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A Response to Hasker’s “Emergent Dualism and Emergent Creationism”

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Abstract: I am grateful to William Hasker for his recent response to my work, especially his response to my, “Souls, Emergent and Created: Why Mere Emergent Dualism is Insufficient,” in his “Emergent Dualism and Emergent Creationism: A Response to Joshua Farris” in a previous volume of *Philosophia Christi* (20:1, 2018). In response to my article in *Philosophia Christi* 20:1, he spends more time on secondary issues rather than the central objection. I respond by showing that he gives no good reasons for denying the primitive particularity view and offers no alternative particularity account.

In a previous article, I argued that Hasker’s understanding of the emergent mind would be more hospitable in the context of a traditional view of the mind, which requires that it be created by God or some other agent rather than natural causes.¹ Working with the view that souls possess a primitive particularity (i.e., a fundamental and absolute thisness), I argued specifically that the lawful nature of natural events is incompatible with Hasker’s view that the soul emerges from the body/brain. In other words, souls do not emerge as regularities. Instead, they appear to be singularities (i.e., irregularities) caused by chance or some non-natural agent. Hasker responded by denying my version of thisness as a subject/personal primitive particularity of the soul. However, there are two main problems with Hasker’s response. First, he does not give good reasons to reject a primitive particularity view of the soul. Second, he fails to offer any account of the soul’s particularity. And, it is this second point with which I am most interested. Even if Hasker finally rejects the “Farris view of particularity,” how he accounts for the soul’s particularity remains a profound mystery.

¹ Joshua Farris, “Souls, Emergent and Created: Why Mere Emergent Dualism is Insufficient,” *Philosophia Christi* 20:1 (Summer 2018), pp. 83-93.

My immediate hope in this paper is to elicit what, I think, is a much-needed response from Hasker on how he accounts for the soul's particularity—the fact that Hasker's soul is *Hasker's* soul and not any ol' soul. But, specifically how does Hasker respond? While I cannot deal with all the issues in that paper for the sake of space, I will give attention to the notion of a primitive thisness, which is at the heart of Hasker's particularity problem.

The Challenge from Thisness

Emergentism and Primitive Thisness

I argued in the original article that a natural emergent mechanism cannot provide us with the results we desire.² I will not rehearse the objection here, but let me summarize it. Given the models of laws we have on offer, it seems quite apparent that those laws are inconsistent with or would never bring about the emergent-mind (with an haecceity, i.e., a primitive thisness). The fundamental problem is that haecceity's are primitive particulars, but laws bring about generalizable events that, in theory, are duplicatable.

On a deterministic understanding of laws, an odd consequence ensues that primitive particulars require their own unique laws. This is problematic for at least two reasons. First, this requires that there are 7+ billion laws at present and more to come, hence a violation of Ockham's razor because these don't appear to be lawful regularities at all, but rather singularities—non lawful. Second, this understanding of laws does not map onto any of the models of laws we have on offer. It is not clear that these laws would explain the primitive particular, as well. These events, rather than looking like regular events, which is needed for emergentism, look, instead, like irregularities (although common irregularities that are partially explained by regularities) in the world if minds are solely dependent upon physical and natural causes.

On an indeterminist understanding of laws, either primitive particular minds emerge by chance or by some additional agency. If the latter, then the mind would not depend solely on physical or biological conditions. If the former, then the mind could, in theory, be reproducible with all the same physical and/or biological conditions in place.

² In the previous article, I lay out some reasons for rejecting hylomorphism. I will not rehearse those here because Hasker does not accept a hylomorphic view of matter. That said, the original argument I raised to emerging subjects in a lawful manner would seem to be excluded because of the fact that minds have primitive particularity. Accepting hylomorphism of individual minds requires that one adopts a view of the material world and laws that problematize the physical sciences.

Problematic as this sounds, the situation is worse for the emergent dualist—where souls emerge solely from material events. Two results would ensue. First, duplicate souls could emerge by chance, yet no ultimately distinguishing fundamental fact could distinguish one soul from the other soul. Second, identical souls would emerge, but this would seem to amount to a contradiction. However, without a primitive thisness there would remain no truth maker that ultimately distinguishes *this* soul from *that* soul.

Hasker responds to the above objection by denying that mental particulars are fundamentally and primitively distinct. By making this move, he avoids the consequent of the objection to his theory. But, his response is unsatisfying, once again, for the two reasons listed above. It is unsatisfying because it seems that we do have a primitive thisness, and he gives no good reasons for denying primitive particularities to minds. It is unsatisfying because Hasker gives no particularity account for minds, here or in his other writings.

Why we almost certainly have Primitive Thisness

If not Primitive Thisness, then what?

Apart from the claim that it is our properties that distinguish us, it seems there are two ways to account for individuation of minds. First, there is what one might call the brute particularity that I am simply different from another particular in view of the point of reference I occupy, and this depends neither on properties nor thisness (unless we assume a point of reference is the specifiable property that distinguishes one mind from another mind). Two consequences follow if Hasker endorses this view. What would follow is that there is no ground for my being *me* (i.e., no truth maker); and, while I could instantiate all the same properties as a distinct particularity in another world there would be no fact of the matter that sufficiently distinguishes *that* particular from me. Second, mental subjects do appear to be primitive particulars.

In order to motivate a case for primitive particulars, we should consider what is most apparent to our own minds. Considering all the features within one's own phenomenal awareness, there does seem to be one feature that ultimately distinguishes my mind. As a mind with my own first-person perspective and, as I have called it elsewhere an inside perspective, it does seem to follow that there is some feature or ground for my being me that is not dependent on properties. There would not be a contradiction in the idea of 2 distinct individuals even if they had all the same qualitatively identical thoughts, yet it appears that there would remain two sets of thoughts and not 1 set of thoughts because there are two subjects.

