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## Against Deflation of the Subject

**Abstract** I will argue that accounts of mineness and pre-reflective self-awareness can be helpful to panpsychists in solving the combination problems. A common strategy in answering the subject combination problem in panpsychism is to deflate the subject, eliminating or reducing subjects to experience. Many modern panpsychist theories are deflationist or endorse deflationist accounts of subjects, such as Parfit's reductionism of personal identity and G. Strawson's identity view. To see if there can be deflation we need to understand what the subject/self is. One aspect of consciousness left unexplored and unappreciated by panpsychist theories is pre-reflective self-consciousness/self-awareness. Theories of the self, inspired by phenomenology, that are serious about subjectivity, could be of use in arguing against the deflationary reductionism of the experiencing subject. These theories show that there is more to the subject of experience than just its experiences (qualities). Even without arguing for any precise account of the nature of the self, it can be shown what phenomenology of subjective character of consciousness and pre-reflective self-awareness contributes to the combination problem debate.

**Keywords:** deflation, subject of experience, panpsychism, combination problem, pre-reflective self-awareness

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### 1. Introduction

There has been a resurgence of interest in self-consciousness and panpsychism in contemporary philosophy of mind. Nevertheless, importance of subjectivity or pre-reflective self-consciousness in experience has been neglected in panpsychist accounts of consciousness.<sup>1</sup> I will argue that we should look to phenomenology in order to better understand and be able to solve or dissolve the combination problems that are encountered in panpsychism. As an extension of materialism, panpsychism holds that physical matter doesn't generate consciousness, but is already endowed with it. The view harbors some combination problems: how consciousness from lower levels generates our level consciousness, how subjects sum to yield a new subject or how experience makes a unified subject of experience.

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1 Strawson has explicitly expounded the significance of self-experience for subjects, though still he has no notion of self-awareness in the sense of persistent mineness. Keith Turansky 2014 has argued for unreduced subjects. He defends a theory of phenomenal subjectivity which takes "for-me-ness" to be a *haecceity*: „an essential, individuating, non-qualitative, non-duplicable phenomenal property“.

The concept of *subjectivity* or *subjective character* of consciousness<sup>2</sup> has been underappreciated in modern analytic panpsychist theories of consciousness. Others have argued for the project of phenomenological contribution to the philosophy of mind and to the general mind/body debate: “Philosophical phenomenology can offer much more to contemporary consciousness research than a simple compilation of introspective evidence” (Zahavi 2005: 5). Phenomenology thus construed is not just introspective analysis of experience. Subjectivity has always been one of the main interests of phenomenological investigations and it is only natural to use such theories when trying to understand problem of the nature of subjects in panpsychism. Phenomenology could help us understand what a subject of experience is and only then could we hope to resolve the unity of consciousness, the boundary problem and the subject-summing problem of panpsychism. It would be beneficial if the contemporary debate on deflationism in panpsychism would be more thoroughly informed by the phenomenological concepts of subjectivity/mineness/pre-reflective self-awareness. Specifically, the problem of consciousness unity will be addressed and a different solution based on the first-person givenness account offered. I will discuss how inclusion of pre-reflective self-consciousness affects these matters.

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First I will lay out the subject combination problem that plagues panpsychism (section 2). One way to answer the subject combination problem is the *deflation of the subject* (section 3). I will examine Strawson’s deflationary account (Sections 3.1 i 3.2). Alternative phenomenological theories of the self/subject will be called upon (Section 4). It will be demonstrated how phenomenology of pre-reflective self-awareness can contribute to the understanding of the unity of consciousness (Section 5), nature of the self and ultimately, what consequences this has for the plausibility of deflation and solving the subject combination problem (section 6).

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2 Pre-reflective self-consciousness/awareness, mineness, me-ness, for-me-ness - there are many different concepts conceived by different philosophers and they don’t necessarily signify the same phenomenon, but they all circulate in the literature as pertaining to subjectivity, that is pointing to a subject or having something to do with a subjective point of view. Mineness and subjective character are sometimes meant or stand for the pre-reflective self-consciousness of the phenomenological tradition. That there seems to exist something like self-consciousness in the pre-reflective and pre-conceptual sense is hold as highly plausible by many phenomenologists and philosophers of mind. This self-awareness is not of the cognitive kind, deployed in I-thoughts, but minimal, non-reflective; what many have defended as pre-reflective self-consciousness. Mineness can be misleading. What this notions are pointing to is the presence of the subject in experience. Problem seems to be that all these concepts are about properties or aspects of consciousness. For discussion and criticism of some uses of these terms see Siewert 2013, Nida-Rümelin 2014, Guillot 2016. They have shown what lies behind these notions and how we should work towards developing better concepts that more accurately describe our phenomenology.

## 2. Panpsychism and the Combination problems

One way to define panpsychism would be to say that everything in nature is endowed with a modicum of consciousness. Panpsychism, though it may sound counter-intuitive or even downright crazy, is endorsed in order to overcome the deficiencies and problems of both physicalism and dualism. Motivation behind the modern revival of panpsychism is the failure of mainstream reductive physicalism to account for and explain consciousness, being thus unable to solve *the hard problem of consciousness*. If properly understood it could prove to be the synthesis of materialism and dualism that rises above the shortcomings of both positions.

