

Continuous Dual-Aspect Panexperiential Monism: A New Framework for the Metaphysics of Consciousness

M. A. Surkes, PhD

Abstract

This paper introduces and defends continuous dual-aspect panexperiential monism (CDAPM), a metaphysical position holding that reality consists of a single continuous field that is intrinsically experiential, with experiential and physical aspects present as two inseparable and irreducible modes of description of the same underlying process. Three commitments define the view: monism (one kind of ultimate reality), dual-aspect (two inseparable descriptive faces, neither reducible to the other), and panexperientialism (experience, not consciousness, as fundamental and ubiquitous). A fourth commitment, continuity, holds that there is no ontological discontinuity between minimal and complex forms of experience; experience exists on a spectrum across all scales of nature. The paper argues that CDAPM dissolves rather than solves the combination problem by removing the discrete-unit assumption that generates it, distinguishes itself from both Russellian monism and standard neutral monism, and offers a more parsimonious foundation than panpsychism for the metaphysics of consciousness.

Keywords: panexperientialism, dual-aspect monism, combination problem, experiential monism, neutral monism, panpsychism, consciousness, Whitehead

1. Introduction

The hard problem of consciousness (the question of why physical processes give rise to subjective experience) has resisted resolution within physicalist frameworks. This resistance has renewed interest in positions that treat consciousness or experience as fundamental features of reality rather than products of it. Panpsychism, in its various forms, has attracted the most philosophical attention, but it faces a well-documented internal difficulty: the combination problem. If micro-level entities possess their own forms of experience or consciousness, it is

unclear how these combine to produce the unified macro-level consciousness characteristic of organisms like us.

This paper argues that reality consists of a single continuous experiential field whose physical and experiential aspects are two irreducible modes of describing the same underlying process, and that this continuity dissolves the combination problem rather than solving it.

The position developed here has a long lineage. Spinoza (1677/1996) argued for one substance with two attributes (thought and extension), neither reducible to the other and both expressing the same underlying reality. That dual-aspect structure is the architectural foundation of CDAPM. But Spinoza left the nature of the substance uncharacterized and had no account of how experience pervades the spectrum from micro to macro. Whitehead supplies that account through his concept of prehension: a minimal form of responsiveness present in all energetic events, constituting a continuous experiential field from the simplest physical interactions to the most complex forms of conscious life. CDAPM synthesizes these two contributions (Spinoza's monism and dual-aspect structure, Whitehead's panexperientialism and continuity) and brings them into direct engagement with the contemporary debate about the combination problem, where the field remains stuck between constitutive panpsychism and neutral monism. The synthesis resolves the impasse by removing the discrete-unit assumption that generates it.

Two broad responses to this difficulty have emerged. The first, represented by constitutive panpsychism (Goff 2017; Roelofs 2019), accepts the challenge and constructs increasingly elaborate mechanisms (phenomenal bonding, experience-sharing, subject-fusion) to explain mental combination. The second, represented by Coleman's (2014) argument that subjects cannot combine and that panpsychists should therefore move toward neutral monism, rejects the discrete-unit assumption as the source of the problem rather than a constraint on its solution.

This paper develops a position that takes Coleman's diagnostic insight seriously and builds on it constructively. The combination problem is not a problem to be solved; it is an artifact of the assumption that experience is instantiated in discrete units that must subsequently combine. CDAPM removes that assumption by treating reality as a single continuous experiential field. Where constitutive panpsychism asks how micro-experiences combine, CDAPM asks why we assumed they were separate in the first place.

This paper proceeds as a piece of metaphysics, not empirical science; it makes no claims that require or await empirical confirmation, and should be assessed on philosophical rather than scientific grounds.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 introduces the three core commitments of CDAPM. Section 3 distinguishes panexperientialism from panpsychism and explains why the shift from consciousness to experience as the primitive category matters. Section 4 develops the dual-aspect structure and explains its relationship to both neutral monism and experiential monism. Section 5 articulates the continuity thesis and shows how it dissolves the combination problem. Section 6 situates CDAPM in relation to cognate views. Section 7 concludes.

2. The Three Commitments

CDAPM is defined by three commitments, each doing specific philosophical work.

Monism.

