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Why a Panpsychist Should Adopt Theism: God, Galileo and Goff

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Abstract

This paper argues that there is a deep level of agreement between panpsychism and theism. Goff's *Galileo's Error* would have been even more compelling than it already is, if Goff had portrayed a panpsychist cosmos as the world created by God, not as a spiritual alternative to theism. First, I critique Goff's assumption of incompatibilism, with regards the relationship between science and religion, and argue that panpsychism provides unique resources for articulating divine action. Second, I argue that most panpsychists endorse either the Principle of Sufficient Reason or a Causal Principle in their rejection of emergence theory, and that if either of these principles are applied to the universe as a whole this would imply a further endorsement of The Cosmological Argument for the existence of God.

1. Introduction

There is no opposition or competition between panpsychism and Christian theology. Instead, panpsychists and theists have far more in common than many often realise.¹ As someone who has argued for panpsychism within my own field of Christian theology, it is unsurprising that I found much to agree with in Philip Goff's *Galileo's Error*. *Galileo's Error* is a marvellous introductory text displaying intellectual virtues of clarity, charity, and wit. Indeed, my own beliefs about the mind are indebted to much of Goff's previous work. I wholeheartedly agree with his arguments against materialism, some of the points against dualism, and I consider panpsychism the most promising position that warrants further philosophical, theological, and scientific investigation.

What disagreements Goff and I may have will not be in philosophy of mind, but only when Goff ventures into the neighbouring areas of philosophy of religion and theology. Like Goff, I am excited about "the possibility that, in a panpsychist worldview, the yearnings of faith and the rationality of science might finally come to harmony." (Goff 2019, 216-17). The only word I

¹ Unless otherwise qualified, by 'theism' I mean the belief in a single transcendent or supernatural God, such as is found in the Abrahamic faiths. Beyond transcendence and the power to create, the other attributes or identity of such a being are not discussed in this paper.

disagree with in this sentence is “finally.” After all, theologians have been using (and creating) the rational tools of philosophy and science to investigate its own truth claims, internal coherency, and practical out-workings for centuries. So, one of the first points I want to contest in this response is Goff’s implicit endorsement of the widely debunked ‘myth of conflict’ between science and religion.²

The places where Goff implies that science and religion are in conflict are often occasions when Goff is trying to sell panpsychism as a new *scientific* approach to consciousness. What makes something a ‘science’ or a particular knowledge-seeking enterprise ‘scientific’ in character is, of course, no simple question. Philosophers of science have been struggling with this question in its modern form for a century, and no consensus is forthcoming. It is not uncommon, therefore, for philosophers to cut this gnarly corner by relying on the modern myth that science and religion are inevitably in conflict, or to affirm some form of naturalism in a plea for legitimacy. If science and religion are defined in opposition to one another, then all one has to do to make panpsychism seem scientific is to show that it too is opposed to religion. As such, there are few places in *Galileo’s Error* where Goff positions panpsychism in competition with theism and does not consider the possibility that someone, like me, might be a theist and a panpsychist. Whilst I am used to the task of repositioning panpsychism and theism into a relationship of mutual reinforcement rather than competition, my work has thus far primarily sought to introduce and defend panpsychism to my fellow Christian theologians. Here I want to consider reasons that a panpsychist philosopher, like Goff, might have for accepting theism. Rather than leaving panpsychists vulnerable to Ockham’s razor or undermining the scientific status of their position, I suggest that the combination of panpsychism with theism is an eminently consistent and appealing position.

In the two sections below, I take a two-pronged approach to move Goff’s position closer to theism. In the first section, I tackle some of the places where Goff mentions God in *Galileo’s Error* in order to remove the obstacles that are constructed between panpsychism and theism. My intention in this section is merely to show that, despite the implications of some of Goff’s comments, there is no competition or opposition between belief in fundamental minds and belief in God. The second section then gives positive reasons why a panpsychist should extend her position and also adopt theism. It is concluded that the combination of panpsychism and theism is the most consistent and satisfying worldview.

² There is a very large literature on this now, e.g. Brooke (1991), Harrison, (2015), Lightman (2019), and Hardin et al. (2018).