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As it is argued in most contemporary works on panpsychism, the constitutive form of panpsychism suffers from a significant problem, that of combination. Constitutive panpsychism posits that macroconsciousness is grounded in microconsciousness, macroexperience just has those microexperiences as parts and it inherits their properties, „they add up to yield macroexperience“ (Chalmers 2015: 253). This is the most attractive form of panpsychism because it gives the promise of mental-physical isomorphism<sup>3</sup> in accordance with the Russellian monism<sup>4</sup> and it avoids emergentism. Combination problem for constitutive panpsychism arises when we try to understand how *o*-consciousness (that we pre-theoretically know as ourselves) comes from fundamental microconsciousness if we are on a position of panpsychism, the thesis that everything has mentality in some way is or has some kind of consciousness. The problem is especially hard when it relates the combination of micro-subjects (if these exist) into macro-subjects (or *o*-subjects<sup>5</sup>) of human beings.

Coleman (2013) has pointed out that there is an “internal tension“ in panpsychism and he argues against the possibility of subject-summing. Constitutive panpsychism was driven by an aversion to emergentism<sup>6</sup>, but in the end it seems that has to yield to some kind of emergence in order to account for the production of high-level subjects. He argues that if panpsychism resorts to emergence then classic physicalism could prove to be more plausible. Accepting emergence could be taken as a betrayal of original intentions of panpsychism.

The combination of subjects seems to be an insurmountable problem for constitutive panpsychism. More than that, it could be insoluble in principle.

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3 See Mørch 2014: 50.

4 The usually preferred interpretation of panpsychism.

5 Phillip Goff's term.

6 Nagel's famous argument for panpsychism includes a *Non-emergence* premise: „P4. Non-emergence: All high-level properties of a composite intelligibly derive from properties of its constituents plus their arrangement.“ (Nagel 1979: 181-182).

Goff (2009) argues that a set of subjects does not *a priori* entail the existence of another subject, we cannot see how this happens, though there is a possibility open that it might have happened in some to us, presently unknown, way<sup>7</sup>. Coleman, while acknowledging Goff's argument, goes on to strengthen the claim that it is metaphysically impossible to combine or assemble subjects to yield new subjects and this, as a consequence, rules out constitutive panpsychism. If this would be the case, some kind of *brute* emergence would be involved and panpsychists don't want this, because it is a position that they originally tried to avoid. This is why Coleman ultimately denies the plausibility of constitutive panpsychism and argues that panpsychists should become neutral monists. Coleman takes what he thinks is a golden middle way between orthodox physicalism and full-fledged panpsychism and defends panqualityism, position in which ultimates are *qualities*.

The combination problem is actually a whole family of related problems. Chalmers distinguishes three different aspects of phenomenal states (subjective character, qualitative character and structural character) that yield three different combination problems: *the subject combination* problem, *the quality combination* problem, and *the structure combination* problem<sup>8</sup>, but there are also the grain problem, the palette problem, the unity problem. The hardest of all problems is *the subject combination problem* or *subject-summing*.

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### 3. Deflation

Deflationist views about subjects of experience dominate the landscape of contemporary literature on panpsychism. Deflationary subjects of experience are not persistent through time as we pre-theoretically conceive of them. They are not diachronically unified, though they can have synchronic unity. Deflationary views were defended by Hume (1739-40), James (1890), Parfit (1971). Modern panpsychist accounts of Roelofs (2015), Mørch (2014), Strawson (2009), Coleman (2013), Seager (2010) all have deflationist traits.

Chalmers (2015; 2016) shows that one possible reaction to the combination problem is to *deflate the subject*.<sup>9</sup> *Prima facie* it is an appealing strategy. But it seems that deflationism about some of the main concepts of panpsychism (subjects, awareness) cannot on itself be a solution to any of the combination problems, though it can help us get to those solutions (together with phenomenal bonding, for example). "Either denying that experiences must have subjects at all, or at least denying that subjects are metaphysically and

<sup>7</sup> Like the phenomenal bonding solution.

<sup>8</sup> See Chalmers 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Other options would be to endorse emergent panpsychism instead of constitutive panpsychism or to identify macro-subjects with micro-subjects (Chalmers 2015: 270).

conceptually simple entities“ (Chalmers 2015: 271). Though he sees it as a conceptual truth that experiences must have subjects who have them, he finds the second denial untenable. Opting for deflation seems like a natural choice in compositional panpsychism/panprotopsychism.

Deflation garners special attention when it comes to the possible solution to the subject combination problem. If we deny the deflation of the subject, there can be no combination. Deflation can range from denying that subjects are metaphysically primitive entities (reduction) to complete eliminativism of such entities. Given deflationism, there is greater plausibility in the composition of subjects from other subjects and composition of subjects from experience. Are we primitive subjects of experience, *Edenic Subjects*? Should we imbue our Subjects with sedulous subjectivity? If we are something like *Edenic* subjects, this would eliminate constitutive pan(proto)psychism.

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Eliminativism of subjects can be found in some neutral monist views, like in theories of Russell, Mach and James. Eliminativist views face combination problems and even less extreme forms of deflationism that view subjects as composite and derivative still have the subject-summing problem (Chalmers 2016). There is also deflation of awareness. James is eliminativist about such relation and Coleman (2013) defends a reductive, functional analysis of awareness.