There is one kind of ultimate reality. CDAPM rejects substance dualism, according to which mental and physical are fundamentally distinct kinds of stuff, and rejects any view on which experience is emergent from a non-experiential base. The single substance is not characterized in physical terms to which experience must later be added; nor is it characterized in neutral terms that underspecify the nature of the base. The base is experiential. This characterization is not a label but a positive specification: the base is described as experiential because it has interior character, which is not a further unexplained property but the very feature that makes dual-aspect description possible rather than arbitrary.

Dual-aspect.

The one underlying reality has two inseparable faces: experiential (subjective, qualitative, interior) and physical (objective, measurable, exterior). Neither aspect is reducible to the other, and neither can exist independently. The physical is not a distinct substance or property added to the experiential; it is the same experiential reality described from the outside. The experiential is not a ghost inhabiting a physical machine; it is the interior of the very process that physical description tracks from the outside.

This dual-aspect structure distinguishes CDAPM from views that collapse one aspect into the other. It avoids materialism, which reduces experience to physical processes. It avoids idealism, which treats physical processes as constructions of mind. And it avoids the structural instability of views that posit a neutral base, since a neutral base requires independent motivation for characterizing it as giving rise to both mental and physical descriptions rather than to one or the other.

Panexperientialism.

Experience is fundamental and ubiquitous. This is not the claim that consciousness pervades the universe. Panexperientialism, as developed in the Whiteheadian tradition, defines experience broadly as prehension: a basic form of responsiveness, interiority, or feeling present in all energetic interactions (Whitehead 1929/1978). Experience here designates the intrinsic character of process: not a property added to it, not a mode of access to it from outside, but what the process is from the inside. Subatomic events involve rudimentary responsiveness; biological organisms integrate these into richer forms; human consciousness is a highly organized, reflective mode of the same experiential continuum. The spectrum runs from minimal to complex without any ontological discontinuity. The spectrum is not flat: minimal experientiality and conscious experience differ not merely in degree but in organizational complexity, reflexivity, and integrative structure, which is why the continuity thesis does not trivialize the target phenomenon but locates it within a richer ontological landscape rather than reducing it to physics redescribed.

A note on the term 'field' as used throughout this paper: it does not designate a physical field in the technical sense of physics, but a continuous, relationally unified process: one in which no part is ontologically separable from the whole and in which local variations are modifications of a single underlying reality rather than interactions between independent entities. This is a metaphysical claim about the structure of experiential reality, not a commitment to any particular physical field theory. Within this framework, three levels are distinguished: the field as continuous ontological base, organizational patterns as the individuation mechanism that generates bounded subjects, and experience as the intrinsic character of the field and its patterns at every level of complexity.

3. Panexperientialism Distinguished from Panpsychism

The shift from panpsychism to panexperientialism is not terminological. It reflects a substantive change in the primitive category and carries significant philosophical consequences.

Panpsychism holds that consciousness is fundamental and ubiquitous. The basic constituents of reality (electrons, quarks, or whatever the physics ultimately identifies) possess their own forms of conscious experience. This formulation faces an immediate difficulty: consciousness, as ordinarily understood, involves subjectivity, unity, and a determinate 'what it is like.' Attributing these features to subatomic events either overloads the notion of consciousness beyond recognition or requires careful qualification that edges toward a different position.

Panexperientialism replaces consciousness with experience as the primitive category. Experience, in the relevant sense, requires none of the unity, reflective awareness, or determinate phenomenal character associated with consciousness. It requires only responsiveness: the capacity of an event to be affected by, and to register, its environment. This minimal notion is not imposed on physics from outside; it is a natural reading of what physical interactions already involve. A particle that attracts or repels another particle is not merely moving in response to a force; it is participating in a relational process that, at the macroscopic level of organized biological systems, becomes conscious experience.

This shift matters for the combination problem. If the primitive is consciousness, a category that essentially involves subjectivity and a determinate experiential character, then the question of how micro-conscious units combine to produce macro-conscious subjects is genuinely difficult. Subjects, as Coleman (2014) argues, cannot straightforwardly combine because each subject's viewpoint excludes the viewpoints of others. If the primitive is experience, a category that does not essentially involve subjectivity or determinate phenomenal character at the micro level, then the combination problem does not arise in the same form. There are no micro-subjects whose viewpoints must be reconciled; there is a continuous experiential field whose organized patterns, at sufficient complexity, constitute subjects.