2. Removing Incompatibilism's Obstacles

Most of the places where Goff positions panpsychism and (traditional Western mono-) theism as alternatives are to do with rejecting the explanatory power of divine intervention. For Goff, if science can explain how an event occurs – that is, if we can describe the physical causes that are sufficient for bringing about an event – then this rules out any kind of dualism, God-world dualism or mind-body dualism. This view, whereby physical causes are in competition with mental and divine causes, is known as *incompatibilism*; physical (efficient, mechanical, determined) causes are seen to be incompatible with any other kinds of causation.

Let's consider another example where Goff, by presenting theism as analogous to dualism, implicitly places theism in competition with panpsychism. In the chapter against naturalistic dualism, Goff draws the comparison between divine intervention and the mind-body interaction problem. Goff's argument (2019, 36-38) can be summarised as follows:

1. Anomalous events are events that cannot be explained through physical causes.
2. If God intervened these would be anomalous events.
3. Anomalous events would be "patently obvious" to scientists.
4. When scientists examine the world, they don't regularly find anomalous events (events that cannot be explained by physical causes).
5. Therefore, God does not intervene.

There are queries to be raised with each of the (1-4) premises of this argument. First, since there is no theoretical reason why God might not intervene as a partial cause influencing but not determining an outcome, it seems that Goff needs to strengthen the first premise to the claim that anomalous events are events that cannot be exhaustively, or at least sufficiently, explained through physical causation. This would be inconsistent, however, because in the final chapter of the book when discussing free will, Goff is entirely comfortable with the partial causal pressure of (rational) inclinations informing events (even, in theory at least, for non-human organisms and objects) (Goff 2019, 204-05). If anomalous events are those for which we cannot *in practice* give a full and complete physical and causal explanation, then anomalies happen the majority of the time. As such, a term like 'anomalous' is probably misleading, since it carries connotations of 'rare' or 'out of place'. After all, if God exists and acts in creation, then we might expect this neither to be rare nor out of place.

Second, a theological compatibilist (arguably the majority of the Christian tradition historically) would reject premise 2. Theological compatibilists believe that, due to transcendence, God can act in and through physical causes, as well as sometimes apart from them if God wishes. Neo-Thomists, for example, argue that all the causation that we encounter and that scientists can describe is known as secondary causation. The world of secondary causes is created and sustained in every instance by God, who is the primary cause of all things. On this two-tiered schema, God could choose to act directly without a mediating secondary cause, which is how miracles are said to work, but God can also create or direct secondary causes in a way that would be undetectable to humans (as we ourselves are also secondary causes). There are certainly potential weaknesses of this position and I am not strongly advocating for it. But I do think it is sufficiently cogent to show that there is a rich variety of options for considering divine action on offer within Christian theology, not all of which presume incompatibilism. I think it is most likely that God acts in a wide variety of specific ways and that we shouldn't treat verbs like 'act' as closed concepts (Abraham 2017).

As an (historically fraught) example, Goff describes how both William Paley and Charles Darwin agreed that the origin of complex organisms required an explanation (Goff 2019, 7-8). Paley opted for an intelligent designer and Darwin for natural selection. The way Goff describes this, it seems as if we have to choose between theism and evolution. The problem with this is that for the majority of Christians both Paley and Darwin were (at least partially) right. It is quite normal for Christians to claim that scientific descriptions of an event might be a description of how God, as creator, decided to achieve a certain outcome. Again, there are a wealth of compatible but distinct options to choose from here: God might set up natural laws in advance, God might gift certain powers and tendencies to specific species or individuals, God might input information some way along the evolutionary chain, God might lure or attract creatures toward a certain future, and there may be other options not listed here (see Kojonen 2016).