Panqualityism is subject to the “nonsubject/subject gap” problem (Chalmers 2015: 272) and tries to “patch it up” with deflation. On such a view, quiddities of microphysical properties are qualities. When there is awareness of qualities, they become phenomenal properties. In panqualityism subjectivity is not essential to qualities. Some panqualityists reject subjects of experience altogether (eliminativism), while others think they are constituted by qualities in certain relations as with Coleman’s solutions and *the higher-order thought theories of consciousness*. Panqualityism of Coleman, in which the basic, intrinsic properties are qualities as „unexperienced qualia“ harbors the conceivability of *awareness zombies* (Chalmers 2016). Attempts to „functionalize“ awareness eventually eradicate the phenomenology of awareness, as is the case in in panqualityism.

What all this comes down to is the problem of radical emergence. The hard problem of consciousness originated as a result of the unintelligibility of radical emergence of experiential from physical (as completely non-experiential). Panpsychism came as an answer, assuming that the experiential can only come or emerge (in a non-problematic way) from experiential (*No-Radical-Emergence Thesis*).<sup>10</sup> But the explanatory gap reappears in panpsychism’s

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10 See Strawson 2006.

and panpsychism's combination problems. There seem to be problems of radical emergence of subjects from qualities, of subjects from experience and of subjects from other subjects.<sup>11</sup> In this paper I will not be concerned with eliminativist positions, only with deflationist ones, particularly with those that reduce subjects to experience.

So, there is an explanatory gap between subjects and experience and some views try to answer it with deflationism, by reducing subjects to experience. If we argue against deflationist reduction, on the ground that there is something like unreducible subjectivity, this could push us towards giving up constitutive panpsychism. We should be wary of reduction in these matters, because we might not know well that what is being reduced, to take cue from Nagel (1974). I think the deflationist reductive approach can be challenged by appealing to the first-person givenness of experience and this is what I will argue for.

Let us examine several representative deflationary views of the self/subject that are endorsed by modern panpsychists. Parfit's theory, though it is not panpsychist in nature, presents a reductionist account of personal identity and of the self (subject). Mørch (2014) cites Parfit's and Strawson's deflationist accounts that are of use in solving the combination problem. In next sections I will make apparent the shortcomings of several deflationary positions and offer a better solution.

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One of the reasons we think of ourselves as subjects in a strong sense is the intuition about persistence of *personal identity*. Cases of personal identity breakdown are taken to support deflationary views of subjects and Parfit's thought experiments contribute to subject reductionism. I will consider one exemplary panpsychist deflationist theory of the self.

### 3.1. Thin sesmets

We find Strawson's position on the question of the subject somewhere in the middle, between pro-selfers and anti-selfers. Strawson expounds the transience view of the self. He argues that there are no persistent subjects. He can be called a panpsychist, or in his terms a *real materialist* (real physicalism) and not just a *physicSalist*.

Strawson shows that subjects have experience of themselves, they have *self-experience*. It is the necessary and sufficient condition for having a self, he claims. There can't be any subject without subjectivity; "subjectivity" can be put in place of "subject". On his account that means a subject is an episode

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11 Chalmers 2015 claims there is an explanatory gap between qualities and awareness and a gap between qualities and experience, on account of the conceivability argument.

of subjectivity and “the existence of *s* (this particular episode of subjectivity) is really nothing over and above the existence of *c* (this particular episode of occurrent living content)” (Strawson 2009: 414).<sup>12</sup> Subject, as an episode of subjectivity is *identical* to an episode of experience. Strawson endorses *the identity view* between experience and subjects of experience.

1108 The real subjects for Strawson are the “thin” ones. “Thin subjects”<sup>13</sup> are synchronic unifiers of co-conscious qualities, though not diachronic unifiers. “There’s a fundamental and immovable sense in which one can’t experience the self as multiple in the synchronic case” (2009, 90). Strawson thinks that we have short streams of consciousness. They are brief pulses of experience which can last up to about 2 or 3 seconds, although this is disputable. James called this temporary selves “perishing’ pulses of thought”. When there is an experiential gap between them, no subject exists. Strawson thinks of subjects as real mental things. He dubs them SESMETs (short for “subject-of-experience-as-single-mental-thing”). Subject is a *single*, but only synchronically, for him: “The unity or singleness of the (thin) subject of the total experiential field in the living moment of experience and the unity or singleness of the total experiential field are aspects of the same thing” (Strawson 2010: 81). According to Strawson, James held a similar position on subject persistence: “Successive thinkers, numerically distinct, but all aware of the past in the same way, form an adequate vehicle for all the experience of personal unity and sameness which we actually have” (James 1892: 181).<sup>14</sup> Long-term continuity is here only in a “bundle theory” sense; there are in fact many consecutive, numerically distinct selves or “Thoughts”. Thin subjects are best described as: “essentially-subject-involving-experiences, briefly flaring neural synergies” (Strawson 2009: 359).

Strawson is taking into account only *episodes*, as if for every particular experience there is a subject of that experience. One great problem of combinationist (constitutive) panpsychist views is that if we (as macro-subjects) are made up of many subjects as parts, then we cannot say for sure who of those subjects we really are. This is the dreaded Problem of *Self-Identification* (see

12 See also Strawson 2009: 274.

13 Strawson 2009 argues that Descartes, Fichte, Hume, Husserl, James, Nozick among others hold the „thin subject“ view.

14 James reserves the word „me“ for the empirical aggregate (empirical ego, *the self as known*), the „identity of the whole“, as an objective self, and the „I“ for the present, momentarily parcel of the stream, “Thought” (pure ego, *the self as knower*). “This me is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The I which knows them cannot itself be an aggregate; neither for psychological purposes need it be considered to be an unchanging metaphysical entity like the Soul, or a principle like the pure Ego, viewed as ‘out of time.’ It is a Thought, at each moment different from that of the last moment, but *appropriate* of the latter, together with all that the latter called its own“ (James 1890: 400-1).