A natural objection arises here: is experience-as-responsiveness a genuine primitive or merely a relabeling of physics? To say that a particle 'registers' its environment, the objection

runs, is to use experiential language for what is simply causal interaction. The term adds nothing explanatory and assumes what needs to be shown.

The objection has force against a naive version of the claim. But CDAPM does not assert that responsiveness is identical to experience as ordinarily understood; it asserts that responsiveness is the most minimal form of what, at higher levels of organization, becomes experience in the full sense. The question is whether there is a principled reason to draw a sharp ontological line between causal responsiveness at the micro level and experiential responsiveness at the macro level. Emergentism draws such a line and then struggles to explain how experience arises from wholly non-experiential precursors. That struggle is precisely what motivates both panpsychism and panexperientialism. CDAPM holds that no such line can be drawn non-arbitrarily: the difference between a particle's responsiveness to an electromagnetic field and a nervous system's responsiveness to its environment is a difference of complexity and organization, not of kind. Calling the former 'merely physical' and the latter 'genuinely experiential' assumes the dualism that the hard problem is supposed to explain. Experience-as-responsiveness is not a relabeling of physics; it is the rejection of the assumption that physics and experience are categorically distinct at any level of reality. The minimal criterion is not phenomenal richness but differential responsiveness: the capacity of a process to register and be modified by its relational context in ways that exceed what its prior intrinsic or structural state determines. This criterion is not causal interaction redescribed. Structural description exhausts invariant relational form; it does not capture counterfactual sensitivity that varies with relational embedding in ways not derivable from prior structural state alone. The distinction from enriched dispositionalism is precise: dispositionalism characterizes processes in terms of what they are disposed to do; differential responsiveness characterizes processes in terms of how they are genuinely open to being modified by their relational context, which is not a dispositional but a constitutive feature: if a process's subsequent organization were fully derivable from its prior structural state alone, no genuine openness would exist; but physical interaction systematically underdetermines subsequent state, which means openness is not added to structure but is primitive to it. At this point CDAPM makes its foundational commitment explicit. The identification of differential responsiveness with minimal experientiality cannot be derived from prior neutral premises without begging the question in the opposite direction (assuming that structural description is complete). The commitment is this: where there is genuine processual

openness, there is interiority; where there is interiority, there is experience in its most minimal form. This is not demonstrated by derivation; it is motivated by the explanatory failure of every alternative. Physicalism posits interiority as emergent but cannot explain the emergence. Neutral monism posits a base that is supposed to give rise to interiority but cannot characterize how. Russellian monism posits intrinsic phenomenal properties but cannot explain why those properties are experiential rather than merely categorical. CDAPM's identification is no more primitive than any of these, and it is less arbitrary, because it is grounded in a continuous field whose character is positively specified rather than left open. The identification is a foundational posit, but it is the most economical foundational posit available. This identification is explicitly owned as a metaphysical commitment grounded in parsimony and explanatory unification rather than derivation; its privilege consists not in being forced but in being the least costly available option given the explanatory demands on any adequate ontology of consciousness. The charge that CDAPM merely renames ontologically rich causation as experience is symmetrical: physicalism renames experience as ontologically rich causation. The question is not which direction avoids identification but which direction is better motivated. CDAPM's motivation is threefold: continuity removes the need for brute emergence, positive specification of the primitive is more informative than leaving it neutral or uncharacterized, and the dual-aspect structure explains why both physical and experiential descriptions succeed. That is a stronger motivation than any competing identification currently offers. It is acknowledged that this comparative framing characterizes competitors in terms of their explanatory limitations; a fully neutral comparison would require extended engagement with the strongest versions of each position, which exceeds the scope of this paper but remains a necessary next step in the development of CDAPM as a research program.