This kind of compatibilism can also be seen in Christian ideas on the soul (*contra*, Goff 2019, 32). With regards to the origins of the soul, Christianity contains a persistent minority tradition of traducianism, which argues that each individual person's soul is not injected *ex nihilo* into fetuses but is inherited along with our bodies via sexual reproduction. There are various proposed mechanisms for this inheritance within the history of traducianism, most of which have some relevance to panpsychism. Some proponents propose that souls are complex entities that fission or partition to generate the child's soul. Others have suggested that the nutritive soul of the gametes can develop into the rational soul of a human or that the gametes carry more basic soul-stuff which becomes a human soul at syngamy. Others confess the precise mechanism

of soul generation to be a mystery whilst still affirming that soul creationism is unnecessary (for discussion see, Swinburne 1986, Crisp 2006, and Leidenhag, forthcoming). In terms of affirming the importance and compatibilism between body and soul, a more central doctrine to point to, which all orthodox Christians (and many Jews and Muslims) affirm, is the resurrection of the body as an essential part of the afterlife. Indeed, for Christians it is the physicality of Jesus' resurrection, not a disembodied afterlife, that is the foundation of their faith and hope. At least within Christian theology, the premise that divine activity (or other immaterial phenomena) stands in opposition to physical causation is somewhat question-begging.

Interestingly, one could interpret Goff's panpsychism as a compatibilist version of 'dualism' (or duality at least) all the way down. Goff rejects naturalistic dualism, in part because he is doubtful that dualists will ever be able to solve the interaction problem. Instead, he argues that on his panpsychism consciousness is the intrinsic nature of the physical, which works in and through the physical. Whilst divinity is not (often) seen to be the intrinsic aspect of creation, traditional Christian theism also argues that God can work in and through created reality. We could even suggest that God is present within and sometimes influences the conscious experience of panpsychist entities at multiple levels of scale; comforting humans, rearranging broken legs, and moving water molecules to form a path through the Red Sea (Leidenhag 2021, 130-138). All of these things can be achieved in tandem with the psychophysical duality of the natural world. Here God would be making a difference in the world (so, we might say 'intervening'), but this could not meaningfully be described as anomalous because in a panpsychist world no event can be sufficiently explained in terms of physical causation alone. As such, we have no reason to suppose that such divine interventions would be patently obvious to scientists.

The third and fourth premises appear highly doubtful to me. There are numerous events for which we lack sufficient or complete physical explanations – particularly those related to medicine and neuroscience, which Goff mentions specifically (Goff 2019, 37-39). Whilst many believe that in theory there is a sufficient psychophysical causal explanation for every event, identifying all the causes involved in any particular real-world event is extremely difficult if not impossible. This does not guarantee that philosophical principles like reductionism or causal closure are certainly wrong, but only that we are not in a position to know for sure and so cannot rule out the existence of God (or free will, and other such phenomena) on the basis of a unfounded allegiance to such principles. The human body and brain are simply too complex and the real-world variables too numerous. The implication of this is that we should not expect scientists to have identified divine activity and we should be wary of any claims to that effect. Not because miracles do not happen – I believe that they do and with marvellous frequency –

but because this is not the sort of thing that I expect scientists to be able to predict, corroborate, quantify, or control for experimentation.

Even within controlled environments many scientific experiments contain anomalous results; so, it seems inaccurate to say that scientists (or anyone else) do not encounter anomalies that surprise us, contravene our expectations, and cannot be easily explained. As Thomas Kuhn famously argued, unless such anomalies accumulate with predictability and regularity, they will not lead to any kind of paradigm shift or force us to change our explanatory structures (Kuhn 2012, 82). A good example is that consciousness is too regular an ‘anomaly’ in a merely physical universe to be ignored. The almost universal testimony of conscious experience amongst humans demands a paradigm shift away from mere physicalist thinking, such as is offered by panpsychism. The experience of a miracle, by contrast, is an unpredictable free act by a personal agent, which might require a paradigm shift in our theological views, but does not require a revolution in the practices or theories of natural science. Miracles are not the sort of thing that the physical sciences can investigate, and we should not expect to find any ‘gaps’ in the causal chain to prove the existence of such anomalous events. In many ways, this appreciation for the proper limits of natural science is a similar argument to the one that Goff makes in several places for panpsychism against materialism (Goff 2019, 65-69, 75, 85).