Roelofs 2015: 265-304) that seems to seriously undermine combinationism. On the combinationist view we “refer to a multitude of subjects” when we ask “who is talking now?” Roelofs contends:

Combinationism renders self-identification impossible relative to the set of our experientially equivalent parts, and probably also relative to the set of our cognitively sophisticated parts. Rather than showing how self-identification is still possible, combinationists have to bite the bullet and claim that self-identification is not important: knowing which set of harmoniously-connected overlapping parts we belong to is all we need. (Roelofs 2015: 303).

Strawson’s theory seems to suffer from a problem of *self-reference*, though diachronically. Which of these subjects is me? Am I a human being, a human head or medulla oblongata, one might wonder in constitutive panpsychism? Similar questions could be asked of Strawson’s pearle view.

When we talk of subject/experience identity what *experience* exactly should we take into consideration? First of all, experience is holistic – the experiential field is a whole prior to its parts. Phenomenal holism is a very plausible thesis.<sup>15</sup> Distinct experiences are „carved out” later. Holism could be defined in this manner:

Phenomenal holism – this is the view that, within a person’s total psychological whole, the nature of a single identifiable experience [...] is essentially determined by the other experiences occurring alongside it – synchronically – within the whole (Basile 2010).

We could rightfully ask how are all of these thin subjects woven together into a stream of consciousness. Strawson explains: “The ‘stitching software’ that underwrites our sense of being a single persisting subject—and delivers a sense of the flowing continuity of experience (for those who have such experience)—is as remarked extremely powerful” (Strawson 2009).

What is it exactly that stays the same in all experiences? If there are as many thin subjects as episodes of experience then Strawson needs to postulate some kind of phenomenal bonding relation to serve as the “stitching software”, holding these subjects together diachronically. This seems like an unparsimonious posit. Strawson’s view is problematic in light of phenomenal holism. Subjects cannot be identical to single identifiable experiences. Since synchronic experiential field as a whole is prior to its parts, there is only one holistic experience to which a subject is identical to.

Dainton also points out Strawson’s claim that we are identical to episodes of our experience. How do we survive sleep and unconsciousness? This is

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<sup>15</sup> Similar to priority monism in Schaffer 2010.



the *problem of continuity* (of a stream of consciousness). If Strawson is right, then we are identical to episodes of experience, we do not *have* experiences (Dainton 2012: 185), this is no ownership. Dainton would claim that overlapping chains of diachronic co-consciousness make up the stream of consciousness. The problem with subject's persistence is how to account for the *diachronic unity*. This involves solving the problem of continuity of a stream of consciousness that has gaps in the form of unconscious states and dreamless sleep. For Dainton the unity of consciousness comes from primitive inter-experiential relationships. He also denies there is something like mine-ness or non-reflective self-consciousness (Dainton 2008: 242–3).

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There is no flow of the stream of consciousness in Strawson's account, there are insurmountable gaps between short-term subject-experience-episodes. Certain worries are then raised against such an account. Since we cannot have experience of unconsciousness states, how can we know anything about them, even that there are such states? Zahavi asks why should our phenomenal field be fragmentary, because there always seems to be some kind of "phenomenal background" of experience. Or at least there is the constant sense of mineness? Strawson's *sesmet* account also entails that the difference between successive "thin subjects" is as deep as between completely different selves or streams (Zahavi 2005: 234–235). Why would all of my thin subjects be *mine* and not somebody else's? What makes "me" is that there is something invariant to all these *sesmets* in my stream of consciousness. What is the same is self-experience (in Strawson's terms). The stream of consciousness is really a *stream of subjectivity*, if it is streamlike at all (as James argued). The answer to these worries lays in the mineness or first-person givenness of experience.

Not just compositional panpsychists are opting for deflation. Mørch (2014) uses Strawson's identity account and expounds a *hylomorphic* account of causation in her emergent panpsychism.<sup>16</sup> She treats experientiality as "a general determinable" and reduces subjects to forms of experiential matter with the help of Strawson's identity view and Parfit's fusion. She endorses the identity view and Parfitian fusion/fision in order to make the experiential combination intelligible (Mørch 2014: 219–220). On her view subjects are transitory forms of fundamental experiential matter. And in the vein of Strawson's theory of *sesmets* it is concluded that "the subject as something that is supposed to persist through time is reduced to a series of momentary total experiential fields connected by similarity and causation" (Mørch 2014: 216). But Strawson himself has written about equating energy with experientiality: "energy is experientiality; that is its intrinsic nature" (Strawson 2006: 243).

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16 She defends a *diachronic fusion* account of combination. See also Seager 2010.

Strawson also briefly deals with combination of *sesmets* (subject combination or subject-summing) when he says: “*Sesmets* are either single ultimates, then, or made up of a plurality of ultimates in a certain synergetic relation—if they exist” (Strawson 2009: 295) though he gives no detailed arguments for such combination nor he explains the nature of this “synergetic relation”. On a different occasion he notes that he finds no problem in a plurality of subjects forming or generating a new subject. Again, there is an attempt to make subject-summing intelligible by deflating subjects themselves.