Instead, my inside perspective is dependent upon a fact of the matter that is not dependent on properties or a material particular—the latter Hasker surely grants. This primitive particularity is not dependent on the capacity for an inside perspective, but rather the capacity is dependent on the former. Let me offer an argument for mental primitive particularity.

Assuming I do exist through time (which I do experience as basic to my being me and my apparent memories), it seems that something makes me *me*. We could run similar thought-experiments as in the original article to show that *I* am not dependent on my properties. If I were dependent on my properties, then it is possible that I exist twice because it is conceivable that another mind could exist in a possible world instantiating all the same properties I instantiate in this world. Yet, this amounts to either a duplicate of me or one identical to me. That said, there would exist no fact of the matter to make determinate that I am me and not the duplicate in another possible world. But there is a fact of the matter, I am me and not the duplicate in another possible world. One can either assert the fact of the matter without a grounding or one can affirm a primitive fact—namely, that I am my own mind apart from any properties. I, as a primitive mind, exist and contribute something novel to the world quite apart from the properties I have, come to have, or cease to have.

Hasker raises another objection to the sort of thisness I advance, by claiming:

An even more decisive objection, however, stems from principle (1). One's sense of oneself simply is not the right sort of thing to be a thisness as defined in (1); it is instead clearly qualitative – in Robert Adams' terminology, it is a suchness and not a thisness. For A to be aware of sense-of-self a and for B to be aware of sense-of-self b is just as much for them to be in different qualitative states as for A to be tasting hamburger and for B to be tasting asparagus. As a candidate for a primitive thisness, the sense of self is not even in the running. I conclude that, since there are no thisnesses in the sense required by Farris's argument, that argument poses no threat to emergent dualism.³

Hasker seems to muddy the waters here because the issue is not that there are two qualitatively identical senses of self, but two subjects. The sense would not make these two subjects identical for these properties would not provide the fact necessary to distinguish the two subjects.

³ Hasker, "Emergent Dualism and Emergent Creationism: A Response to Joshua Farris," *Philosophia Christi* 20:1 (Summer 2018), pp. 93-101.

Hasker argues that my understanding of thisness is problematic and should be interpreted as a quality rather than a thisness based on the “inside perspective” or the sense of oneself. I take Hasker’s point that there is something of what it is like to be me, and only I have an inside perspective on the fact, but this does not prove his point because there are two subjects quite apart from the identical senses they may have of themselves. Rather, this helps make the case that there exists primitive thisnesses independent from one’s spatial location, the body one has, and the properties one comes to have. While it is true, I can come to bear properties that other minds have like the tasting of a hamburger or the tasting asparagus. The fact that A is in the qualitative state of tasting a hamburger and B is in a distinctive qualitative state of tasting asparagus presumes a fact about A as distinct from B that remains unaccounted for when discussing different qualitative states. Let us consider one important fact about qualitative states that remains unanswered on Hasker’s account.

Consider the fact of one’s qualitative experience of tasting coriander. It is true there are certain physical facts about coriander that have something to do with how coriander tastes, but there remains an unaccounted fact when I taste coriander quite apart from Hasker tasting coriander. There is a fact of tasting coriander that is distinct from the fact of Hasker tasting coriander that physical facts, properties, could not explain.⁴ Even if you have two qualitatively identical experiences of coriander, they are numerically distinct because of the subject of experience and the fact that experiences have different subjects. As E.J Lowe has helpfully stated,

[I]t is strongly arguable that the only *adequate* criterion of identity for mental states and events will be one which makes reference to their subjects... [P]art of what makes an experience of *mine* numerically distinct from a qualitatively indistinguishable experience of *yours* is the very fact that it is *mine* as opposed to *yours*.⁵

The point is that qualitatively identical experiences are insufficient when accounting for identical subjects. Even if one has an identical suchness, this would in no way determine identical subjects having the same experience.

⁴ E. Callaway, “Soapy taste of coriander linked to genetic variants,” *Nature: International weekly journal of science* (September 12, 2012) <https://www.nature.com/news/soapy-taste-of-coriander-linked-to-genetic-variants-1.11398> [accessed on July 31, 2018].

⁵ E. J. Lowe, “The Probable Simplicity of Personal Identity.” In *Personal Identity: Complex or Simple?* edited by Georg Gasser and Matthias Stefan, 137-155 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 149.

Going back to the experience of coriander, there would remain one fact unaccounted for, namely, the fact that makes me-me as a subject experiencing coriander and the fact that conceivably makes my duplicate a distinct subject experiencing coriander. And, what is more, the further notion that there is a sense of self would not itself account for my being *myself* quite apart from my duplicate not being a subject identical to me.

What does this all show? It shows that there exists one primitive fact about minds independent from properties. It remains that for these two to be two subjects with the same suchness, or qualitative experiences, one would require a primitive thisness (haecceity) that ultimately makes one subject *this* subject and the other subject *that* subject. Unfortunately, without it, it appears that there would be no fact of the matter distinguishing two distinct subjects who have all the same qualitative experiences. For the reasons listed above, it appears that I do exist, but not according to Hasker's view. And, according to emergentism, I could not come to exist apart from God (or some other non-natural agent) granting that particularity. If I came to exist by chance, then there is no fact of the matter that would make me *me* and would ultimately distinguish *myself* from another. It seems obviously false that there would be no fact of the matter that makes me *me*.

In the end, Hasker did not sufficiently take into account the concern from particularity, which was the main issue in the previous article. First, he does not give good reasons to reject a primitive particularity view of the soul. Second, he fails to offer any account of the soul's particularity. And, it is this second point with which I am most interested.

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