3.1 The Identification and Its Defense

This argument presupposes a non-Humean metaphysics of modality: the underdetermination at stake is not merely epistemic but ontological, reflecting genuine processual openness rather than incomplete specification of a Humean mosaic. CDAPM is explicitly committed to this: processes are not supervenient on instantaneous states but are ontologically prior to them, which is precisely what a continuous field ontology entails. The distinction between causal openness and experiential openness is this: causal openness is fully

characterized by the counterfactual profile of a system under interaction laws, specifiable from the outside; experiential openness is the same underdetermination described from the inside, as the process's own registering of its relational context, which is not an additional property but the interior aspect of what causal description tracks from the exterior. The objection that differential responsiveness describes structure rather than experience assumes that structure and experience are independently specifiable: that we could, in principle, have all the structure without any experience. That assumption is precisely what CDAPM denies. The demand for a derivation of experience from structure presupposes that all facts are expressible within a purely external structural vocabulary; CDAPM denies this not as a framework-immunity move but on principled grounds: structural description is always aspect-relative, capturing the exterior of a process whose interior is not structural but experiential. This reliance on a structuralist characterization of physical description is not an endorsement of ontic structural realism: CDAPM uses the structuralist account of physics descriptively, to specify what physical vocabulary tracks, while arguing that what it tracks is itself not exhausted by that vocabulary. The critique of structural realism targets its ontological claim that relations are all there is; CDAPM's use of structural description targets only its epistemic scope. The incompleteness of structural description is not merely a perspectival limitation but a principled one: structural vocabularies are defined over invariant relational form, and invariant relational form is precisely what abstracts away from the particular intrinsic character of the process. This means that structural description is constitutively silent about interiority, not contingently incomplete. The identification of responsiveness with minimal experientiality is not a claim this paper fully demonstrates; it is the foundational commitment of panexperientialism generally, shared with Whitehead, Strawson, and Goff, and the paper's contribution is to show what follows if that commitment is accepted on continuity grounds rather than atomistic ones. The gap between functional-structural description and experiential identification is not a defect specific to CDAPM; it is the central unresolved challenge for any non-reductive account of consciousness, and CDAPM's contribution is not to close it by derivation but to relocate it: the question is no longer why experience arises from non-experiential matter but how a continuous experiential field organizes itself into the forms we recognize as conscious life.

4. The Dual-Aspect Structure

The dual-aspect commitment raises an immediate question: if the underlying reality is experiential, in what sense is the physical a genuine and irreducible aspect rather than simply a way of describing what is ultimately only experiential?

The answer requires distinguishing two levels at which the question can be posed. At the ontological level, the physical is not a distinct substance; it is the exterior face of an experiential process. At the descriptive level, physical and experiential descriptions are genuinely irreducible to one another. No amount of physical description, however complete, entails or captures the qualitative, interior character of experience. No amount of experiential description, however refined, entails the quantitative, relational structure that physical description tracks. Both modes of description are necessary, and neither is eliminable in favor of the other.

This asymmetry (ontological experiential base, epistemologically dual description) distinguishes CDAPM from strict neutral monism. Neutral monism holds that the base is neither mental nor physical; it refuses to characterize the underlying substance in terms drawn from either domain (James 1912; Russell 1921). CDAPM does not refuse. It characterizes the base as experiential. But it insists that this characterization does not render physical description merely derivative or eliminable. Physical description is irreducible at the descriptive level even if the underlying reality is experiential at the ontological level.

The position might be stated this way: physicality is a form in which the experiential manifests when viewed from the outside. The physical and the experiential are not two equally uncharacterized aspects of a neutral substance; they are two modes of access to a reality that is, in its interior nature, experiential. The physical is real; it is not an illusion or a mere appearance. But it is the exterior of something that, from the inside, is experience.

This formulation invites the objection that it collapses into idealism: the view that the physical is ultimately mental. The objection misidentifies what CDAPM claims. Idealism holds that physical reality is a construction of, or dependent on, mind. CDAPM holds that the same underlying process that physical description tracks is, in its intrinsic character, experiential. This is not idealism; it is a claim about the intrinsic nature of the physical, not a claim that the physical depends on the mental for its existence or structure.

CDAPM also explains something that competing frameworks leave anomalous: why two radically different modes of access to reality both succeed. Physical description gives us exterior structure (measurable, relational, quantitative). Experiential description gives us interior access (qualitative, immediate, first-personal). On physicalism, the success of experiential description is unexplained: it is either reduced away or left as an inexplicable addition to a physical world. On idealism, the success of physical description is unexplained: it becomes a construction of mind whose structural reliability is mysterious. On neutral monism, both successes are unexplained, since the neutral base is defined precisely by its inability to characterize either.

