This is version 2.0. This is a transitional version. The frequent ellipses indicate the idea will be developed in version 3.0.

Abstract Why is there something rather than nothing? I don't know. But 'nothing' may not be the correct default state. It may be that the existence of possibilities requires fewer (weaker) assumptions. In this case, arguably, we should start with the existence of possibilities and not 'nothing'. In this case, there exists the possibility of (for example) red qualia. But the possible existence of a red quale does not delineate what it is the possibility *of* if the possibility contains only a *reference* to red. Instead, the possibility must contain an actual instance of red to delineate what it is the possibility *of*. But, if possibilities are the weakest and (therefore) starting assumption, and the *possibility* of a red quale must itself contain an *instance* of red, then red exists necessarily. This argument would work for all qualia. Further, it could be that physical things and physical laws are (in some sense) instances of qualia. Incidentally, this would solve the problem of evil: pain, too, is made of qualia. These considerations align with some suggestions by Leibniz.

1.

Why is there something rather than nothing? I don't know. And if there were *absolutely* nothing—not even potential logical structures or anything it's hard to see how things could get off the ground. But it's simply not clear that that's the right question. It may be that it requires fewer (weaker) assumptions to allow that there are *possibilities*.[1] If that's the case, we may at least consider the existence of such-and-such possibility.

Now, suppose we have the existence of the possibility that

(1) p_1: 2 + 3 = 5

(2) p_2: 2 + 3 = 6

If we regard p_1 and p_2 as abstract mathematical propositions, then both propositions could exist, in the sense of abstract mathematical propositions. These would exist in the realm of 'numbers' or, more generally, 'structure'. If we allow the existence of possibilities, then the *possibilities* of p_1 and p_2 could both exist. But consider

(3) p_3: 2 + 3 = 5

(4) p_4: 2 + 3 = 6

Here, we can interpret p_3 as saying: if there were 2 things (perhaps physical objects) and 3 (other) things, then there would be a total of 5 things. But then it is the case that it could not be that if there were 2 things and three (other) things, then there would be a total of 6 things. So in this case the existence of the possibility p_3 rules out the existence of the possibility p_4.[2] In this case, p_3 delineates what it is the possibility *of*. p_3 cannot be interpreted as p_4.

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1   I'm going to be consistent in not using the word *possibilia*. One of several reasons for that is (5).

2   A subtlety is that if p_1 is a possibility if and only if p_{i+2} is, as could be argued to be true in some cases, then the existence of p_1 does rule out the existence of possibility p_2.

I am assuming

(5) if X is possible, then there exists a possibility, namely the possibility of X

The possibility need not have the same kind of existence that X would, but there is something that exists in some sense nonetheless. That is all we are after.

2.

We want to consider the possibility '(a particular shade of the quale) red exists'. The problem here is that this simply does not rule out that what 'red' means within the possibility is not what we would call 'green' (for example). The locution 'red exists' does not rule out that 'red' could refer to any particular quality whatsoever. Thus, 'red' cannot be part of the existence of the possibility, as the possibility does not mean what we want it to mean.

Instead, we have the existence of the possibility p_5 that

(6) 🟥 exists

which is to say, if there were the possibility of 🟥 then 🟥 would actually exist.

(This is an example of what I have elsewhere called a qualation, the idea being that it is a combination of an equation (in this case a very simple one), and a quale.)

Now, (6) rules out that the possibility in question *could* be talking about anything other than red qualia and (I would claim) it is the only way to do so. But notice that to merely specify the *possibility* of the existence of red *qua* redness, we had to give an *actual* red. Otherwise, the possibility does not know (so to speak) what is meant by 'red'. So in p_1 and p_2 we have it that 'it is possible that …' does not require the actual existence of anything, but in p_5 we have it that the subjunctive 'if there were …' *does* require the actual existence of some particular thing.

What I have been struggling to argue is that 'the possibility red' must itself contain actual redness, since otherwise the possibility cannot specify what it is a possibility *of*. If this possibility wants (so to speak) to rule out that it is the possibility of the existence of greenness, then it must specify 'red' in the possibility in such a way that it can be differentiated from 'green'. But a mere *name* for a color cannot do this. The only way to do this is to use the actual quale of redness.