#### 4. Minimal self

The concept of subjectivity doesn't seem to be a central part of these pan-psychist accounts. Mostly there is talk of experience.<sup>17</sup> This dates back to Eddington who wrote in *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928) that the stuff of the world is the *mind-stuff*. As it is often argued, phenomenally conscious mental states have a *qualitative* character and a *subjective* character (Kriegel 2005).<sup>18</sup> Subjective character of a conscious state is something it's like to be in that state for the subject and qualitative character of a conscious state is what it's like to be in that state. If I am having a blue experience, then there would be a qualitative aspect to that experience, the blue aspect and a subjective aspect, the for-me aspect. Conscious experience intrinsically involves having a “point of view”, first-person perspective.

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All experience is somehow bounded and unified together in the subject's phenomenal space. James explains it in the following paragraph:

No thought even comes into direct *sight* of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law. It seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not *thought* or *this thought* or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being *owned*. Neither contemporaneity, nor proximity in space, nor similarity of quality and content are able to fuse thoughts together which are sundered by this barrier of belonging to different personal minds. The breaches between such thoughts are the most absolute breaches in nature (James 1890: 221).<sup>19</sup>

17 One of those who point out the significance of subjectivity is Keith E. Turausky. He argues for the thesis that the *individuating* subjective character of consciousness “requires the invocation of haecceities: non-qualitative, non-duplicable properties that uniquely individuate objects (and, in this case, subjects)” (Turausky 2014: 249).

18 We need to be careful when using the umbrella term “subjective character”, because it can designate very different things. Nida-Rümelin 2014 shows there are three interpretations of „subjective character“: *basic intentionality*, *primitive awareness and awareness of basic intentionality*. Only in the third sense are we speaking of some sort of *pre-reflexive self-consciousness*.

19 Similarly Shoemaker 1996, Nagel 1986.

Thoughts are always part of some mind, there is no experience of a “nobody’s thought”. Why is this so? How do experiences hold themselves together? Such questions increase our phenomenological need for subjectivity and experiencing subjects.

It seems that there are good reasons to take the mineness of experience as the constant and not experientiality. What I find in introspective observation of myself is a persistent sense of this “for-me-ness” of experience. Subjectivity has a *self-intimating nature* (Levine 2001: 109). I think we should be appropriative of phenomenologist’s insights on subjectivity and with such knowledge could shed some light on present matters. We should try to understand and solve problems of combination that are part of panpsychism while being self-conscious about *mineness* or *first-person givenness* of experience. With this notion of subjectivity, as it will be argued, we can also answer the shortcomings of both Parfit’s and Strawson’s accounts.

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Consider, for example, Zahavi’s (2005, 2014) view of the self. Like Strawson’s and unlike some of the other previous views discussed, Zahavi’s *experiential self* is a “thin subject” account of the self, though it is not reductive. This for-me-ness of experience makes a difference to subject’s phenomenology. My first-person perspective is a *phenomenological fact*, even the pre-reflective first-person givenness of experience. Though we can imagine *qualitative* Perfect Twins, there is a further fact that is not entailed by those qualities, and that makes them distinct: their respective individuate first-person perspectives.<sup>20</sup> That I have these experiences does not in any way entail that I should have this first-person perspective. Deflationism in panpsychism is due to a lack of clear notion of subjectivity. But a “thin subject” theory of the self can still include subjectivity. Turausky (2014) notes that Zahavi does not posit subjects as such, just subjectivity as first-person givenness, but I think it is safe to assume with Strawson (2009) that when something has subjectivity it is a *subject*.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. Pre-reflective self-awareness and unity of consciousness

Let us track back to the problems of boundedness and unity of subjects and make sense of them in new light of subjectivity. Briefly I will discuss how the unity of consciousness problem would look if a phenomenological theory of subjectivity is assumed. This will show us in what way deflation could be wrong.

Chalmers and Bayne (2003) define *The Unity Thesis*: “Necessarily, any set of conscious states of a subject at a time is unified”. To answer the boundary

20 See Zahavi 2014 and Turausky 2014.

21 Subjectivity entails a subject (Strawson 2009: 274).

problem is to answer the unity problem, there is a deep connection between these issues. They are not the same, but seem close, because notions of unity and boundedness are close. In terms of phenomenology, I regard subjectivity of experiences as what sets the boundaries of subjects. Both the unity and boundedness are explained by the metaphysical fact that they belong to the same bearer, the same subject that has them and mineness and first-person givenness and pre-reflective self-awareness point to this.

One proposed solution to the subject-summing problem is the *phenomenal bonding relation* strategy (Goff 2009) positing a special kind of relation *between* subjects, that seems to unite subjects into a composite subject, though the bond is unknown to us. It is such because we can only introspect within a subject. Perhaps, the intrinsic nature of physical relations is the phenomenal bonding relation.

