

Emergence Cannot Save Dualism, but Neo-Aristotelianism Might

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ABSTRACT:

To account for the neurological dependence of mental states on brain states, substance dualists, such as Dean Zimmerman and William Hasker, appeal to emergence. Accordingly, the human soul—a mereologically simple mental substance—is naturally emergent from and dependent on the structure and function of a human brain and nervous system. According to David Chalmers this view counts as a type of protopanpsychism, which avoids the combination problem. I agree that this view is a type of protopanpsychism, but I think it does not escape an alteration of the combination problem. I raise two objections: (i) a sorites argument, and (ii) a type of combination argument similar to those raised against protopanpsychism. I combine these problems arguing that it is implausible that by adding a single atomic simple we get a new whole constituted by internal relations from a subvenient structured object constituted by external relations.

In conclusion, I suggest such a neo-Aristotelian alternative. Accordingly, the parts of the body are inseparable parts standing in internal relations to each other and to the essence of the soul. The internal essence of the soul informs the development of the body according to law-like developmental events. I argue that this hybrid view avoids the neurological dependence problem and the combination problems. I also explain how this hybrid view shows promise in dealing with the causal pairing problem among other issues.

Introduction

To account for the neurological dependence of mental states on brain states, substance dualists, such as Dean Zimmerman and William Hasker, appeal to emergence. They hold:

EMERGENT DUALISM: (i) Human persons are not identical to a physical body, but consist of a physical body and a non-physical substantial soul, provided that that having a physical body is not necessary for being a human person. (ii) The human soul is naturally emergent from and dependent on the structure and function of a living human brain and nervous system.¹

According to David Chalmers this view counts as a type of protopanpsychism, which avoids the combination problem.² I agree that this view is a type of protopanpsychism, but I think it does not escape an alteration of the combination problem. Focusing on Hasker's development of **EMERGENT DUALISM**, I raise two reasons for thinking that emergence

¹ William Hasker, "The Dialect of Soul and Body," *Contemporary Dualism: A Defense*, edited by Andrea Lavazza and Howard Robinson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 215-16.

² David Chalmers, "The Combination Problem for Panpsychism" *forthcoming*.

cannot save dualism: a sorites argument, and a type of combinatorial argument, similar to those raised against panpsychism and protopanpsychism. I then combine these problems into a further objection. In conclusion, I suggest a neo-Aristotelian type of substance dualism that avoids these objections thereby showing promise for dualism.

1. Emergent Dualism & Panprotopsychism

1.1 *Emergence*

Once we attend to the details of **EMERGENT DUALISM** it becomes clear that it is a form of panprotopsychism. Emergence occurs when the parts of a system are arranged in the right way and their collective activity brings something new into existence that is not reducible to the parts of the system it came from. Applied to the soul, Hasker states:

emergentism implies that consciousness, thought, rational volition, and so on make their appearance naturally as a result of the structure and functioning of the human brain and nervous system...emergentists do not view the mind and its powers as being, as it were, injected from outside into the human biological system. Instead, the soul appears naturally, given the appropriate physical organization and function of the body and brain.³

According to **EMERGENT DUALISM** mental properties, mental events, novel causal powers, and the soul emerge from the brain.⁴ Each is distinct from and not determined by the operations of the brain or its physical properties.⁵ However, at least some of these emergent features (causal powers) are “already implicit in the physical ‘stuff,’ otherwise their emergence would sheerly be magical.”⁶

1.2 *The Emergent Soul*

³ William Hasker, “Why Emergentism,” *Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 152.

⁴ Hasker, “Why Emergence?”, 157.

⁵ Hasker, “The Dialectic of Soul and Body,” 217.

⁶ Hasker, “Emergent Dualism: A Challenge to a Materialist Consensus,” in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology*, edited by Joel B. Green (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2004), 112.

The soul, according to Hasker, is the conscious self. It thinks, reasons, feels emotion, makes decisions, and is at the core of what we mean by ‘person’.⁷ Hence, certain facts about the soul *wholly* ground facts about personhood, consciousness, intellect, affect, and will. The soul is an immaterial substance possessing its own causal powers. Hasker speaks of the soul as “an undivided whole.”⁸ It is not always clear what Hasker means by this. “The self of emergent dualism,” says Hasker, “is not a Cartesian soul: it is generated by the functioning of a physical object and is itself spatially located, and it is not simple in the way that a Cartesian soul is simple.”⁹ Elsewhere, he states

...the self that is the subject of experiences must function as an undivided unity and not as a system of parts. But this does not immediately carry with it all the freight traditionally attached to metaphysical doctrines of the “simplicity of the soul.”¹⁰

