is nothing more than the meeting of external condition X. So, on desire theory, the property of being pleasant just is the property of being desired. Alternatively, on causal role theory, the property of being pleasant just is the property of playing the appropriate causal role. Externalists take this view of pleasantness because they are motivated by the *heterogeneity intuition*. According to the heterogeneity intuition, the range of P-experiences that are pleasant is so diverse that there can be nothing *internal* that is common to all such P-experiences that renders them pleasant. Thus, the externalist looks elsewhere for an explanation of why all pleasurable P-experiences are pleasant.

⁶¹ Heathwood (2007), 23-44.

But the heterogeneity intuition is mistaken. For one, properly specified, it fails to rule out that pleasantness is a felt-quality that is common to all pleasures. The mistake underwriting the intuition arises because the externalists interprets the instance of the term “experience” in the analysandum of *ETA2* as “P-experience,” rather than as “Q-experience.” But if we understand a pleasure as a Q-experience that consists of a P-experience plus a phenomenologically-real A-experience, then we can account for the heterogeneity of pleasures by appeal to the varying P-experiences while also affirming the phenomenal reality of pleasantness.

In being motivated by the heterogeneity intuition, the externalist throws the baby out with the bathwater. For example, consider Heathwood when he writes:

[S]uffice it to say, the phenomenology just doesn’t bear it out—there doesn’t seem to be any one feeling common to all occasions on which we experience pleasure or enjoyment⁶²

But of course there is a feeling common to all pleasures: they all *feel* pleasant! By failing to distinguish between Q-experience and P-experience, the externalist considers a pleasure to be a P-experience and, upon noting the heterogeneity amongst P-experiences which are pleasurable, looks beyond the qualitative character of the experience to locate the pleasantness of that experience. But a pleasure’s being a pleasure does not consist in its being desired or in its playing a causal role. A pleasure’s being a pleasure consists in its *feeling* pleasant. Of course, it is open to us to say that the *pleasantness*—the positive

⁶² Heathwood (2007), 24.

A-experience—is at least partially determined by the fact that the relevant P-experience is desired or by the fact that the relevant P-experience plays a certain causal role.

By correcting externalism in the way that I have suggested, we yield the following corrected theory of affect:

Corrected Theory of Affect (CTA): A Q-experience is a pleasure iff the associated P-experience meets external conditions X, where X at least partially determines A, and where P and A jointly constitute Q.

Note first that *CTA* can explain the nature of pleasantness and can also account for *Motivation* and *Opposite Valence*:

Motivation: Pleasant sensations are intrinsically motivating in that they *all by themselves* provide *motivating* (albeit defeasible) reasons for their subjects.

and

Opposite Valences: Unpleasantness is opposite of pleasantness.⁶³

To see why, stipulate for illustration that the external conditions X are being the object of a desire. According to CTA, for an A-experience to be an experience of felt-pleasantness just is for a P-experience to be desired in a certain way. So, pleasantness is determined, at least partially, by a desire. Similarly, *Motivation* is explained because pleasurable

⁶³ Aydede (2014), 123-5.

experiences are partially determined by desires, and our desires give us motivating reasons. *Opposite Valences* is explained in virtue of the relevant desires, so that pleasantness is the opposite of unpleasantness because the former is determined by, roughly, a desire that the P-experience continue, while the latter is determined by, roughly, a desire that the P-experience cease.

Also note that *CTA* yields the correct answer in regard to acquired taste-type phenomena. On *CTA*, my perceptual experience of coffee as a child is the same as my perceptual experience of coffee as an adult, and the fact that one was an instance of pleasure while the other was not is to be explained in virtue of differing affect, which is explained in virtue of the associated perceptual experience meeting differing external conditions in each case.

Finally, note that *CTA* is consistent with the motivating intuition behind internalism. Recall that intuition was that the unpleasantness of an experience is “right there in it.” I argued in the preceding subsection that the proper way to understand this intuition is that pleasures are intrinsically pleasant because that affect—the pleasantness—partially constitutes the sort of qualitative character which we refer to as being a pleasure. What matters in regard to this intuition is not the relationship between P and A, but rather the relationship between A and Q. That is, what matters is that the affective character be “right there in” the Q-experience, not necessarily “right there in” the P-experience. While on *CTA* the affective character is not wholly determined by P, the affective character *is* partially constitutive of the qualitative character—the totality of the felt qualities—associated with the experience, and this all that matters in regard to the motivating intuition behind internalism.

To conclude, a pleasure is not a P-experience that is desired (externalism) or just a special sort of P (internalism). Rather, a pleasure is a Q-experience that consists of a P-experience with an associated A-experience. The A-experience is phenomenally real and is partially determined by features external to the P-experience. So the internalist intuition that the affect is internal to the “experience” is correct, when properly disambiguated. And the externalist intuition that “experiences” are too varied to share a common feature that determines their associated affective character is also correct, properly disambiguated. My account, *CTA*, unites these the two theories.

