

# Panpsychism

## A Radical Revisionary Thought



# Two Quotidian Thoughts

- \* Some things are alive, and some things are not. Things not alive include:
  - \* The formerly alive: the dead
  - \* Things never alive: the inanimate.
- \* Further, some things are conscious, and some things are not.
  - \* Here some precision is required when we say that  $x$  is not conscious, distinguishing between the *unconscious* and the *non-conscious*:
    - \* A being or a state which is unconscious is a being or a state belonging to a being which is at times phenomenally conscious, e.g., someone knocked out or a repressed thought that you hate your mom.
    - \* A being which is non-conscious is a being which is categorially unsuited to be in a conscious state, e.g., a pen or a quartz pebble found whilst hiking in the mountains.



# Scalarity

- \* Notice that both of these distinctions are might be scalar:
  - \* Something can be fully alive, somewhat alive, not alive.
  - \* Something can fully conscious, somewhat conscious, or not conscious.
- \* Let us allow that given scalarity, there may be borderline cases.
- \* Still, let us also insist that the existence of borderline case is consistent with there being distinctions between (i) the living and the not living, and (ii) between the conscious and the not conscious.
  - \* After all, although there is grey, still, there are black and white.



# Four Theses

- \* Four theses jointly making trouble for our quotidian distinction:
  - \* Material Composition
  - \* Nonreductionism
  - \* Realism
  - \* Nonemergence



# Material Composition

- \* All living beings are complex material systems.
  - \* We are exclusively and exhaustively made of matter.
  - \* Live beings are composed of lots of little bits of matter, suitably arranged.
  - \* There is no immaterial *life dust*—a phrase, when looked at aright, is already oxymoronic at best.



# Non-reductionism

- \* Ordinary mental states—thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations—are not physical properties of the organism.
- \* This true in two senses:
  - \* Mental states are not *identical* with physical states.
    - \* After all, mental states are subjective and physical states are objective.
  - \* Mental states are not *implied* or *fully explained* by physical properties alone.
    - \* Again, we cannot wring the subjective out of the objective.



# Realism

- \* To say that there are mental and living beings is no mere *façon de parler*:
  - \* Mental states and living beings exist, and, further, the the state of being alive and state of being conscious are simply states of material organisms.
  - \* We cannot, as it were, wish them away.



# Nonemergence

- \* All the states of any given material system are completely determined—in non-mysterious if in as yet unknown ways—by the states of their constituent parts and the relations between them.
- \* Every material system is, in effect, a lego block house.
  - \* Once the lego blocks are put into suitable relations to one another, the lego block house exists.
  - \* A lego block house, as they say, is nothing ‘over and above’ so many lego blocks related to one another in some perfectly non-mysterious way.
  - \* A child does not first put all the legos into contact with one another and *then* build or create the house. There is simply nothing left to do.



# A Complex Material Object

A lego house is a complex material object exactly like every other complex material object.

We live in a lego-block universe.



*Photo: Bill V*



# A Problem for our Quotidian Distinction

- (1) If non-reductionism, then the mental properties a material system are neither identical with nor implied by its physical properties.
- (2) So, if a complex material system has mental properties (and realism affirms just this), then its mental properties (including consciousness) either emerge from the material system or are there all along.
- (3) They do not emerge.
- (4) So, the mental (including conscious) properties are there all along.
- (5) If (4), panpsychism is true.
- (6) If panpsychism is true, then our quotidian thoughts about the living and the non-living and the conscious and the not conscious are (sigh, as usual) false.

—That is to say, then, everything is alive and everything is conscious.