CDAPM explains both in one move. Physical description succeeds because it tracks the exterior of a real process. Experiential description succeeds because it accesses the interior of that same process. First-person data is not anomalous on this account; it is structurally expected. The hard problem of consciousness is not merely dissolved by CDAPM; it is explained: the reason there is something it is like to be a conscious organism is that experientiality is the interior of the very processes that physical description tracks from the outside. CDAPM is thus not merely metaphysically elegant but epistemically well-motivated: it is the only framework currently available that explains why both modes of access succeed without remainder. The epistemic argument does not strictly entail the ontological conclusion: representational asymmetry between physical and experiential description is compatible with ontological positions other than experiential monism. CDAPM's claim is that experiential monism is the most parsimonious ontology that explains the asymmetry without positing an unexplained relationship between two fundamentally different kinds of description.

5. The Continuity Thesis and the Dissolution of the Combination Problem

The fourth commitment of CDAPM, continuity, holds that there is no ontological discontinuity between minimal and complex forms of experience. Experience does not suddenly appear at some threshold of physical complexity; it is present across all scales, varying in richness and organization but not in kind.

The grounds for this claim are twofold. First, there is no principled ontological threshold at which responsiveness ceases and experience begins. Every proposed threshold (biological

complexity, neural integration, and information processing) is either arbitrary or empirically contentious. Second, the alternative requires a discontinuity that emergentism has never successfully explained: the sudden appearance of experience from wholly non-experiential precursors. CDAPM holds that the explanatory burden lies with those who posit the discontinuity, not with those who reject it. Continuity is the more parsimonious default: emergent thresholds in nature (temperature, liquidity, life) mark functional transitions within a continuous underlying process, not ontological discontinuities, and the same interpretive move is available for the emergence of complex experience from minimal experientiality.

A purely discrete ontology must treat relations as primitive links between self-contained entities. But such links lack an ontological ground: they are neither internal to the relata nor features of a shared structure. A continuous field, by contrast, grounds interaction as modulation within a single process. Without such a ground, causation is not explained but stipulated. A structured network of discrete relations fares no better: relations between discrete relata either presuppose a medium in which they obtain, regressing to the very continuity they were meant to avoid, or they are brute posits with no further explanation (which is precisely the stipulation that field ontology replaces). Discrete substance metaphysics is unstable as an ontological ground: it either requires primitive ungrounded relations, regresses to a continuous medium, or relocates the problem into modal primitives such as laws or structural facts. None of that avoids positing something beyond the discrete relata themselves.

This claim has a direct consequence for the combination problem. The combination problem, as standardly formulated, presupposes that experience is instantiated in discrete units (micro-experiences, micro-subjects, or protophenomenal properties) that must subsequently combine to produce the unified experience characteristic of organisms like us. The problem is to explain how this combination occurs.

CDAPM removes the presupposition. If reality is a continuous experiential field rather than a collection of discrete experiential units, then there is no combination to explain. What appears, from the perspective of physical description, as the integration of components into a complex system is, from the perspective of experiential description, the same underlying process organizing itself into more complex patterns of experience. The unity of consciousness is not

produced by combination; it is the organized expression of a continuous experiential reality at a particular level of complexity.

This is not a solution to the combination problem; it is a dissolution of it. Solutions accept the problem's framing and attempt to answer within it. Dissolution shows that the framing itself generates a pseudo-problem. The combination problem is a pseudo-problem not merely because a better ontology avoids it, but because the discrete-unit assumption that generates it has no independent motivation: it is not derived from observation, not required by physics, and not forced by any prior commitment in the philosophy of mind. It is a default inherited from substance metaphysics, and defaults are not constraints. The combination problem arises because panpsychism begins with discrete experiential atoms and asks how they add up. CDAPM begins with a continuous experiential field and asks how complex patterns of organization emerge within it, a question for which both physics and biology already provide frameworks.