The final step is to see whether *CTA* can be of use to the panpsychist in regard to avoiding the objection from moral ruin. On *CTA*, the affective character of an experience (note: subsequent unqualified use of “experience” should be understood as referring to Q-experience) is partially determined by facts external to the phenomenal character of the experience. What this means is that a P-experience does not bring its own affective character along with it. If the only morally relevant feature of experiences are their affective character, then the panpsychist may be able to avoid the objection from moral ruin. In the next section, I will defend the claim that affect is the uniquely morally relevant feature of morality, and in the following section, I will sketch how this fact may be of use to the panpsychist.

§3.3: The Moral Significance of Q

In this section, I present three considerations that I think support the claim that affective character, and not phenomenal character, is the morally significant feature of qualitative

experience. If I am correct, then the panpsychist may be able to avoid the objection from moral ruin: If only affective, and not phenomenal, experiences are morally relevant, then just because panpsychism posits the existence of microexperiential properties, these properties need not be members of the morally relevant set of experiential properties.

The first consideration in favor of the claim that affective character, and not phenomenal character, is the morally significant feature of qualitative experience is that research by experimental philosophers seems to support it. In a 2007 study, Gray et. al. studied subjects' attributions of moral patiency across eighteen different conditions. These different conditions corresponded with the possession of various mental "capacities." The aim of the study was to discover the relationship between these mental capacities and ascriptions of moral patiency. Their interpretation of the data suggested categorizing eleven of the capacities under a single factor that they termed "Experience." The remaining seven capacities were categorized under a factor they termed "Agency." The "Experience" capacities were associated with a greater incidence of attribution of moral patiency than were the "Agency" capacities. Within the "Experience" factor, the following list orders the capacities in descending order of association with moral patiency: hunger, fear, pain, pleasure, rage, desire, personality, consciousness, pride, embarrassment, and joy. This ranking suggests that subjects' attribution of moral patiency tracked the "strength" of the affective character of the mental capacity. For example, while both fear and embarrassment are unpleasant experiences, fear is, in general, more strongly unpleasant than is embarrassment.⁶⁴ The data therefore may

⁶⁴ Gray, H. M., Gray, K. & Wegner, D. M. (2007), 619.

plausibly be construed as supporting the claim that ascriptions of moral patiency track affective character.

Of course, even if this interpretation of the data is legitimate, all that this suggests is that people *think* affective character is what matters morally, which supports—but doesn't entail—that it does in fact matter morally. For this reason, I offer two more pieces of support of that stronger claim.

To bolster the empirical evidence, we can reflect on scenarios and consult our own intuitions. The sorts of scenarios that we craft need not be overly fanciful, for there are living humans who are apparently capable of experiencing pain without feeling it to be unpleasant. The condition is known as *pain asymbolia*. Individuals with pain asymbolia have functioning nociceptors that transmit nociceptive signals from the site of the noxious stimulus to the brain for processing.⁶⁵ Pain asymbolics are aware of the location, intensity, and qualitative character of an administered pain, and they feel it as a pain.⁶⁶ However, they do not find the pain to be unpleasant. Indeed, pain asymbolics are known to even laugh at their pain experiences when being administered noxious stimuli in clinical settings.⁶⁷ With this in mind, consider the following scenario:

⁶⁵ See Grahek (2007). Particularly pages 89-93, 98-102, and 139-140.

⁶⁶ This is to be contrasted with individuals with congenital insensitivity to pain, who can also discriminate the sensory features of a noxious stimuli, but who do not have properly functioning nociceptors and who therefore do not feel pains (in addition to not feeling the noxious stimuli as unpleasant. Pain asymbolics feel the pain—that is they feel the noxious stimuli via nociception, but do not feel the pain as unpleasant. See Danziger (2006) for more on congenital insensitivity to pain. See Grahek (2007) for more on the distinction between congenital insensitivity to pain and pain asymbolia. E.g., Grahek (2007) 101-102. Grahek also distinguishes pain asymbolia from the effects of morphine—see Grahek (2007) 139.

⁶⁷ Grahek (2007), 140.

Ashlyn

Without merit, Brandon despises Ashlyn, who is a pain asymbolic. He decides to cut her with a knife that has been modified so that being cut with it causes no lasting physical damage. When the day finally comes, Brandon sneaks up behind Ashlyn at the beach and cuts her as she is tanning.

Brandon has plausibly behaved in such a way that he is morally blameworthy. However, has Brandon wronged Ashlyn? Were Ashlyn a typical person, the answer would be a clear “yes.” However, given Ashlyn’s condition, it seems as though Brandon has not interpersonally wronged Ashlyn, at least not in the way that he would have were Ashlyn a typical experiential subject. Although there would be a phenomenal character to Ashlyn’s experience, that experience would not be morally relevant. This suggests that affective character, and *not* phenomenal character, is the morally relevant feature of the qualitative character of experience.

