

Russellian Emergentism

Realism about phenomenal consciousness (Block, 1995) is the view that there are entities such that there is something it is like to be them (Nagel, 1974). Granted realism, physicalism about consciousness is the thesis that conscious entities instantiate phenomenal properties in virtue of having physical bodies that undergo some natural processes.

Among the most influential arguments against physicalism are the so-called ‘conceivability arguments’ advanced by Kripke (1972), Chalmers (1996), and others. Chalmers (2010) proposed a generalised formulation of them (*GCA*) which concludes that either materialism (which I do not equate with physicalism for reasons to come) is false or Russellian monism is true. The first disjunct amounts to the claim that phenomenal properties do not belong to the physical realm. The second introduces a form of panpsychism (or of panprotopsyichism) as a materialist alternative not present in traditional conceivability arguments. In my talk, I will show that there are further physicalist alternatives and introduce one, called ‘Russellian emergentism’ (*RE*), that shares some central tenets with Russellian monism (*RM*).

I will show that *RE* is closer than *RM* to the scientific view of consciousness and to ordinary intuition, and yet it has similar resources to address the most prominent challenges to physicalism. Both endorse structuralism about physics and take phenomenal (or protophenomenal) properties to be intrinsic properties, but whereas *RM* posits them at the level of fundamental particles, *RE* does so at higher levels where cognition, in particular, belongs.

I would proceed in two stages. In the first, I would argue that the *GCA* does not rule out some forms of physicalism to which *RE* belongs. The *GCA*, if valid, does not prove either that *physicalism* is false or that Russellian monism is true. In fact, I would show that ‘materialism’ in the *GCA* stands for *microphysicalism*, and that the *GCA* remains silent concerning non-

microphysicalist forms of physicalism.

In the second stage, I would introduce and motivate *RE*. Basically, it is a variation of *RM* where the panpsychist ingredient is replaced with an emergentist one. I would argue that *RE* has the advantage over *RM* of being closer to natural science and more intuitively plausible, and yet the lines of argument available for *RM* to address other major puzzles for physicalism, i.e., the explanatory gap and the knowledge argument, are also available for *RE* in virtue of some significant resemblances.

References

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