It appears that Hasker’s soul is not mereologically simple, but a functional whole. Hasker states, “I have repeatedly argued, for example, that the emergent self could under certain circumstances be divided—for instance, by the fission of the generating organism.”¹¹ These remarks are in tension with a more recent statement of Hasker’s:

...the self, the subject of experience, cannot be a complex physical object such as the human body or brain. Instead it must be a *simple substance*, one that has no parts that are themselves substances, and which cannot be divided into parts.¹²

It is difficult to understand these remarks taken together. Clearly, Hasker holds that the soul is a unified whole, but is he talking of functional unity or a mereologically simple substances? Hasker is unclear. His early remarks suggest no. However, his argument from the unity of consciousness, his recent endorsement of David Barnett’s simple argument,

⁷ Hasker, “On Behalf of Emergent Dualism”, 78.

⁸ Hasker, “Why Emergence?”, 159.

⁹ Hasker, “Is Materialism Equivalent to Dualism?”, 196.

¹⁰ Hasker, “Is Materialism Equivalent to Dualism?”, 187.

¹¹ Hasker, “Is Materialism Equivalent to Dualism?”, 187. See also, *The Emergent Self*, ch. 7; and “Persons and the Unity of Consciousness” in *The Waning of Materialism*, edited by Robert Koons and George Bealer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 175-90.

¹² William Hasker, “Do my Quarks Enjoy Beethoven?” forthcoming.

and the quotation immediately above, strongly suggest that Hasker holds that the soul is mereologically simple.¹³

2. New Problems for Emergent Dualism

2.1 A Sorites Problem

According to **EMERGENT DUALISM**, once an aggregate of matter is arranged in the right way the soul emerges. Hasker writes, "...prior to the emergence [of the soul] there was only an aggregate of simples, even if the arrangement of the simples was very similar to that of the body parts of a person."¹⁴ Consider an aggregate of matter arranged in such a way as to be a properly functioning brain and central nervous system, where the number of parts arranged in the right way for a soul to emerge is n . Consequently, there is some subset of those atomic simples and their arrangement such that they are sufficient, not for a soul to emerge, but for an organ just short of a brain to exist. Now, suppose God has this organism and is adding one by one and activating atomic simples until being just shy of n by one simple ($n-1$). God adds the final atomic simple, the relevant emergence laws activate, and the soul emerges.

Here is the problem. There is no metaphysical significance between having $n-1$ atomic simples behaving in a certain way and having n atomic simples behaving in a certain way. The two cases do not differ in a metaphysically significant way at all. **EMERGENT DUALISM** is committed to attributing quite a significant degree of power to the addition of one atomic simple.

How could a defender of **EMERGENT DUALISM** reply? Perhaps one could reply that it isn't merely n number of atomic simples that does all the work. We also need the correct arrangement of n atomic simples. This seems to be what Hasker has in mind. This does relieve the number of atomic simple of doing all the metaphysical work. But is this good enough? I think the answer is, no. Notice that the aggregate of $n-1$ atomic simples is already structured. At the moment the final atomic simple is added the structure is complete. It is still the addition of the final atomic simple to the aggregate that does all the work. **EMERGENT DUALISM** is left with the problem of attributing a significant degree of power to the addition of one atomic simple.

¹³ See, for example, Hasker, "Do my Quarks Enjoy Beethoven?"

¹⁴ Hasker, "Is Materialism Equivalent to Dualism?", 185.

2.2. A Combinatory Problem

According to panpsychism, fundamental physical entities have conscious experience and bind together to form conscious agents. Protopanpsychism holds that fundamental physical entities do not have conscious experiences, but do bind together to form conscious agents. David Chalmers, and others, think these views enjoy the advantages of materialism and dualism while avoiding their problems.¹⁵ However, panpsychism and protopanpsychism faces the combination problems: the difficulty in explaining how fundamental physical entities combine to yield the kind of conscious experience we have.¹⁶

“The mind/soul,” Hasker explains, “ is both generated and sustained by the biological organism, and its activities are subserved and enabled by the function of the organism.”¹⁷ Consequently, **EMERGENT DUALISM** maintains that a unified non-physical substance emerges from a physical aggregate of parts. To understand the problem, recall the dependence relation between body and soul. Hasker states,

My view is that the conscious field is indeed divided as a consequence of the supporting organism’s being divided, and this seems an entirely plausible view, once we grant the possibility of the field’s being generated by the organism in the first place.¹⁸

This implies a grounding relation between body and soul. The body is ontologically more fundamental than the soul in important respects. According to standard accounts, As are ontologically more fundamental than Bs, in the relevant sense, if facts about the existence of Bs are grounded in facts about As.¹⁹ In this case, facts about the soul (being divided) are

¹⁵ See David Chalmers, “Panpsychism and Panprotopsyism”, in *Consciousness in the World: Perspectives on Russellian Monism*, edited by Torin Alter and Yujin Nagasawa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 246-76.