The conclusion is that the mere possibility of the existence of red requires the *actual* existence of redness. Otherwise the possibility cannot specify which quale it is the possibility *of*.

[Leibniz: the greater the quantity of its essence, the more it exists. This works well with the theory of this paper. See appendix.]

This argument evidently applies to any possible quale whatsoever. On the one hand that sounds bad. But on the other hand, it could turn out that physical laws and physical things can be understood as particular kinds of qualia.

Incidentally, this would solve the problem of evil: there is pain in the universe because pain, too, is qualia.

3.

There is a further consideration. Since we can experience red qualia, then it is the case that in retrospect red qualia could exist. But what allowed for the potential existence of *redness* in the first place? Why is it that out of all of the possible qualia there is redness?

I think it could be argued that this query self-destructs…

Two data points—3rd person and 1st person…

See also 3rd-person vs. 1st-person *causality* paper (note these are very radically different notions of causality; paper forthcoming eventually).

4.

We briefly consider the question of which requires weaker assumptions: nothing, or the existence of possibilities.

To start with, note that 'nothing' might itself require an axiom (Inwagen ?). Namely, that there 'is' 'nothing'. But note, this is unstable on some considerations. If there is 'nothing' it must be *possible* for there to be 'nothing'. But in that case the *possibility* itself exists. Thus, something exists.

But the question of weaker assumptions hinges on what we assume the 'background' formal (logical) system(s) is (the one in which we evaluate the axioms). An assumption a_1 might be weaker (and therefore more probable) than another assumption a_2 in one formal system FS_1, but be stronger (in the sense of requiring or assuming more) in another formal system FS_2.

The natural thing to try is to then evaluate which is weaker: FS_1 or FS_2. But this depends at least partly on the role the formal systems (as mathematical or structural objects) are to play in relation to what is supposed to exist in its particulars, and is therefore a big mess.

See the 'no free lunch' theorem…

Further, things depend on what we take to be the primitive terms of the formal systems… Term ' ' (i.e. one sense of nothing) compared to term '███'…

Note that the term '5' in an object language is *not* the same thing as the term ''5'' in a meta-language. The object language refers to the number 5 in its model, while the meta language refers to the term '5' which is in the object language. In this case '5' is a name for 5, while ''5'' is a name for '5'.

We have

(6) ''5'' ≠ '5'

However, clearly, there is some sense in which the term '███' in the object language *is* the same thing as the term "███" in the meta language. In both cases a *name* would not uniquely delineate what the language is talking about (the name 'red' could refer to the subjective experience of green, for example, and there would be no contradiction in this (and we could suppose the rest of the formal system is consistent with this usage)). So we have

(7) "███" = '███'

This is important. This has to do with qualia's ineffability (and understanding the social models of languages...)

Suppose that there are 42 students in a class. Suppose the professor, standing at the black board, writes

(8) the number 5 exists

on the black board. But, in contrast, suppose that the professor has colored chalk and writes

(9) ██ exists

Then, very clearly, there is a sense in which there is only *one* number 5 in the classroom, yet there are *43* red qualia in the classroom (one for each of the 42 students + one for the professor)…

Where does this leave us? …

Appendix

Leibniz: "But in order to explain a little more distinctly how temporal, contingent, or physical truths arise from eternal or essential or metaphysical truths, we must first acknowledge, from the fact that something exists rather than nothing, that there is in possible things, i.e. in possibility or essence itself, a certain demand for existence or (so to speak) a straining to exist, or (if may so put it) a claim to exist; and, to sum up in a word, essence in itself strives for existence. From this it follows further that all possible things, i.e. things expressing an essence or possible reality, strive with equal right for existence[2] in proportion to their quantity of essence or reality, or to the degree of perfection which they contain; for perfection is nothing other than quantity of essence."

LEIBNIZ: ON THE ULTIMATE ORIGINATION OF THINGS

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