But, as I’ve already hinted at above, there is a more interesting point to be made here. Rather than pairing up divine intervention and the dualist’s interaction problem in the hopes that rejecting one will lead to the rejection of the other as well, panpsychism makes divine activity in the natural world more explicable. This is because panpsychism describes a world that is not as physically determined or mechanistically shallow as might be supposed, but one with internal depth; a world filled with intrinsic natures of consciousness. Panpsychism allows theologians to articulate how God’s presence might be in the world, not in a spatial sense, but within the experience of creatures as a felt second-personal presence (Leidenhag 2021, 130-138). In the Christian tradition, notions of divine presence and divine action are often linked, if not sometimes treated as synonymous (Arcadi 2018, 96-101). To say that God is present within all things is also to say that God acts, either concurrently, persuasively, decisively, or in other ways. To be sure, panpsychism is not a *deus ex machina*. Panpsychism cannot solve all the various objections to divine action (many, for example, are really forms of the problem of evil, rather than anything particularly to do with action or causation discourse) and panpsychism does not help articulate all the very many ways God might act in the universe. However, it does give more resources to this area of philosophical theology and does so in a way that is consonant with

philosophical, biblical and liturgical expressions of God's intimate yet hidden presence (Leidenhag 2021, 129-30).

This experiential depth to all things that panpsychism posits is why panpsychism so often invites connection with mysticism, to which Goff tells us he is drawn. But rather than this resulting in a form of immanentist spirituality (that is a spirituality that denies anything transcendent or beyond nature), this depth to nature might just as easily be viewed as a door to the supernatural, to a transcendent God that exists beyond spacetime and who lovingly interacts with nature at the very depth of its being, within the intrinsic nature of every particle, piranha or person.

The discussion above considered how Goff put (supernatural) theism in competition with panpsychism largely through some form of assumed incompatibilism. I have argued that there are established mainline theological positions within Christianity (and other theistic traditions) than undermine the grounds for this constructed opposition. But it might be argued that I have missed the heart of Goff's objection to theism. At several points in *Galileo's Error*, Goff appeals to the principle of explanatory simplicity and to Ockham's razor in order to make various arguments. Ockham's razor is "the principle that, all things being equal, we should try to make our theories of reality as simple as possible." (Goff 2019, 48-49) Or, "don't believe in more things if you can get away with fewer." (Goff 2019, 134) The appeals to various forms of theological compatibilism may seem particularly vulnerable to Ockham's blade.

However, the "all things being equal" and "if you can" are important. Such qualifications indicate that one can only use Ockham's razor when comparing two explanations with the same explanatory power for the same relevant phenomena. The desire for simplicity has to be subordinate to the desire for explanation. This is why panpsychism itself is not as vulnerable to Ockham's razor as many have previously supposed; materialism (and Galileo's legacy on natural science) cannot explain consciousness and so we need to posit something more. Goff's "simplicity argument" is to posit consciousness within matter, so we still have one type of thing, psychophysical stuff, and do not have to resort to stronger forms of dualism. Goff then makes the same move with regard to explaining mystical experiences. He sets up a choice between seeing mystical experiences as an illusion or a supernatural dualism, and offers panpsychism as the simpler middle path, "formless consciousness is the ultimate nature of *physical reality*" (Goff 2019, 207). It is this formless consciousness that he suggests the mystics may be encountering. This spirituality without transcendence or supernaturalism may have the advantage of simplicity (ontological monism), but at too high an explanatory cost. For the explanatory power of theism

is not confined to explaining mystical experiences down the ages, but to explaining mystical experiences and providing an ultimate explanation for everything else.

3. Why a Panpsychist Should Also be a Theist

So far, I have argued for why an opposition between panpsychism and supernatural theism is false. God could just have easily created a panpsychist universe as any other, and as I will conclude, I think we have good reasons for speculating that God would desire a panpsychist universe in particular. One could, then, stop here by acknowledging the neutrality between panpsychism and belief in God; a panpsychist is as welcome to be a theist as any substance dualist, hylomorphist, or (local) materialist.³ However, I want to make a more positive case for why a panpsychist should embrace theism.

