The Tanmatron Field: A Non-Reductive, Dual-Aspect Resolution to the Hard Problem of Consciousness

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Abstract

David Chalmers' formulation of the "hard problem" of consciousness highlights the failure of reductive physicalism to account for subjective, phenomenal experience (*qualia*) arising from objective neurobiological substrates. This paper posits that Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's theory of perception and *tanmatras*, formalized through Richard Gauthier's concept of the dual-aspect tanmatron, offers a powerful alternative non-reductive solution. By reframing perception through a top-down, dual-aspect framework, the theory eliminates the explanatory gap without falling prey to the combination problem that plagues bottom-up panpsychism.—Saint Louis, USA, September 23, 2026

Keywords: "hard problem", dual-aspect, tanmatra, tanmatron, perception, consciousness.

I. The Tanmatron as a Psychophysical Vector

Reductive materialism stumbles at the transition point where physical stimuli (e.g., photons hitting a retina) are converted into subjective experience (e.g., the vividness of crimson). The "gap" exists because the inputs are assumed to be entirely devoid of mental properties.

This framework dissolves the boundary by rejecting the premise of inert matter. Drawing from Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's philosophy treatise *Ananda Sutram*[1] (1962) Gauthier[2,3] (2026a, 2026b) introduces the tanmatron as a fundamental, dual-aspect entity. A tanmatron is a psychophysical vector consisting of two inextricably linked components: a physical vibration (such as a photon carrying a specific frequency) and an associated psychic *tanmatra* (which carries the intrinsic psychic quality or *qualia* of the experience, such as redness).

Because the tanmatron arriving at the organism already contains this psychic *tanmatra* component, the brain is spared the impossible task of manufacturing consciousness out of dead matter. The explanatory gap is bridged at the point of physical-psychic emanation, rather than inside the skull.

II. Top-Down Cosmopsychism: Overcoming the Combination Problem

Contemporary Western panpsychism is heavily bottlenecked by the combination problem: the mystery of how billions of micro-conscious subatomic particles combine to form a single, unified macro-conscious human subject.

Sarkar's architecture evades this hurdle by operating as a constitutive top-down cosmopsychism. The theory posits a foundational, cosmic-level mental field (Cosmic Mind), within which physical matter is condensed and individual bodies and minds are evolved. Under this model, human minds are not built "bottom-up" from scratch by aggregating rogue particles. Instead, the individual mind is a localized, bounded partition of this pre-existing cosmic field.

When tanmatrons stimulate the sensory apparatus and travel through the nervous system, they reach what Sarkar terms "appropriative points" (neural-mental interfaces). These points do not generate mind; they function as a localized transducer, allowing the psychic tanmatra component of the incoming tanmatron to reflect smoothly upon the individual's pre-existing subjective "mental plate."

III. Comparative Analysis: Gauthier's Tanmatron vs. Chalmers' Double-Aspect Information

To position this theory within the contemporary analytic canon, it is useful to contrast Gauthier's tanmatron framework with Chalmers' own Double-Aspect Theory of Information, introduced in his seminal paper *"Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness"*[4] (1995) and expanded in *The Conscious Mind*[5] (1996). Chalmers tentatively suggests that information embodies a dual nature—an objective, physical aspect realized in physical systems (like neural networks) and a subjective, phenomenal aspect realized in consciousness.

While sharing a foundational dual-aspect intuition, the two frameworks differ fundamentally in ontology and directionality:

> **The Locus of Information:** Chalmers treats information as an abstract, relational structure defined by an information space of "difference relations". It *happens* to have two sides when processed by a complex cognitive system. Gauthier's tanmatron, conversely, is a concrete, localized psychophysical quantum. The phenomenal aspect (the psychic tanmatra) is not an abstract byproduct of a structural state; it is an intrinsic element of the radiated entity itself.
>
> **Ontological Grounding:** Chalmers' double-aspect information lacks a unified cosmic anchor, leaving it vulnerable to the combination problem when applied to complex minds. The tanmatron framework grounds its psychophysical properties in a top-down cosmic mind field. The psychic tanmatra can map cleanly to the individual's mental plate because both are variants of the same foundational, cosmic mental substance.

IV. Objections and Replies

An analytical physicalist might raise several standard objections to the tanmatron framework. Two primary challenges are addressed here:

Objection 1: Causal Closure of the Physical
The physicalist objects that mainstream physics operates under the principle of causal closure—the idea that every physical event is entirely determined by prior physical causes. If the psychic

tanmatra has an active role in perception or interacts with "appropriative points" in the brain, it violates causal closure by introducing non-physical interference into a physical system.

> **Reply:** The tanmatron framework respects causal closure because the psychic tanmatra does not act as an external, interventionist force altering physical trajectories. Because the tanmatron is inherently dual-aspect, the physical vibration (the photon, wave, or neural pulse) obeys standard physical laws all the way to the neural-mental interface. The psychic tanmatra is a parallel, intrinsic aspect of that vector. Its interaction at the appropriative point is one of *reflection* onto the mental plate, not a physical collision or disruption of neural energy conservation.

Objection 2: Ockham's Razor and Ontological Parsimony

A physicalist or illusionist would argue that invoking a "cosmic mental field" or fundamental "psychic tanmatras" unnecessarily multiplies entities. If neuroscience can eventually explain perception as purely computational processing of physical wavelengths, adding psychic aspects violates Ockham's razor.

> **Reply:** Ockham's razor dictates that we should not multiply entities *beyond necessity*. However, physicalism has persistently failed to explain *why* or *how* physical processing should feel like anything at all—the very definition of the hard problem. Introducing the dual-aspect tanmatron is not a superfluous addition; it is a necessary ontological expansion required to account for an undeniable datum of reality: subjective experience. It is arguably more parsimonious to posit a dual-aspect universe from the outset than to insist that entirely non-conscious matter miraculously generates subjective experience at an arbitrary threshold of complexity.

V. Conclusion

The tanmatron framework provides a highly competitive architecture for the philosophy of mind. It satisfies Chalmers' requirement for a non-reductive approach by treating phenomenal properties as fundamental, yet it respects physical sciences by outlining a clear, causal path of transmission through neural pathways. By utilizing a dual-aspect carrier—the tanmatron—to deliver the psychic tanmatra directly to a top-down reflective mind, this theory offers a structurally elegant resolution to the hard problem.

References

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Acknowledgments: The author was assisted in structuring and refining this manuscript using Google AI tools.
September 23, 2026, Saint Louis, USA
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