CDAPM makes a stronger claim than merely offering a coherent alternative to existing positions. Every competing ontology requires at least one brute posit: discrete ontologies require primitive relational links with no further ground; neutral monism requires a base whose character is left unspecified; Russellian monism requires primitive intrinsic properties whose experiential character is asserted but not explained; physicalism requires brute emergence; idealism requires brute mental construction. CDAPM requires fewer and more explanatorily unified posits than its competitors: rather than primitive relations, primitive intrinsic properties, or an uncharacterized neutral base, it posits a single continuous experiential process whose character is positively specified. The continuous experiential field grounds relations (as modulations within a single process), causation (as field-level interaction rather than action at a distance between discrete relata), individuation (as organizational patterns within the field), physical structure (as the exterior description of field processes), and experiential interiority (as the interior of those same processes). This is what may be called the Field Grounding Principle: a continuous experiential field is the only ontology that grounds all of these without remainder. It is not merely parsimonious; it is the only non-brute ontology available. The concentration of explanatory work in a single posit is not a defect but a feature: the mark of a successful foundational ontology is precisely that one well-characterized primitive grounds many phenomena without multiplication of entities. The field is not explanatorily overloaded; it is explanatorily unified, and unification is

what foundational metaphysics is for. The field's multiple roles are not independent posits aggregated post hoc; they are consequences of a single well-specified commitment: that reality consists of one continuous process whose interior is experiential and whose exterior is physical. Each explanatory role follows from that commitment by analysis, not by addition. Every foundational ontology posits a primitive whose ultimate character resists further derivation: physics posits quantum fields, process philosophy posits occasions of experience, physicalism posits brute physical laws. CDAPM is no worse off than its competitors on this score; it is better off in that its primitive is positively characterized rather than left neutral or unspecified. This claim is advanced not as a deductive proof but as an inference to the best explanation: of the available ontological options, CDAPM alone requires no primitive posit whose character is left without further account. This comparative claim is not a knock-down argument: competing frameworks will dispute what counts as a brute posit and what counts as explanatory adequacy. The claim is more modest: CDAPM's primitive is positively characterized (experiential process with dual-aspect structure) whereas its competitors either leave the base unspecified (neutral monism), assert intrinsic properties without further account (Russellian monism), or posit brute emergence (physicalism). That positive specification, even if not derivation, is an explanatory virtue that the IBE supports.

One competing relational ontology deserves explicit attention. Ontic structural realism holds that relations, not intrinsic properties, are fundamental: what exists are structures, not the things that bear them. This might appear to avoid the grounding problem that afflicts discrete ontologies. It does not. Structural realism treats relations as primitive: they are fundamental without further account of what makes them the relations they are or what grounds their obtaining. CDAPM's field ontology differs precisely here. The continuous experiential field does not posit primitive relations; it posits a single process within which what we call relations are modulations. The relations are not ontological primitives but aspects of a unified dynamic. Structural realism replaces discrete substances with primitive structures; CDAPM replaces both with a continuous process that grounds structure rather than presupposing it. The difference between field modulation and primitive relation is this: a relation obtains between two or more independently specifiable relata, whereas a modulation is a self-differentiation of a single process with no prior discrete terms. The field does not relate; it varies. The structural realist will object that process differentiation is itself a form of structure; the reply is that CDAPM's field

does not differentiate into pre-given relata but varies intrinsically, meaning its differentiations are aspects of a single ongoing process rather than relations between independently specifiable terms. This distinction may not satisfy every structural realist, but it is not obviously eliminable by their framework.

The continuity thesis does not render individuation unintelligible. Individual experiencers are real; the question is what kind of reality they have. CDAPM treats individuation as an organizational phenomenon rather than an ontological one. What we call a subject of experience is a particular pattern of organization within the continuous experiential field: stable enough to constitute a perspective, complex enough to involve reflective awareness, but not a discrete experiential atom that preceded its integration into a larger whole. Individual subjects emerge from the field; they do not compose it.

This account of individuation invites a further question: if the experiential field is continuous and undivided, what generates the boundaries that make individual subjects possible? The answer lies in the character of complex organizational systems. A whirlpool is real (it has a determinate structure, a boundary, causal powers) but it is not a discrete substance added to the water. It is a stable pattern the water makes under certain conditions. Individual subjects are analogous: stable, self-maintaining patterns of experiential organization within the continuous field, bounded not by ontological discontinuity but by the dynamics of their own organization.