There are at least three different kinds of materialists, which I will call illusionists, reductionists, and non-reductive physicalists (emergentists). Illusionists deny there is anything called ‘consciousness’ or qualia that demands an explanation; it’s an illusion. Reductionists think that conscious experience can be explained away by reducing it to something non-experiential, namely mere physical processes. Panpsychists reject both of these by affirming that consciousness exists and demands a non-reductive explanation.

Non-reductive physicalists (or, emergentists) such as Alex Moran in this volume, argue that wholly non-experiential matter can give rise to consciousness; it’s an emergent feature of the physical world. For a while, philosophers of mind were optimistic that emergence theory was the way to go. After all, we are pretty confident that complex physical features of the world (like, liquidity and life) are emergent, so why not consciousness too? However, one reason for the revival of panpsychism is that the argument for brute emergence is looking increasingly implausible. This is the so-called genetic argument for panpsychism, sometimes referred to as the argument from non-emergence or the argument from origination. Put simply, this argument denies that mind or experience could ever emerge from wholly non-experiencing material stuff. Consciousness cannot suddenly appear in a world in which nothing conscious has previously existed, not even in a latent or potential form.

It was this argument that was operative in Thomas Nagel’s famous essay ‘Panpsychism,’ which has been so influential on the field. Nagel argued that “unless we are prepared to accept the

³ I list these as common positions amongst theists, but they should not be considered exhaustive.

alternative that the appearance of mental properties in complex systems has *no causal explanation at all*, we must take the current epistemological emergence of the mental as the reason to believe that *constituents have properties of which we are not aware*, and which do necessitate these results.”

(Nagel 1979, 187) That is, to have a metaphysically and scientifically plausible account of the emergence of consciousness, emergence theorists need to become panpsychists. Emergence might have an important part to play within a panpsychist account of consciousness (it may help us explain how we get complex human minds from a combination of simple atomic or bacterial minds), but it cannot explain how we get consciousness into the universe in the first place.

Galen Strawson makes this point through a comparison between “brute emergence” and the creation of reality when he writes that if emergence is intelligible then “it will be intelligible to suppose that existence can emerge from (come out of, develop out of) non-existence.” (Strawson 2008, 66) Similarly, J.P. Moreland writes,

“The emergence of consciousness seems to be a case of getting something from nothing. In general, physical-chemical reactions do not generate consciousness, not even one little bit, but they do in the brain, yet brains seem similar to other parts of organisms or bodies. How can like causes produce radically different effects? The appearance of mind is utterly unpredictable and inexplicable. This radical discontinuity seems like an inhomogeneous rupture in the natural world.” (Moreland 2003, 209)

Even though he subsequently rejects panpsychism, Moreland hints towards three of the main arguments for panpsychism; the argument from non-emergence (“getting something from nothing”), the argument from continuity (“brains seem to be similar with other parts of organisms or bodies”) and the evolutionary argument (a dissatisfaction with “radical discontinuity” or a “inhomogeneous rupture in the natural world”). A panpsychist might tie these problems together in the following way: If the universe is made up of the same stuff throughout, and some of this stuff so-arranged is definitely conscious and other parts appear not to be, then either we need to introduce inhomogeneous ruptures into the natural world – either by radical emergence or regular divine interjection – or we need to say that there is a continuum of consciousness throughout the universe. Panpsychists, like Goff and myself, opt for the latter.

It is surprising that Goff does not explicitly make this genetic argument for panpsychism in *Galileo's Error* and does not tackle emergence in any detail. To my mind it is an argument that contemporary panpsychists must make since emergence theory is often seen as their main philosophical rival. In making the genetic argument panpsychists argue for the existence of

minds of which we are not directly aware, cannot be empirically detected, and which they cannot arrive at through an argument from analogy;⁴ and panpsychists make this argument on the basis of the principle that experience cannot come from non-experience; something cannot come from nothing.

In making this argument, the panpsychist is committing herself to at least one of two explanatory principles. She either rejects the radical novelty of the emergence of mind from matter because it violates the Causal Principle, according to which every contingent being has a cause of its existence and that the perfection of the effect is found in the cause. Or, she rejects the emergence of mind from matter because brute emergence cannot uphold the Principle of Sufficient Reason which states that: “no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise.” (Leibniz 1951, 527; cf. Nagel 2012, 17). It is because the panpsychist cannot abide the abandonment of these metaphysical principles which undergird scientific and rationalist endeavours that, instead, she chooses to posit mind as fundamental to the universe.