Although phenomenal bonding is an intersubjective relation, it is often framed as a problem of *intrasubjective* relations. Chalmers (2016) claims that phenomenal bonding is “co-consciousness”, the relation of the unity of consciousness. But what co-consciousness relation really is? In itself it is empty, undefined. This notion doesn’t seem to explain much, it just states that some phenomenal states are experienced together, conscious together, phenomenally unified. And why are they experienced together? James writes on the co-consciousness relation:

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The conjunctive relation that has given most trouble to philosophy is *the co-conscious transition*, so to call it, by which one experience passes into another when both belong to the same self. About the facts there is no question. My experiences and your experiences are ‘with’ each other in various external ways, but mine pass into mine, and yours pass into yours in a way in which yours and mine never pass into one another. (James 1912, 47)

Different selves are related in various ways through external space, but experiences are “with each other” in the inner space of the self. Chalmers has pointed out that there is a question if the co-consciousness relation is transitive or not. Dainton (2011) imagined how a nontransitive view of co-consciousness could make the combination problem coherent. But it has to be the case that co-consciousness is transitive and all experiences (states) are co-conscious in a total state of consciousness of a subject. That they belong to one subject tells us when the transitivity stops, so to speak. It shows where the boundary of consciousness is. Just look at the James paragraph, it states that experiences are co-conscious “when both belong to the same self”, not the other way round. Bayne and Chalmers (2003) argue that the unity thesis cannot be explained by starting from “our concept of a subject”. Their argument does not go through because it assumes the bundle theory of the self, which is not the only available option on the subjects of experience metaphysical market.

So how to explain the phenomenal unity? One possibility that is worth exploring is that *self-consciousness* accounts for the unity of consciousness (Bayne 2004). Bayne explores renditions of unity based on self-consciousness. The *psychological constraint* on co-consciousness states that “experiences can be co-conscious only if the subject of those experiences is aware of them as their own” (2004: 229). The robust account of the unity of consciousness of this sort would take that self-consciousness *explains* the unity of consciousness, though Bayne doesn’t defend such a strong account, he just claims that self-consciousness *constrains* the unity. I think that a more robust account can and should be argued for. Bayne tries to argue against the psychological constraint based on the considerations of thought-insertion, depersonalization and Cotard delusion cases. These patients have a phenomenally unified perspective but they lack a *sense of ownership* (“the bare sense of being the subject of an experience” in Bayne’s terminology). So any defender of self-consciousness account of unity will have to show that in these cases sense of ownership is preserved.

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One could say that experiences are unified in the self as in a kind of space (subjective space).<sup>22</sup> Subjectivity is the foundation of experience, the space where experience is manifested, relation of the subject to the experience could be the same as spacetime is related to its material objects. This way the “spatial relations” between experiences are just relations of the subjectivity space. Experiences are unified because they belong to the same one space of subjectivity. That they are co-conscious is grounded in their shared subjectivity, the same first-personal givenness. This is why co-consciousness relation may be misleading.

Fasching views the first-personal givenness as a *dimension*, and as such it is not the result of relations between experiences, “but is what makes them possible”:

‘one awareness’ (the togetherness of the manifold synchronically co-conscious experiential contents) is not a result of any relations between the experiential contents, of some synthesis of them... the character of a dimension in which the contents, with all their relations, have their presence in the first place (Fasching 2009: 143-144).<sup>23</sup>

22 Talk of the field-like characteristics of subjectivity is not new, “field of first-personal givenness of experience” (Zahavi).

23 This would be to conceive of a self as a phenomenal space. But, even if self is imagined as a kind of space that holds the experiences, it would have a substantialist interpretation, or so I would argue. Dainton has considered and rejected the notion of a „subjective space“ (Dainton 2008: 141-145). He equates it with A-thesis or pure awareness thesis. He denies that selves are identical with phenomenal spaces, as proposed by Stephen Priest, because such a phenomenal space would have to be substantial rather than relational and this can’t be the case. Dainton thinks that for it to be substantial it has to „have some introspectively discernible qualitative phenomenal features of a recognizably

Self-consciousness and subjectivity that unifies experiences is the pre-reflective first-personal givenness of experience, mineness or *ipseity* (Zahavi 2005; Nagel 1974). For Zahavi, this is the experiential (“minimal”) self. Self is not something detachable from its experiences. This is the middle way of “the phenomenological proposal”, a view posited between regarding the self as an entity distinct, separated from experience and a view that the self is a manifold or a bundle of experiences; neither can it be detached nor it can be reduced to experiences (Zahavi 2014: 18). And as Zahavi explains in his discussion on *act-transcendent identity of the self* in Husserl, the self cannot be given as identical in just one act, it is known as identical to itself in the synthesis of the manifold of experiences that come and go (Zahavi 2005: 131).<sup>24</sup> Thus, self/ego is the abiding dimension of first-personal experiencing, as Zahavi sometimes formulates it.

Authors like Zahavi and Fasching seem to argue against an account of a subject as substance that is oversimplified and not the only one possible position that one can assume towards the nature of the subject. As Zahavi has himself noted the no-no-self view also comes in a variety of different flavors and strengths. Zahavi’s notion of experiential self is too thin and deflationary because he puts too much emphasis on the first-personal character and this hides the subject or ego as a “mental thing”, a something, and not a way a thing is, ego as an individual substance and not a mode of a substance or a mode without a substance. In the end I think some of these authors are arguing against the “bare particular” view of the subject (but also against the bundle view, such is Parfit’s).

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Eventually, it is a category mistake to claim, as Zahavi does, that mineness, as a feature or property of the experience, is *the experiential self*, (pointed out by Siewert)<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, we can safely claim that mineness implies an experiential self. Mineness, as Zahavi understands it, could indicate that there is something more than experiences and their relations to a subject of experience. In a recent paper Marie Guillot (2016) proposes that subjective character refers to several distinct notions that are being confused by some authors: *for-me-ness* (a relation of awareness between a subject and an experience), *me-ness* (a reflexive relation of awareness a subject has to itself) and *mineness* (a relation of awareness between subject and a fact that it owns the experience) and all these are about relations of awareness between a subject and its experiences. What Zahavi seems to have in mind when he talks about *mineness* is actually *for-me-ness*.