What the whirlpool model does not yet explain is first-person exclusivity: why the perspective constituted by a given organizational pattern is inaccessible from outside it. The answer lies in the self-referential character of sufficiently complex experiential organization: a pattern that models its own states as states generates a perspective that is, by definition, interior to itself. Exclusivity is not a primitive feature of subjects but a consequence of self-modeling. The exclusivity is subjective rather than merely functional because the modeling process is itself experiential: it is not a computational representation of states but an experiential integration of them, such that the interiority is not inferred but constituted. The move from self-referential organization to first-person givenness is not an additional explanatory step; it is the same step described from the inside rather than the outside, which is precisely what the dual-aspect structure of CDAPM predicts. Self-modeling here is not mere physical self-representation, as in a thermostat registering its own temperature; it requires that the modeling process itself be

incorporated into the ongoing organization of experience, such that the system's states are not merely tracked but integrated into a perspective that is constitutively its own. The gap between bounded self-modeling and phenomenal unity is acknowledged: CDAPM's account explains why a perspective is structurally bounded and experientially interior, but the further question of why bounded experiential integration yields the specific qualitative unity characteristic of conscious experience remains a target for future development within the framework.

This has a specific consequence for Coleman's concern about the discreteness of points of view. Coleman treats the exclusivity of subjects' perspectives (the fact that my point of view cannot include yours) as a metaphysical primitive that blocks combination. On the CDAPM account, that exclusivity is an organizational property of complex experiential patterns, not a primitive feature of experience as such. It arises at the level of nervous systems and brains, where the pattern of experiential organization is sufficiently stable and self-referential to constitute a perspective. It does not characterize the experiential field at the micro level, where there are no stable self-maintaining patterns of sufficient complexity to constitute perspectives at all. The discreteness of human subjectivity is therefore a product of a particular level of organizational complexity, not a feature that experience must have at every level. Individuation is real; it is simply not ontologically primitive. The robustness of first-person exclusivity is explained by the stability and closure of self-modeling systems: a process that models its own states as its own generates a perspective that is, by the logic of self-reference, bounded: not because the field is divided but because the modeling relation is reflexively self-enclosing, admitting no external standpoint without ceasing to be the perspective it is.

6. Relation to Cognate Views

Russellian monism.

Goff (2017) defends a form of Russellian monism according to which consciousness is the intrinsic nature of the physical. Where physics describes the relational and dispositional properties of fundamental entities, Russellian monism identifies the categorical ground of those properties with phenomenal or protophenomenal properties. CDAPM and Russellian monism share the commitment to treating experience-related properties as intrinsic to physical reality. They differ in two respects. First, CDAPM takes experience rather than consciousness as the

primitive, avoiding the overloading of the primitive category with features (subjectivity, unity, determinate phenomenal character) that generate the combination problem in the first place. Second, CDAPM's dual-aspect structure treats the physical not as a relational overlay on a phenomenal base but as a genuine irreducible mode of description of the same process, which avoids the structural mismatch problems that affect constitutive Russellian monism. The structural mismatch in question is this: Russellian monism posits phenomenal or protophenomenal properties as the categorical ground of physical relational structure, but the relationship between those intrinsic properties and the relational structure they are supposed to ground remains unexplained; the properties are posited to fill a gap without an account of how they do so. CDAPM avoids this by making the physical exterior and the experiential interior aspects of the same process rather than distinct levels requiring a grounding relation between them. Where Russellian monism posits intrinsic phenomenal or protophenomenal properties as the categorical ground of physical structure, CDAPM posits experiential processes whose exterior face just is that structure: the difference being between properties grounding a process and a process that is itself the ground.

Panqualityism.

Coleman (2012, 2014) defends panqualityism, the view that the basic constituents of physical reality have intrinsic qualitative natures that are not yet phenomenally characterized: unexperienced qualia. Consciousness arises when these qualities come to play the right functional role in the cognitive economy of an organism. Coleman's paper arrives at this position through a compelling internal critique of constitutive panpsychism: he argues that subjects cannot combine because each subject's point of view (discrete, unified, exclusively its own) is precisely what must be suppressed in producing a unified macro-subject, making any such production a case of emergence rather than structural constitution.