One of the interesting facts about this argument for panpsychism is that the Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Causal Principle form the backbone of the most common forms of the Cosmological Arguments for the existence of God; the Leibnizian Cosmological Argument argued from contingency, The Thomistic Cosmological Argument argued from sustained existence, and the Kalaām Cosmological Argument argued from a temporal beginning. These cosmological arguments, and others, are a family of *a posteriori* arguments that infer a necessary and creative being (God) from particular facts about the universe. Many of the critiques against the cosmological argument, such as those put forward by David Hume and Immanuel Kant, attack either the Causal Principle or the Principle of Sufficient Reason. However, these points of critique are not open to the panpsychist who has already endorsed these principles within the genetic argument for panpsychism.

Whereas the philosopher of religion asks, ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ and ‘Why is that something like this?’, the philosopher of mind asks, ‘Why are there experiencing subjects rather than philosophical-zombies?’, and ‘Why are these experiencing subjects as they

⁴ The argument from analogy is a common answer to the problem of other minds. The problem of other minds, put simply, is to ask on what basis we believe that other people whom we interact with are conscious minds rather than mindless robots behaving as if they were conscious subjects. One popular answer is that we believe that other minds exist, that other people are conscious subjects, because we make an analogy from our own physiology and experience and, on the basis of sufficient similarity between myself and others, believe that others are conscious in a manner similar to myself. Since panpsychism affirms some measure of consciousness to entities extremely unlike myself, such as a simple single-cell organisms, vast galaxies, and even inorganic particles, the argument of analogy seems unavailable to them.

are?’ Either there is an answer to these questions in terms of a reason, pre-existing conditions or a cause (i.e., God/fundamental mentality), or there is no explanation at all and the universe/experiencing subjects just exist as a brute fact and have always done so. Since the panpsychist is dissatisfied with conscious organisms being a brute fact, it seems likely that she should find the brute fact of the universe’s existence to be dissatisfying also.

The panpsychist posits consciousness as fundamental because the contingency of the human mind needs to be explained. But in doing so, the panpsychist does not reduce the contingency of consciousness in general, she only ties the contingency of consciousness to the contingency of the universe as a whole. As such, the panpsychist uses the principle of sufficient reason to form a full, but not complete, explanation for human consciousness. This explanation is full because whilst human consciousness is satisfactorily explained,⁵ the puzzling aspect of consciousness has not disappeared entirely, it has just been moved to the fundamental level of reality (Pruss 2006, 17; Swinburne 2004, 78). The existence of consciousness becomes no more (and no less!) surprising than the existence of any other fundamental feature of the world; spacetime, natural laws, quantum vacuums, or whatever. Whilst it is beyond the bounds of panpsychism as a position within philosophy of mind, these fundamental realities still need explaining.⁶ The most parsimonious and consistent way for this to be achieved would be to extend the same logic and explanatory principles that one applies within the universe to the universe at large. What I am suggesting is for the panpsychist to take her reasoning a step further and posit that there is a first cause or sufficient reason for the existence of the panpsychist universe, just as she posits that there must be a causal explanation or sufficient reason for the appearance of human minds within the cosmos.

Is it legitimate to demand an explanation of the universe based on the prior demand for an explanation of the mind? Even if human consciousness is a contingent fact demanding an explanation, perhaps we could still say – as Bertrand Russell did – that the universe “just is” (Russell 1948, 175). Russell argued that theists are making a Fallacy of Composition in supposing

⁵ Assuming panpsychists can eventually give an adequate account of mental combination or assuming cosmopsychists give an account of individuation/de-combination.