However, some may find there to be an important defect with the foregoing argument. The problem is my focus on a single, *local* experience, rather than my making a global claim regarding subjects of experiences. I argued that Brandon’s cutting Ashlyn with the modified knife does not wrong Ashlyn. However, this might not be true. While Brandon’s cutting might not violate Ashlyn’s right to be free from undue pain, it may violate some other right that she has in virtue of various other interests of hers. To defend against this objection, I must broaden my claim: My claim must be that an individual capable only of phenomenal experiences and incapable of *any* affective experience (including being incapable of experiencing non-perceptual affectively-valenced mental

states such as emotions, which is *not* the case for individuals with pain asymbolia) cannot be wronged by an act such as Brandon's. So, while Brandon's cutting Ashlyn did not violate Ashlyn's right to be free from undue pain, it may have violated one of her other rights. However, these other rights, I claim, hold only in virtue of the fact that she does have a subjective welfare in virtue of being able to undergo other affective experiences (such as emotions or feelings).

As a third and final piece of support for the claim that the sort of moral relevance discussed in Chapter 2 tracks the affective character of experience and not the phenomenal character of experience, consider the role that experiential properties already play in moral philosophy. For one, utilitarians compare, rank, and aggregate different experiential properties according to their moral significance. So an experience of great pain might counterbalance, say, ten experiences of moderate pleasure. Alternatively, one billion small pleasures might aggregate to more than a single moderate pleasure. Not dissimilarly, when determining proportionality of punishment to crime, or when determining what compensation is owed by a rights-violator (or, offender) to a victim, deontologists also must compare harms and benefits. For experiences and for harms and benefits (excepting, perhaps, those which wholly concern property rights) to be quantifiable in this way, the salient experiential feature must be one that remains consistent across the experiences in question. The property that remains consistent across the experience of having your arm wrongfully broken or of watching your dog be wrongfully killed is not the phenomenal property, but rather the affective property—the occurrent (un)pleasantness. Given that moral theorists already compare, rank, and even aggregate experiences, and given the variation in sensory character of the experiences

that are compared, such theorists must be taking themselves to be comparing, ranking, and aggregating the affective character of those experiences, rather than their phenomenal characters. This fact suggests that we already take affective character to be the uniquely morally relevant feature of the qualitative character of experience.

Together, the foregoing three considerations support the claim that the moral significance of experiences lies in their affective character and not in their sensory character. I conclude that the affective character of experience is the uniquely morally relevant feature of the qualitative character of experience that I turn now to showing how this fact may help the panpsychist avoid the objection from moral ruin.

§3.4: Sketching the Solution

I have argued that the affective character of experience is the uniquely morally relevant feature of the qualitative character of experience and that the affective character of experience is at least partially determined by facts external to the phenomenal character of the experience in question. What this means is that the qualitative character of an experience with a given phenomenal character, when that phenomenal character does not satisfy the relevant external conditions, is wholly constituted by the phenomenal character. In such a case, there is no affective character, and thus the experience is not morally relevant. Because ultimates are, considered singly, maximally simple, the P-experiences to which the panpsychist ascribes them—presumably as a matter of brute fact—cannot meet any external conditions. For example, an ultimate's P-experiences cannot be made the object of one of the ultimate's propositional attitudes, nor can it play

any causal role in the ultimate's mental economy. Thus, the qualitative character of an ultimate's experiences is exhausted by the phenomenal character. Given that the phenomenal character is not morally relevant, no experience had by an ultimate is morally relevant. The objection from moral ruin no longer goes through. To illustrate, recall:

The Objection from Moral Ruin

P1. If panpsychism is true, then all fundamental constituents of the world possess experiential properties. (Core Commitment)

P2. At least some experiential properties, in being possessed, ground certain moral obligations to their possessors. (Valence Conjecture)

C1. If panpsychism is true, then we have moral obligations to at least some fundamental constituents of the world.

P3. We have no moral obligations to any fundamental constituents of the world.

C2. Panpsychism is not true.

My arguments in this chapter give us a principled reason to reject that P1 and P2 jointly entail C1.

§3.5: Conclusion

I have argued that panpsychism is best formulated as a version of Russellian Monism according to which the categorical bases of the dispositional properties that are the microphysical properties postulated by fundamental physics are experiential properties. On this formulation, panpsychism entails that there is *something it is like* to be a fundamental constituent of the world. I then argued that of the various reasons that we intuitively reject the idea that there is *something it is like* to be, for example, an electron, the strongest reason for rejecting that idea is that it seems to entail that we owe moral obligations to electrons. Finally, I argued that by properly parsing the qualitative character of experience, we can see that no such moral implications are entailed by panpsychism. I conclude that panpsychism is a more attractive ontological theory of the qualitative character of experience than has been granted.

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