CDAPM accepts Coleman's diagnosis but identifies a suppressed assumption in his argument. The demonstration that subjects cannot combine relies on a conception of subjectivity that presupposes a discrete point of view with its own experiential access and a private qualitative field. Micro-level experience on the panexperientialist account has none of these features. A Whiteheadian occasion of experience is not a unified perspective with exclusionary access; it is a momentary event of responsiveness and registration. Coleman's argument shows

that subjects cannot combine when subjectivity is conceived as a discrete, exclusive point of view. It does not show that experience in this minimal, pre-subjective sense cannot be continuous.

The gap Coleman is left with (unexperienced qualia at the micro level, awaiting a relational mechanism to bring them into awareness) is itself a product of accepting that phenomenal qualities must precede experience rather than constituting it. CDAPM removes this gap differently: experience-as-responsiveness is the primitive, and qualia are its organized forms at higher levels of complexity. There are no subjectless qualities waiting to become experienced because the experiential character, in its minimal form, is never absent. What Coleman's paper calls for in its conclusion, development of an adequate relational model of subjectivity, CDAPM addresses not by providing that model but by showing that the relational gap it is meant to bridge need not be opened in the first place.

Neutral monism.

Standard neutral monism holds that the underlying substance is neither mental nor physical and refuses any positive characterization of the base (James 1912; Russell 1921). CDAPM agrees that the base cannot be adequately characterized in purely physical terms, but it provides a positive characterization: the base is experiential. This is not a concession to idealism; it is the recognition that a genuinely neutral base (one that is positively neither mental nor physical) leaves unexplained why both mental and physical descriptions apply to it. A base that is intrinsically experiential provides the required explanation: physical description captures its exterior relational structure; experiential description captures its interior qualitative character.

Cosmopsychism.

Some philosophers (Goff 2017; Shani 2015) have moved toward cosmopsychism (the view that the universe as a whole is conscious and that individual minds derive from this cosmic consciousness) as a response to the combination problem. Cosmopsychism avoids the combination problem by reversing its direction: instead of asking how micro-experiences combine into macro-consciousness, it asks how cosmic consciousness differentiates into individual minds. CDAPM is structurally similar in replacing a bottom-up combinatorial account with a field-based one. The difference is that CDAPM takes experience rather than

consciousness as the cosmic primitive, which avoids the implausibility of attributing unified conscious experience to the universe as a whole while remaining agnostic about whether the universe possesses anything like the reflective, unified awareness that characterizes paradigm cases of consciousness.

7. Conclusion

CDAPM offers a coherent, parsimonious framework for the metaphysics of consciousness. Its core commitments (monism, dual-aspect, panexperientialism, and continuity) fit together without internal tension. The shift from consciousness to experience as the primitive category removes the discrete-subject assumption that generates the combination problem. The dual-aspect structure preserves the irreducibility of physical description without conceding materialism or idealism. The continuity thesis treats individuation as organizational rather than ontological, rendering the emergence of individual subjects intelligible without requiring a combinatorial account.

A note on explanatory scope: CDAPM's ambition to ground consciousness, causation, individuation, and epistemic access within a single framework invites the charge of explanatory overreach. The response is not to narrow the claims but to specify the constraints. CDAPM is falsified, in the philosophical sense, by any coherent ontology that grounds all of these without positing an experiential field, which is precisely what the Field Grounding Principle argues and no competing view currently achieves. The framework is also constrained by its own commitments: it cannot accommodate discrete micro-subjects, emergent consciousness, or a neutral uncharacterized base without abandoning its core architecture. These are not escape hatches but genuine constraints, and they distinguish CDAPM from frameworks that adopt similar explanatory language without equivalent structural discipline.

The position is not merely a technical maneuver within the panpsychism debate. It reflects a substantive claim about the nature of reality: that the universe consists of one continuous experiential process, that what we call the physical is the exterior of that process, and that what we call consciousness is its most complex and organized form. This claim, if correct, has consequences that extend beyond philosophy of mind into epistemology and the theory of

education, consequences developed in the companion framework of which CDAPM forms the metaphysical foundation.

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