# Comments on Miguel Sebastian's 'What Panpsychists should Reject: On the Incompatibility of Panpsychism and the Principle of Organisational Invariance'

I think Miguel is really onto something here. However, I have some disagreements with the specific arguments he makes.

## The second argument

I'm concerned that Miguel doesn't distinguish carefully enough between what is *possible* and what is *plausible*. There are lots of propositions I disbelieve because their truth is highly implausible. For example, I don't believe that I am in the Matrix, or that I am living in a world that was created five minutes ago, or that although the universe has been highly regular to the present moment it's about to go bonkers. I do not reject these hypotheses on the grounds that they are not *possibly* true, but on the grounds that they are not *plausibly* true. There is a genuine possible world in which each and every human is locked in a pod being fed information about a virtual world by evil computers, a genuine possible world which contains physical duplicates of fossils despite only having existed for five minutes, and a genuine possible world which suddenly goes from being highly regular to being highly irregular at a certain point in its history. But it is implausible to suppose that the *actual* world is one of these worlds. It is reasonable to assume that the actual world is not so crazy.

Of course it is a deep and difficult question what grounds the reasonableness of these beliefs. Why shouldn't our world be one of the crazy ones? I don't have any good suggestions here, other than to say that without the assumption that such sceptical possibilities are not actual science and metaphysics are impossible.

I take it that Chalmers' arguments for the Principle of Organisational Invariance are not supposed to show that worlds in which there are dancing or fading qualia are impossible. They are merely intended to show that it is highly plausible to suppose that the actual world is not such a world. If it is implausible to suppose that the actual world is one in which there are dancing or fading qualia, then it is to the same degree plausible to suppose that there the Principle of Organisation Invariance is true. Miguel presents us with another implausible world: the semi-zombie world in which the consciousness grounding components of the actual world are mingled with components unable to ground consciousness. The proponent of the Principle of Organisational Invariance can happily agree that such a world is possible, and at the same time argue that it is implausible to suppose that such a world is actual. This seems to me all that is required in order to make a case for the Principle of Organisational Invariance.

## The first argument

With regards the first argument, I'd like to hear a little bit more about why accepting that the categorical properties of the actual world are 'enabling conditions' for experience is a cost for the panpsychist. We might think of the categorical nature of the world as a kind of 'raw experience', which is moulded into more specific forms of experience by being arranged into causal patters. Monists tend to suppose that the number of fundamental categorical properties is quite small. Somehow this small number of categorical properties yields the complex consciousness had by human beings. Perhaps this happens in virtue of categorical properties arranging themselves into complex causal patterns.

## A point of agreement

I do think, however, that there is something behind Miguel's worries. Functional states are pretty abstract ontological beasts, whilst panpsychists tend to suppose that consciousness is a natural phenomenon constituted of natural properties. It's very hard to see how natural *stuff* – water, carbon, consciousness – might float free of the natural stuff it's made of in the way it would surely have to be for the Principle of Organisational Invarience to be true. So in the end I agree with Miguel that panpsychism and the Principle of Organisational Invariance are odd bedfellows, and anyone wanting to defend both owes us an explanation of how the two cohere.

Sorry I haven't had time to write more!