¹⁶ David Chalmers, “The Combination Problem for Panpsychism” forthcoming.

¹⁷ Hasker, “On Behalf of Emergent Dualism”, 79.

¹⁸ Hasker, “Reply to My Friendly Critiques,” *Philosophia Christi* 2, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), 103.

¹⁹ For example, according to Jonathan Shaffer, ‘x is fundamental’ just means that ‘nothing grounds x’, while ‘x is derivative’ just means that ‘something grounds x.’ See, Jonathan Schaffer, “On What Grounds What” in David Manley, David J. Chalmers & Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 373. See also, Gideon Rosen, “Metaphysical Dependence, Grounding and Reduction,” *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*, edited by Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 109-135; and Kit Fine, “Guide to Grounding,” *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, edited by Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 37-80.

grounded in facts about the body (the organism being divided). But, what facts? It seems that at least *structural facts about the body ground structural facts about the soul*. The body splits, so the soul splits. How is it then that the structure of the soul is such that it is a unified whole when the body, which grounds the structural facts of the soul, is not itself unified?

Let's return to the combination problem for panpsychism. Regarding panpsychism, Hasker writes,

What we need is a *single* mind, and a single field of conscious awareness, for each sentient being...Panpsychism leaves this need unmet, and we would still need an explanation of the process by which those bits of mind-dust are fused into a single conscious mind. But given that this need would remain, not much is gained by postulating the mind-dust to begin with.²⁰

Quoting John Searle, Hasker states that what we need to know is “how the brain produces the peculiar organization of experiences that express the existence of the self.”²¹ Of course Hasker's view does not face the same combination problem as panpsychism as it does not attribute consciousness to bits of matter.²² Still, as noted, Hasker's view is a type of panprotopsychism. Emergent causal powers, says Hasker, are “already implicit in the physical ‘stuff,’ otherwise their emergence would sheerly be magical.”²³ Although, Chalmers thinks **EMERGENT DUALISM** escapes the combination problem, I argue it faces a very similar problem.²⁴

EMERGENT DUALISM faces the problem of explaining how bits of non-conscious matter combine to constitute mental properties and produce a conscious soul. It needs to explain the process by which a mereologically simple, immaterial, substance, with a complex organized system of mental properties emerges from a material aggregate composed of billions of separable parts. It seems equally mysterious and equally problematic as to how a brain could be organized in such a way as to produce a soul. The cost of **EMERGENT DUALISM** is just as great as the cost of panprotopsychism insofar as

²⁰ William Hasker, “Do My Quarks Enjoy Beethoven?” *Forthcoming*.

²¹ John Searle, “The Self as a Problem in Philosophy and Neurobiology” in John Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century: Selected Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 136.

²² See David Chalmers, “The Combination Problem for Panpsychism” *forthcoming*.

²³ Hasker, “Emergent Dualism: A Challenge to a Materialist Consensus,” in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology*, edited by Joel B. Green (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2004), 112.

²⁴ David Chalmers, “The Combination Problem for Panpsychism” *forthcoming*.

an emergent soul is equally mysterious and perhaps more problematic than getting conscious minds from unconscious matter. The argument I have in mind is as follows:

- P1. If **EMERGENT DUALISM** is true, then facts about the unity of soul are wholly grounded by facts about the unity of the brain.
- P2. The facts about the unity of the soul cannot be wholly grounded by facts about the brain.
- P3. Therefore, **EMERGENT DUALISM** is false.

What can be said on behalf of this argument?

First, a distinction needs to be made regarding the nature of unity. That x is *functionally unified* means the various parts of x work together to accomplish some end. Artifacts and aggregates can be spoken of figuratively as functionally unified. Notice that since what is at work here is efficient causation, x literally has no objective function. Rather, the parts of x are assembled to imitate a function in the artificer's mind. This type of unity is external to x . However, metaphysical unity is distinct as it pertains to real (especially living) substances. Accordingly, x is *metaphysically unified* just in case x is a mereologically simple substance (a substance containing no separable parts). Here the principle of unity is internal.