⁶ Dasgupta (2014) explores a notion of the PSR whereby “every substantive fact has an autonomous ground.” (384), and that autonomous grounds include essences. In Dasgupta’s terminology and in the logic of grounding, I might be read as saying that God is an ‘autonomous ground’, because God is not apt for being grounded, whereas the universe is a substantive fact – apt for being grounded. In traditional Thomist metaphysics this is expressed by say that uniquely for God, God’s essence is existence, thereby making God the only necessarily existing, and in Dasgupta’s terminology the only autonomous entity. Dasgupta does in fact acknowledge that something(s) with the essence of existence may be an implication of his proposal – only he thinks this is compatible with atheism-cum-naturalism; so here, we would have to debate the definition of ‘god’ (396-399). However, I have chosen to stick with more traditional language of contingency and necessity, because I have some reservations about employing grounding to describe the God-world relation.

that just because the contents of the universe are contingent, so too is the universe itself as a whole contingent. A panpsychist might be inclined to champion Russell's argument here, since she is particularly alert to the fallacy of composition in defending panpsychism from the absurdity that all things that are composed of consciousness are themselves conscious (e.g., slippers, spoons, stars, etc). However, by making consciousness fundamental and intrinsic to the physical universe, the panpsychist blocks this Russellian critique of the cosmological argument. If the fundamental and intrinsic nature of everything in the universe ceased to exist, then the universe itself would cease to exist (Reichenbach 1972, chap. 5). If fundamental consciousness is contingent, then so too is the universe as a whole. In which case, the panpsychist universe demands an explanation for its existence.

Another way to consider this argument is to debate the proper location of 'bruteness', or what is left unexplained within any account of reality. This is an issue Goff mentions a few times in *Galileo's Error*. In particular Goff writes, "Everyone takes some facts as basic and unexplained. Some people take the laws of physics as an unexplained starting point; others the existence of God; others the laws of logic and mathematics. I take the reality of consciousness as a fundamental starting point." (Goff 2019, 198-99) Expressed this way, what one takes as brute seems to be little more than a personal choice or matter of taste, which we can make no arguments for or against. But this is clearly not the case; the place of bruteness is important in evaluating competing theories. Despite their simplicity, the panpsychist rejects various forms of materialism because materialists take the explanandum as brute; either the appearance of consciousness is an illusion or the mind-body relation as brute emergence. This is why Goff concludes that "contemporary materialism is not a solution but a stubborn refusal to face up to the problem." (Goff 2019, 96) The same could be said of Russell's statement that the universe just exists. If we consider the panpsychist universe as our explanandum and apply the same logic that the panpsychist applies against materialism, then we will need to posit a necessary being to stop the infinite regress of explanations in a non-arbitrary manner (cf. O'Connor 2013, 42).

There is one further way for a panpsychist to attempt to avoid the conclusion of theism. Panpsychist philosophers D.S. Clarke and Freya Mathews have each suggested that this particular universe of fundamental consciousness is the necessarily existing entity at the end of the explanatory chain (Clarke 2003, 120; Mathews 2003, 61). This is to claim not only that a panpsychist universe does exist, but that it must exist. It might seem that by positing a necessary consciousness, Clarke's and Mathews' panpsychism is starting to look quite a lot like some form of theism or pantheism, particularly if this conscious is "like us" or "welcomes us" (e.g. Goff

2019, 217).⁷ What should we make of such a claim? A theist might politely remind their interlocutor that necessity is a very strong claim, and not something to be appealed to lightly. In particular, to posit the actual panpsychist universe as existing necessarily will create at least three difficulties for the panpsychist.

First, to claim that something exists of metaphysical necessity is to claim that it is self-caused, or to use Timothy O'Connor's phrase, necessary beings are "absolutely invulnerable to nonexistence." (O'Connor 2008, 70) If something is a necessary being then questions like, 'Why does it exist?' are inappropriate questions, which is why Stephan Hawking's question 'Who created God?' is a philosophical non-starter (Hawking 1988, 174; cf. Clarke 2003, 120). If this were applied to this universe then it means that our current cosmological theories with regards a beginning of at least this version of the universe and its eventual heat death. It seems like a bad idea to set panpsychism up in conflict with current science, merely to avoid the conclusion of theism. Second, if this (exact) panpsychist universe exists necessarily, then, unless the universe also has some contingent intentional will and power, what causally follows will also be of necessity and there is no contingency left in the universe at all, which as Bruce Reichenbach writes, "is a disquieting notion" to say the least (Reichenbach 2021).

