On the Phenomenon of Unification

One of the aspects of consciousness is the fact that it is formed from unifications of qualia. In this paper, unification will be shown to be a phenomenon that works based on the unformal nature of self-reference. Self-reference being an unformal entity, it is no-thing and every-thing both at the same time. These unformal properties will be shown to play an essential role in the existence and manifestation of unification. The best exemplification of the unformal workings of unification will be shown to happen in the phenomenon of telepathy. Telepathy will be argued to be a case of consciousnesses unification and will be shown that its imperfection is not a reason for rejecting it, but is a door towards the workings of the phenomenon of unification.

Introduction

Also known under the name of "the combination problem", the problem of unification is one of the main mysteries of consciousness. The reason why I choose the name of "unification" instead of "combination" is that I think it captures better the phenomenology of two or more consciousnesses unifying into one consciousness. At a first sight, it might appear as a straightforward phenomenon: we have two consciousnesses and they unify into one. Of course, this needs an explanation of how exactly it happens. But the problem seems clear enough. We will see though that unification is a much subtler phenomenon, and only if we get to appreciate its subtlety, we can have a chance at explaining it. Actually, its apparent simplicity is one of the reasons why we haven't yet got an explanation for it. It appears to be too simple to be able to say anything at all about how it works. By going deeper into its structure, we will uncover much richer manifestations, and those manifestations will offer us more data from which we can get to an explanation. This paper will not solve the problem, but it will expose some interesting considerations about the workings of unification that can be later pursued by other people.

The analysis will be based on the workings of self-reference which is responsible also for the emergent structure of consciousness. These ideas have been explored at length in previous papers of mine, but in order for this paper to be self-contained, the main ideas of emergence and self-reference will be presented again. We will start as usual from presenting the emergent phenomenology of consciousness, namely that consciousness is structured on a holarchy of levels, then we will show how the emergent phenomenology leads to the idea of self-reference, and then based on the unformal properties of self-reference we will go and show how unification is one of the manifestations of self-reference. One of the reasons why unification needs unformal properties is because we are dealing with two or more entities becoming one. Such a phenomenon cannot be accounted for in formal terms, because in formal terms, x is x and cannot be anything else. But since we are dealing with entities that are melding their identities, we can only go about and explain this if we are working in the unformal realm. As was shown in "The Self-Referential Aspect of Consciousness" paper, self-reference is such an unformal entity that includes and transcends itself both at the same time. We will see that such unformal properties are what it takes for an explanation of unification to be found.

This paper is also intended as an expansion of the analysis upon self-reference. Given the fact that unformal entities allow for contradictory properties to be true at the same time, a problem arises regarding the boundaries of these contradictions. Are they completely chaotic or, if regarded properly, we can discover that they are rather structured? Given the fact that consciousness is to some degree structured, this is an indication that not all contradictory properties are allowed. This paper will thus try to explore to what extent contradictions are allowed and how the interplay between contradictions gives rise to the manifestations of unification. The analysis that will be done here will be merely the beginning of what might be continued in the future in a full science of consciousness. What is desired here is to argue how for a full science of consciousness we might need to switch from the current formal way of doing science to a rather unformal way, in which contradictory properties are not only allowed, but are necessary if we want to have a shot at understanding consciousness.