In defense of P1, recall that Hasker holds that emergent causal powers are "already implicit in the physical "stuff," otherwise their emergence would sheerly be magical."²⁵ The same thing should be said regarding features of the soul, such as unity. The aggregate only has functional unity. However, the soul is metaphysically unified. Indeed, Hasker's own argument from the unity of consciousness establishes this.²⁶ So, in what way is the metaphysical unity of the soul implicit in an aggregate of parts that is merely functionally unified? There seems to be no way for an aggregate of parts to give rise to a metaphysically unified substance.²⁷

The problem for **EMERGENT DUALISM** is that the brain is not metaphysically unified but atomistic. Therefore, the brain cannot ground facts about the unity of the soul.

²⁵ Hasker, "Emergent Dualism: A Challenge to a Materialist Consensus," in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology*, edited by Joel B. Green (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2004), 112.

²⁶ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 122-46; and "Persons and the Unity of Consciousness", 181-83.

²⁷ For an interesting application of this argument to chemical change see, Richard J. Connell, *Substance and Modern Science* (Houston, TX: The Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), 81-87.

There just is no fact regarding the metaphysical unity of the brain that could ground the fact that the soul is mereologically simple.

2.3. *Compounding the Problems*

These objections can be combined as follows. The unity of an aggregate, such as the brain, is one in which the relations among the parts are external relations. This is evident by the fact that the parts of the aggregate are separable parts. However, the unity of the soul is such that any differentiation of faculties or powers within the soul must stand in internal relations to the soul itself. This is evidenced by the fact that these inseparable parts—faculties if intellect, emotion, will, and so on—cannot exist outside the whole of which they are inseparable parts. In turn, this raises a new way to look at both the sorites and combination problems together. It is implausible that by adding a single atomic simple we get a new whole constituted by internal relations from a subvenient structured object (the brain) constituted by external relations.

A Neo-Aristotelian Suggestion

The suggestion is for the substance dualist to give up emergence. One might worry about the neurological dependence issue that motivates **EMERGENT DUALISM**. I suggest something of an inverse to **EMERGENT DUALISM**. If the soul is more fundamental than the body and the body is not a mereological aggregate, then the problems I have raised vanish.

Consider the following substance dualist view, which draws heavily from the late Medieval Aristotelians²⁸ and current work by J. P. Moreland.²⁹ Accordingly, the human body is a mode of the human soul, an ensouled physical structure. The human soul is a mereologically simple, spatially unextended substance, and contains the capacities for consciousness and for animating, enlivening, and teleologically developing its body. The internal essence of the soul informs the teleology and development of the body according to a series of law-like developmental events. The parts of the body are inseparable parts standing in internal relations to each other and to the essence of the soul.

²⁸ See, Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes: 1274-1671* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011); and Dennis Des Chene, *Life's Form: Late Aristotelian Conceptions of the Soul* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000).

²⁹ This section is heavily influenced by recent work by J. P. Moreland. See, "Tweaking Dallas Willard's Ontology of the Human Person" *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 8 (2) (2015): 187-202; and "In Defense of a Thomistic-Like Dualism" forthcoming.

Notice that this view avoids several problems. The metaphysical unity of soul and body is preserved, and therefore avoids the neurological dependence problem that motivates **EMERGENT DUALISM**. This view also provides a plausible solution to the causal pairing problem as well. According to this hybrid view there is a connection between soul/body or mind/brain that is more primitive than causation and. In fact, this hylomorphic connection can ground mind/body causation. The soul animates, informs, unifies, forms and is hollenmerically present to its body. My mind is a faculty of my soul and my brain is an inseparable part of my body. Consequently, my soul relates to my body in in virtue of these relations. This connection is fundamental and prior to causation. Hence, the pairing problem is not a problem at all. Each individual soul has a specific body as a mode. The pairing of body and soul is guaranteed by the ontology of the soul.

Likewise, the sorites and combination problems are avoided, as the soul and body are mereologically simple. There are no separable parts to combine to form a mind or a soul. Moreover, this view does not suffer from the problems of consciousness and intentionality that materialist views face, as the proprietor of consciousness is not wholly material. For example, on this hybrid view, the unity of consciousness is not a problem. At least not in the way it is for materialist views.

A difficulty for materialism lies in how to account for the fact that objects of perception, background and abstract or emotional features combine into a single experience? When having various experiences at the beach, for example, what neural mechanisms ensure that these experiences (sounds, colors, smells, and the like) are unified as one experience? Considerable empirical evidence suggests that different locations in the brain process different signals related. This is the opposite of what we should expect, as there is a single, unitary awareness of the entire visual field. Moreover, there is a what-it-is-like to have the whole visual field. While it is difficult to see how myriads of atomistic parts could give rise to a single, non-atomistic, holistic field, it is not difficult to see how a mereologically simple soul could. The soul is a unified whole. It has no separable parts among which the objects of perception are broken down into. A mental substance not composed of separable parts has no difficulty in accounting for the unity of perception and the unity of consciousness in general.

