

**Phil 397
The Mind/Body Problem**

**Fall 1995
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**Ernest LePore & Barry Loewer: *Mind Matters*
[Handout #11]**

§ Basic Terminology:

- * **Physical property: a property expressible in the vocabulary of physics.**
- * **Mental property: a property expressible in the vocabulary of (folk) psychology (e.g. having a belief that P).**

§ [The Target Argument]:

- 1. Davidson says that any case of genuine causation has to be covered under a strict (exceptionless) causal law.**
- 2. Davidson also says that there are only strict physical laws.**
- 3. Psychological laws can never be strict.**
- 4. Therefore, the causation between the mental and the physical (the behavior) cannot be genuine causation.**
- 5. If the mental event does not really play a role in the causation of behaviors, then mental properties are not causally relevant.**
- 6. Therefore, under Davidson's view, mental properties are not causally relevant; mental states are epiphenomenal.**

§ LePore and Loewer's Reply:

- 1. Mental events do cause other events. They *are* physical events and so can, like any event, have consequences.**
- 2. Mental properties, furthermore, are causally relevant as well.**

§ L & L's Strategy:

A. To define the notion "causal relevance" through analysis of normal causal relations, such that in all cases we can locate the causally relevant properties through the definition given.

B. Next, to apply this definition of "causal relevance" to mental properties and show that mental properties are also causally relevant.

§ Two Senses of "Causal Relevance":

a. Properties F and G are relevant₁ to making it the case that c causes e.

b. c's possessing property is causally relevant₂ to e's possessing property G.

___ The conditions for causal relevance₂:

- (I) c's being F is causally relevant₂ to e's being G iff**
- (i) c causes e**
 - (ii) Fc and Ge**
 - (iii) - Fc > - Ge**
 - (iv) Fc and Ge are logically and metaphysically independent.**

The difference between these two notions is that, in brief, the first kind of causal relevance is established through the existence of a strict law, while the second causal relevance is established through the observation of a particular case. The importance of pointing out this difference between these two senses of causal relevance is, according to LePore and Loewer, that mental properties are causally relevant only in the second sense but not in the first sense. Under the first sense, a mental property M is causally relevant₁ to behavior which has property B, only when there exists a grounding psychophysical law which has the form of 'All Ms cause Bs.' But there is no such law as far as psychologists would admit. Therefore mental properties are not causally relevant₁.

Under the second sense, however, a mental property M is causally relevant₂ if and only if all the conditions listed in **(I)** are satisfied. For instance, I suddenly have a desire to read Fodor's Psychosemantics, so I went to the bookshelf to fetch this book. The intentional property depicting my desire is causally relevant₂ to my behavior, according to **(I)**, if and only if (i) my mental state causes my behavior; (ii) my mental state has that intentional property of 'having a desire to read Fodor's Psychosemantics' and my behavior has the property of 'going to the bookshelf to fetch Fodor's Psychosemantics'; (iii) if I did not have that desire, I would not have gone to the bookshelf to fetch Fodor's Psychosemantics; and finally, (iv) my having this desire and my adopting this behavior are logically and metaphysically independent of each other.

In **(b)** there is no requirement of a lawful (or law-like, if acceptable) relation between the two properties if they are involved in mind-body causation. As long as the single case at issue stands as a fact and the counterfactual analysis shows that the causation would not have occurred if the mental event did not have that property, plus the condition that the

relation is not merely the result of a logical entailment, then the mental property counts as "causally relevant."

§ LePore and Loewer's Claim:

___ LePore and Loewer argue that mental properties may be causally irrelevant in the sense of relevant₁, but they are causally relevant in the sense of relevant₂. As long as the second claim stands, namely, mental event's possessing mental property M is causally relevant₂ to the behavior's being the behavior that B, mental events are not epiphenomenal.

§ [Summary of their view]:

___ They keep the idea that *causes* have to be strictly covered, and give up on the idea that the *causal relevance* of the mental depends on the nomological (law-like) connection between the mental and the behavioral effect. (Refuting premise 5 in the target argument.)

§ The Argument of the Causal Relevance₂ of the Mental bases on the Analysis of Counterfactuals:

___ If (I) supplies sufficient conditions for causal relevance₂, then there is no incompatibility between AM and the causal relevance₂ of the mental.

§ Counterfactuals and Possible Worlds

___ Any counterfactual hypothesis "creates" a possible world.

Kripke's view on possible worlds: It is not like a foreign country where one can travel to; it is rather a counterfactual situation *built on* one of the members of the actual world.

David Lewis' view on possible worlds: There is a plurality of worlds, and each world has its own residents. The worlds are apart from one another by some slight differences and thus some worlds are more similar to ours; some are less.

Consider the counterfactual:

(Q) If event c were not F, then event e would not be G.
(- Fc > - Ge)

(Q) is true if and only if:

___ in all the most similar worlds at which *c* fails to have *F*; or *c* fails to have a counterpart *c'*, counterpart of *e* would fail to have *G*; or *e* fails to have a counterpart.

To show:

___ In the case of a lack of strict laws, we can still establish the truth of counterfactuals - $F_c > - G_e$.

[Argument]:

1. The set of strict laws and basic physical facts do not by themselves settle the truth values of counterfactuals.

2. Only when the strict laws and noncounterfactual statements true at α entail $A \rightarrow B$ or $-(A \rightarrow B)$, can $A > B$ have determinate truth values.

[Note: If there are indeed a strict law such as All *A*s cause *B*s, then there would not be any possible world that is similar to ours and in which $-(A \rightarrow B)$ is true.]

3. But neither the counterfactuals ($- F_c > - G_e$) nor their negations are entailed by the strict physical laws and noncounterfactual truths.

4. Therefore, the counterfactuals ($- F_c > - G_e$) have no determinate truth value.

5. Therefore, the truth of counterfactuals like ($- F_c > - G_e$), that is, counterfactuals of the sort needed to establish causal relevance₂, are *compatible with AM*.

§ Two Supporting Proofs:

I. Causal irrelevance₁ alone is insufficient to sustain a charge of Epiphenomenalism.

(A rejection of Honderich's principle of the nomological character of causally relevant properties.)

II. We cannot have some further conditions on (I) such that, once added, AM does entail that irrelevance₂ of the mental. (A rejection of Sosa's suggestion of adding a further sufficient condition on (I): *c*'s being *F* is causally irrelevant₂ to *e*'s being *G*, if there is a property *F** of *c* such that ($F^*c \ \& \ - F_c$) holds nonvacuously.)

§ [Conclusion]:

(1) The mental and the physical are distinct.

___ (1) is true if we are talking about properties, but false if we are talking about events.

(2) The mental and the physical causally interact.

___ (2) is true if we are talking about properties.

(3) The physical is causally closed.

___ (3) is false if we are talking about properties.

(3') All causation is reducible to, or grounded in, physical causation.

___ They accept this claim.

§ [Final Summary]:

___ Mental events are physical events, and they cause behaviors just as the subvenient physical events cause behaviors.

___ Mental events have both mental and physical properties.

___ There are no strict laws governing mental properties; therefore, mental properties are not causally relevant₁.

___ But mental properties are still causally relevant₂ since causal relevance₂ only requires that all four conditions (one of which is the counterfactual analysis) holds.

___ Causal relevance₂ does not presuppose any strict causal law.