Third, if the panpsychist were to claim that the universe exists of logical necessity then they would be suggesting that, were we to properly understand the concept, it is inconceivable that it could be otherwise. Put another way, if it is conceivable that not- x , then x does not exist by necessity (but exists contingently). Logical necessity is the strongest sense of the claim of necessity, and some theists do not even want to posit logical necessity to God (e.g., Swinburne 2004, 79, 148). Moreover, since the panpsychist typically follows David Chalmers in using conceivability arguments against physicalism, they should be hesitant about invoking logical necessity and thereby removing conceivability arguments from the playing-field. If the universe's non-existence is conceivable (which I think it clearly is) then to also state that the universe is necessary is to sever any link between conceivability and possibility. However, if a panpsychist severs such a link then they can no longer argue from conceivability to the possibility of zombies, which many panpsychists are wont to do in order to ward off physicalism.⁸

Best return to the altogether more parsimonious and straightforward claim that this panpsychist universe is contingent and can be best explained by affirming a transcendence, creator God. In

⁷ Goff has also tentatively explored the idea that the universe is a conscious agent in order to explain cosmic fine-tuning (Goff 2019a).

⁸ I owe a debt of thanks for Philip Goff for helping me clarify and articulate this argument (which is not to say that he agrees with me here).

the words of Charles Taliaferro, “Theism can thus provide an explanation for the existence of the panpsychistic cosmos as well as for the different levels of consciousness pervading it.” (Taliaferro 2018, 369)

4. Conclusion

Let me restate again how much I enjoyed *Galileo’s Error*, and how much Goff and I agree on many of these arguments. In fact, the fundamental agreements between panpsychism and theism is the central point of this response. It is not uncommon for philosophy of mind and philosophy of religion (and Christian theology) to bump up against one another and overlap. A common way to draw the line between philosophy of mind and theism is based on an analogy between an (immaterial) human mind and an immaterial divine mind, and the question of how these minds interact with material bodies. As Yujin Nagasawa (2020) has argued, if one makes this sort of move based on an analogy of immaterial substance (by replacing phenomenality with divinity), then panpsychism would seem parallel to polytheism rather than monotheism. If one adopts a more cosmopsychist view, then the corresponding position in philosophy of religion is pantheism, although I have argued elsewhere that such a move is not as straightforward as it may seem at first (Leidenhag 2019).

But, for a theologian who affirms the transcendence of God and the claim that God created all things out of nothing— as mainstream traditions within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all affirm — then any move from mind to God on the basis of an analogy of substance should be suspect. Human minds are not a little bit like God, not even the minds of substance dualists. The ultimate divide, according to (supernatural) theism is not between immaterial things (Gods, angels, minds) and material things, but between God and everything that is not God, between Uncreated necessity and created contingency. Creation not only includes physical matter, but everything that God has created, such as consciousness. It is because of this transcendence that God’s action is not in competition with (or incompatible with) creaturely action, physical causation, or scientific explanation.

Why posit such a transcendent being in the first place? As argued in the latter half of this paper, when the entire system demands an explanation then the simplest and most explanatorily satisfying solution is to posit something beyond that system. Here the extension of panpsychism into theism is not achieved on the basis of an analogy of immaterial substances, but on the consistent use of explanatory principles and epistemic virtues; the principle of sufficient reason,

the causal principle, and the desire for simplicity but not at the cost of explanatory power. I can agree with Goff that panpsychism is the best explanation on offer within philosophy of mind; but it is not the best explanation on offer within philosophy of religion.

If we accept theism, particularly along the lines of the Christian faith, then the claim that God chose to create a panpsychist world makes good sense. If God values human minds, freedom and relationship, then we should expect God to create a world rich with ubiquitous mentality. If God desired to create a world in which to become incarnate, in which to dwell as in the temple, to be present within and unite Godself with, then a panpsychist world of order, unity, simplicity, and spiritual depth seems to have been a good idea (cf. Page 2020, 351-353). Far from being mutually exclusive alternatives, I can't think of a worldview more explanatorily and personally satisfying than a combination of theism and panpsychism.

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