At the same time this view holds to the central importance of the body for the functioning of the soul's powers. Regarding this aspect of neo-Aristotelian thought, Denis Des Chene writes,

The human soul is not merely joined with the body in fact. It is the *kind* of soul which, though capable of separate existence...nevertheless by its nature presupposes union with a body, and moreover with a particular kind of body, a body with organs, in order to exercise all its powers—even reason insofar as reason needs the senses to give it material for abstraction.³⁰

Elsewhere, Des Chene notes, “Even the intellect requires, so long as the soul is joined with a body, a certain disposition of the brain.”³¹ Consequently, this view entails that there are specific neurological conditions closely associated with the soul’s capacity for consciousness. Moreland explains that the contemporary search for these neurological correlates,

...would not provide information about the intrinsic nature of the capacity or the property it actualizes (e.g., pain) nor about the possessor of that capacity (the soul, not the brain). But it would provide information about the bodily conditions require for its actualization.³²

Consequently, the form of neo-Aristotelian dualism I am suggesting, along with Moreland, is not at all undermined by contemporary neuroscience, but actually supplies a metaphysical framework to support it.

This view also shows promise for resolving theological objections to substance dualism. For example, this view naturally leads to a high view of the body, as it is a mode of

³⁰ Dennis Des Chene, *Life's Form: Late Aristotelian Conceptions of the Soul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 71.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

³² Moreland, “In Defense of a Thomistic-like Dualism”, Forthcoming.

the soul, and inseparable part of the soul.³³ Likewise, this view provides a natural account for why my soul requires this body to be glorified and resurrected.³⁴ My body is uniquely and inseparably a part of me. I ensoul my body. My soul—me—makes my body what it is. At death I no longer ensoul matter, but will again at the final resurrection.

This hybrid view shares similarities with hylomorphic dualism.³⁵ The soul on this view informs and structures the body. Like William Jaworski and Howard Robinson, I see nothing incompatible between hylomorphism and substance dualism.³⁶ However, the greatest difference is that on the suggested account the human person is identical to their soul. The soul is not something separate. This crucial difference allows this neo-Aristotelian view to avoid the priority principle problem raised recently by Andrew Bailey.³⁷ Contrary, to a more popular Thomistic account (where the soul is not the person but is what thinks), on this view the individual is the soul that thinks. Hence, I do not think my thoughts derivatively, but do so directly.

These remarks serve merely as a suggested way forward for substance dualism. The weaknesses of **EMERGENT DUALISM**, exposed by the objections I've raised, reveal that an aggregate of matter cannot be a fundamental entity from which a soul can emerge. Yet, it seems plausible that a soul could be a fundamental entity of which a body can be a mode. As of now, it seems to me that insights of Late Medieval Aristotelianism can do much to save dualism.

³³ See, Brandon L. Rickabaugh and C. Steven Evans, "Spiritual Formation for Bodily Souls or Spirited Bodies? A Critique of Christian Physicalism", Forthcoming.

³⁴ See, Brandon L. Rickabaugh, "Why This Resurrected Body for My Substantial Soul? A Neo-Aristotelian Account", Forthcoming.

³⁵ See for example, David S. Oderberg, "Hylomorphic Dualism", in *Personal Identity*, edited by Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller Jr., and Jeffrey Paul (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 70-99; John Haldane, "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind", in *Form and Matter: Themes in Contemporary Metaphysics*, edited by David S. Oderberg (Oxford: Blackwell 1999): 40-64; and John Haldane, "Analytic Philosophy and the Nature of Mind: Time for Another Rebirth?" In *The Mind Body Problem: A Guide to the Current Debate*, edited by Richard Warner and Tadeusz Szubka (Oxford: Blackwell 1994): 195-203.

³⁶ See, for example, William Jaworski, "Hylomorphism: What It Is and What It Isn't", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 85 (2011), 176-77; and Howard Robinson, "Aristotelian Dualism," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume 1, edited by Julia Annas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983): 123-144; and T. J. Mawson, "Substance Dualism," in *The Continuum Companion to Philosophy of Mind*, edited by James Garvey (London, GB: Continuum, 2011): 73-91.

³⁷ Andrew Bailey, "The Priority Principle," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2015): 163-174.