

Hylomorphic Mental Causation

No Problem for Hylomorphism

Levels of Reality

- The Cartesian model of a bifurcated world has been replaced by that of a layered world, a hierarchically stratified structure of “levels” or “orders” of entities and their characteristic properties. It is generally thought that there is a bottom level, one consisting of whatever microphysics is going to tell us are the basic particles out of which all matter is composed (electrons, neutrons, quarks, or whatever) (Kim, 1993).

A Drive to Reduce

- ‘The fact that reductionism delivers the simplest solution to the problem of mental causation,’ contends Jaegwon Kim, ‘is probably the best argument in favor of it.’
- The conception of reductionism in view here is an enhanced Nagelianism, where some theory T^2 is reduced to a more fundamental theory T^1 just in case all of the laws of T^2 are derivable from the laws of T^1 augmented with appropriate bridge principles connecting the predicates of T^2 with correlative predicates in T^1 , and where the appropriate bridge principles are given as biconditionals so that the correlative properties countenanced by T^1 and T^2 can be regarded as genuine identities.

A Resulting Dilemma

If we are prepared to embrace reductionism, we can explain mental causation. However, in the process of reducing mentality to physical/biological properties, we may well lose the intrinsic, subjective character of our mentality—arguably, the very thing that makes the mental mental. In what sense, then, have we saved “mental” causation? But if we reject reductionism, we are not able to see how mental causation should be possible. But saving mentality while losing causality doesn't seem to amount to saving anything worth saving. For what good is the mind if it has no causal powers? Either way, we are in danger of losing mentality. That is the dilemma. (Kim, 1996)

Unseating the Mental

- A minimum premiss set required to generate a problem:
 - The Causal Closure of the Physical (CCP): Every physical event that has a cause at t has a complete physical cause at t .
 - Property Divergence (PD): No mental property is identical with any physical property.
 - Causal Exclusion Principle (CEP): Necessarily, if an event x is causally sufficient for an event y in virtue of x 's being Φ , then no event x^* is causally operative in bringing about y in virtue of x^* 's being Φ^* , where Φ is not identical with Φ^* .

Amendments to CEP

- Φ is a determinate property of Φ^* only if: (i) necessarily, if Φ is instantiated in some world, then Φ^* is instantiated in that world and is co-incident with Φ ; and (ii) possibly, Φ^* is instantiated while Φ is not.
- Abridged and Amended Causal Exclusion Principle (CEP_{AA}): Necessarily, if an event x is causally sufficient for an event y in virtue of x 's being Φ , then no event x^* is causally operative in bringing about y in virtue of x^* 's being Φ^* , where Φ is not identical with Φ^* , and neither Φ nor Φ^* is a determinable of the other—unless y is causally overdetermined.

An Exclusion Argument

(1) CCP

(2) PD

(3) CEP_{AA}

(4) So, mental events are epiphenomenal.

Illustrated

- (1) Suppose Candace waves her arm in order to signal a taxi.
- (2) Candace's arm instantiates a physical property; Candace's arm is also caused to move.
- (3) CCP
- (4) Therefore, the movement of Candace's arm has a complete physical cause, most likely some neurophysiological event e .
- (5) PD
- (6) So, if Candace has the property of having some belief or desire, her belief or desire properties are not identifiable with any of her physical properties.
- (7) CEP_{AA}
- (8) So, Candace's beliefs and desires cannot be causes of her arm's moving.

Queried

- A humble thesis of mental enmeshment: at least *some* mental events are caused by physical events.
 - Call that the causal receptivity of the mental.
- A hopeful thesis of mental enmeshment: at least *possibly* some physical events are caused by mental events.
 - Call that a datum of our lived lives.
 - Aristotle would call it a *phainomenon*.

Enter Hylomorphism

- ✦ Two Theses of Hylomorphism:
 - ✦ Hylomorphic Principle of Mental States
 - ✦ Systemic Dependent Homonymy

Hylomorphic Principle of Mental States

- It is clear that the properties of the soul are structures in matter. So, the definitions of mental states should be of this sort, for example: being angry is the movement of a certain sort of body (or of a part or capacity of a body), brought about by a certain cause and for a certain purpose (Aristotle, *De Anima* 403a24-27)
- The Hylomorphic Principle of Mental States (HPMS): State s is a mental state of some organism only if: (i) s is composed of some functionally suitable matter m ; and (ii) necessarily, m plays the role, ϕ , definitive of that state.

Systemic Dependent Homonymy

- We have said, in a general way, what the soul is: it is a substance, in the sense of a structure. But this is the essence of a certain sort of body. It is just as if a tool were a natural body, for example, an axe. Being an axe would be its substance, and this would be its soul; if this (being an axe) were separated out of it, it would no longer be an axe, except homonymously. But as it is now, it is an axe—for the essence and structure of this sort of body is not a soul; but this (the soul) is the essence and structure of a sort of natural body, namely, one having a source of motion and rest within itself. It is necessary also to consider what is said about the parts (of a living body). For if an eye were an animal, sight would be its soul; for this is the substance of the eye in the sense of its structure. But the eye is the matter of seeing; if sight were removed from the eye, it would no longer be an eye, except homonymously. Then it would be just like the eye of a statue or painting. And it is necessary to appreciate that what holds for the parts holds for the entire living body (Aristotle, *De Anima* 412b10-22).
- The Homonymy Principle (Systemic Dependent Homonymy): Necessarily, if m has been the matter of some mental state s but is no longer playing the role ϕ definitive of that state, then m is a ϕ only homonymously.

A Hylomorphic Rejoinder

- CEP, the causal exclusion principle, is either false or inapplicable:
 - (1) CEP is plausible in some version in the domain of mental causation only if subvenient material bases are specifiable as such without reference to the mental properties supervening upon them.
 - (2) If HPMS and SDH, they are not specifiable in this way in the domain of mental causation.
 - (3) HPMS and SDH.
 - (4) Therefore, CEP is not applicable in the domain of mental causation.

A Drive to Reduce Rejected

- Kim: 'The fact that reductionism delivers the simplest solution to the problem of mental causation is probably the best argument in favor of it.'
- Hylomorphism: 'The fact that hylomorphism delivers the simplest solution to the problem of mental causation is surely an argument in favour of it—not the best, perhaps, and certainly not the only, but still another reason to commend it.'