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spatial kind“ and he argues that it does not have such a phenomenal feature, that there is no mineness (Dainton 2008: 101-145).

24 *Contra* Strawson’s identity between subjects and episodes of experiences.

25 Siewert, C. Consciousness and Self-Consciousness, Remarks on Zahavi’s Self and Others, (PowerPoint presentation).

Nida-Rümelin (2014) shows there are three interpretations of „subjective character“: *basic intentionality*, *primitive awareness* and *awareness of basic intentionality*. Only in the third sense are we speaking of some sort of *pre-reflective self-consciousness*. She argues that awareness of basic intentionality cannot have the structure of basic intentionality and so is not itself experiencing. Subject is not a part or an element of the stream of consciousness, it is not „in it“ to be experienced as an object (Nida-Rümelin 2014: 271). What this means is that in pre-reflective self-awareness we are aware of ourselves as entities (things) that unite experiences and are their bearers; the owners of such and such experiences. If this is our nature as subjects, then we are aware of this aspect or characterization of our nature, and we are aware of ourselves as unifiers of experiences. This is the „general concept“ we have of an experiencing subject.

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As Nida-Rümelin also argues, *self-awareness based conceptualization* of the fact that „simultaneous instantiations of experiential properties are instantiated by one and the same subject“ (2016a, 76) is also *nature-revealing*. What this conceptualization reveals is *the simple view*. The simple view states a metaphysical fact that simultaneous experiential properties are instantiated in one subject. To be aware of simultaneously having experiences is to be aware of oneself as the one having them, as the one unifying them.

There seems to be no phenomenological datum to “co-consciousness”, but there is to mineness and pre-reflective self-awareness, in the sense explained in previous sections. Phenomenological datum of pre-reflective self-awareness points to the metaphysical fact that all experiences are had by one subject which unites them (as bearer). Perhaps, there is no phenomenological fact that corresponds to the unity of consciousness, the feeling of unity, but there is a feeling of mineness (or pre-reflective self-awareness) in every experience that a subject experiences. What does it mean for two mental states to be co-conscious? It is for them to be the states of the same subject, to be instantiated in the same subject (bearer). So, co-consciousness is explained by there being a common subject to many experiences.

## 6. Back to deflation

Since most phenomenologists endorsed the existence of pre-reflective self-consciousness we should appraise such theories of the self. Phenomenology is too broad, there are too many phenomenological theories of the self to consider them all in the course of this paper. I will concern myself with more recent phenomenology-inspired theories but also those that criticize phenomenological theories, though they are similar in spirit. To make the contrast clear I will consider egological and non-egological theories. In any case, it is of paramount significance that panpsychists consider theories

that are serious about subjectivity (namely, pre-reflective self-consciousness). To argue against deflation of the subject/ego we need to understand what the subject is and so examine other theories of the self. What all these authors agree on in their theories is that there is an abiding dimension of givenness, presence, witnessing or openness: “field of first-personal givenness of experience” (Zahavi), “dimension of first-personal manifestation of the experiences” (Fasching).

Those who defend panpsychism, should take into consideration phenomenological theories of subjectivity, and acknowledge that there is ubiquitous pre-reflective self-consciousness and that there is an experiencing subject that it points to. If there is such awareness then the subject combination problem and the unity problem are to be resolved in accordance to that fact. Pre-reflective self-consciousness gives us the explanation why the subject combination problem is intractable and how we could solve it, but also why the unity of experience is based in the experiencing subject, as their substratum, or bearer. Perhaps, different inferences on these panpsychist problems could be reached depending on the different understanding of pre-reflective self-consciousness. It would depend of whether one is maintaining an *egological or non-egological theory of self-consciousness*. Some philosophers of subjectivity that are influenced by phenomenological tradition see this self-awareness as individuating and that it points to the existence of an ego (egological theories). Endorsing such a view of self-awareness is more likely to lead to the conclusion that there is no plausibility in subject combination and that unity is to be explained by the presence of the ego. Others (The Heiledberg School, Sartre and Gurwitch) argue for non-egological theories of self-consciousness and for the anonymity thesis. Taking up such a stance on the pre-reflective self-consciousness could prove to be more compatible with the deflationist position in panpsychism. Panpsychists should have this in mind and base their solutions to the aforementioned problems on these phenomenological theories. Panpsychists should not ignore the importance self-consciousness if they are to construct good theories of consciousness.

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Resolution of panpsychist metaphysical problems depends on how they understand the concept of the experiencing subject (deflationary/non-deflationary) and phenomenology has a lot to say on the “subject”. There is something like pre-reflective self-consciousness but it can be understood in different ways (egological/non-egological) so this, too, has repercussions for panpsychist theories.<sup>26</sup>

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26 I think that an argument from phenomenology could be made to the conclusion that the subject is a substance (substantialist calim). Exercising this argument in full length would go well beyond the scope of the present paper, but I have defended this substantialist position in a different paper (manuscript). In short, drawing on modern



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If there is one individual mineness or pre-reflective self-awareness pertaining to a subject, or pointing that there is one subject in question, the combination of such subjects seems less plausible. If the dimension of mineness is anonymous (Fasching), self-awareness does not point to any individual subject (non-egological theory) and there are only experiences connected in a bundle by co-consciousness relation, plausibility of subject combination (subject-summing) is increased. Therefore, all this has important repercussions in the subject combination debate among panpsychists. Philosophers of self-awareness (Guillot, Siewert, Nida-Rümelin) have argued that such properties as mineness or me-ness (and pre-reflective self-awareness) point to a relation between an *experience* and a *subject* of experience. And this subject seems to be the same one in many synchronic and diachronic experiences. If it is to be judged by the phenomenology of self-awareness and mineness, the deflation of subjects proves to be an invalid strategy, one that cannot be justified. Accounts of Zahavi, Strawson and Fasching, though not panpsychist, are also deflationary, but as it was argued, phenomenology of pre-reflective self-awareness seems to point to a more inflationary position when it comes to the nature of the self. Zahavi and Strawson, in the end, present very unstable positions.

Zahavi moves from an epistemic to a phenomenal and a metaphysical thesis, „from the „self-manifestation“ of experience (*for-me-ness*) to a phenomenal access to the self (me-ness)“ (Guillot 2016: 50). He makes this leap because he conflates *for-me-ness* with *me-ness*. Zahavi makes an illegitimate move based on an unjustified assumption of an equivalence and ends up committing a category mistake, claiming that a *property* of an experience is *the experiential self*. The problem of Zahavi’s “thin” or minimal self account seems to be, that it puts the self and experience too close, without making the necessary phenomenological and metaphysical distinctions. If it is not to be judged by metaphysical reasons that the experiencer and experiences are not identical, then this can be inferred from phenomenological datums of self-awareness and content of experience-awareness. Zahavi’s *for-me-ness* seems to encompass several different notions, and this problematic *for-me-ness* leads him to conclude that there is a minimal self. Not making a clear distinction between *for-me-ness* and *me-ness* (or *mineness* of Guillot 2016) in phenomenology gives

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philosophical accounts of mineness (from Zahavi to Guillot), pre-reflective self-consciousness (Nida-Rümelin) and acquaintance (Gertler, Goff) I think it can be shown that if one is acquainted with oneself, that is if one has self-acquaintance and acquaintance with one’s experiences (so one has self-awareness and awareness of experiences), one acquires introspective knowledge that oneself is a substance. To do this one would have to demonstrate that if the subject is self-acquainted then this revelation of its nature in self-awareness gives him justified introspective (phenomenal) knowledge that it is an experiential subject which has experiences (experiential properties) and so is of the substantial kind.

way to the minimal self theory in metaphysics, which is marked by the problematic identity view (Strawson 2009). To put Guillot's mineness terminology aside, one could say that Zahavi conflates two kinds of awarenesses into one, his *for-me-ness*.<sup>27</sup> If these two awarenesses are not kept apart and seen as distinct, problems arise, I would argue. I think that a better theory of the self should make a distinction between *awareness of the self* and *awareness of the experience* (without fusing these into one *for-me-ness*). Making this distinction would help one attain a more stable position. One could then argue for subjects having experiences, and not for subjects being identical to an aspect or a property of the experience, and without committing a category mistake, as one does by adopting a deflationary view.

Phenomenology of self-awareness can give us introspective knowledge about the nature of subjects and this, in turn, would have important consequences for the plausibility of constitutive panpsychism and for deciding on the possible solutions to the subject combination (subject-summing) problem. The route to subject-summing is indirect, but valuable. Namely, if pre-reflective self-awareness shows us that we are individual substances, deflation of the subject would not look very promising as a strategy of a would-be panpsychist for solving the combination problems. And if the deflation is not plausible, then the viability of subject-summing is also put into question. In that case, the main strategy that paves the way for subject combination in panpsychism, is also brought down.

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## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to show that panpsychists should include more considerations on pre-reflective self-awareness and mineness (subjective character of consciousness in general) in future building of their metaphysical theories. Even if one is not persuaded that the self is a substance of some sort, there is an aspect or a dimension of mineness that needs to be reckoned with by panpsychist theories of consciousness, especially when it comes to the problem of subject combination. In the end, this could challenge the commonly assumed reaction strategy to the combination problem – deflation of the subject. Panpsychists seeking a way to or overcome the subject combination problem would benefit from exploring the phenomenological theories of selfhood and pre-reflective self-awareness.

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<sup>27</sup> Take into consideration Zahavi's latest vindication of minimal selfhood where he tries to answer Guillot's criticism (Zahavi: forthcoming).

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Protiv deflacije subjekta iskustva

Apstrakt

Argumentovaću da teorije subjektivnosti i prerefektivne samosvesti mogu biti od koristi onima koji zastupaju panpsihizam u boljem razumevanju prirode subjekata iskustva, a posredno, i pri rešavanju problema kombinacije. Na problem kombinacije subjekata, koji se stavlja pred panpsihistu, obično se odgovara „deflacijom“, subjekt se eliminiše ili svodi na sama iskustva. Mnoge moderne panpsihističke teorije su deflacionističke i zauzimaju reduktivno stanovište prema subjektivnosti. Značaj prerefektivne samosvesti, kao aspekta svesti, nije dovoljno priznat od strane panpsihista. Teorije sopstva, inspirisane fenomenologijom, koje brane postojanje subjektivnog aspekta svesti, mogu biti od značaja u argumentaciji protiv mogućnosti redukcije subjekata iskustva. Pokazaću kako fenomenologija subjektivnog karaktera svesti i prerefektivne samosvesti doprinosi debati o problem kombinacije subjekata u panpsihizmu.

**Ključne reči:** deflacija, subjekt iskustva, panpsihizam, problem kombinacije, prerefektivna samosvest