

**Phil 397  
The Mind/Body Problem**

Fall 1995  
Professor JeeLoo Liu

**Brain McLaughlin: *On Davidson's Response to the Charge of Epiphenomenalism*  
[Handout #15]**

**§ Two Types of Epiphenomenalism**

**"Token Epiphenomenalism":** Physical events cause mental events, but mental events cannot cause anything.

**"Type Epiphenomenalism":** (a) Events cause other events in virtue of falling under physical types, but (b) no event can cause anything in virtue of falling under a mental type.

**[Why Davidson's Anomalous Monism Would Lead to Type Epiphenomenalism]:**

1. According to Davidson, events can cause other events only in virtue of falling under physical types cited in strict laws;
2. But no mental event-type is a physical event-type cited in a strict law, since the mental is anomalous.
3. Therefore, under Davidson's theory, type epiphenomenalism is true.

**Davidson's Response:**

\_\_\_ Only events have causes and effects.

\_\_\_ But events are not causes or effects *by virtue of* their properties, mental or physical.

**§ Davidson's Extensionalist View of Causal Relations**

(C1) The *relata* of the causal relation are non-abstract, particular events; and if event *c* caused event *e*, and *c* = *d*, then *d* caused *e*; and if *c* caused *e*, then there is something that caused *e*.

(C1): (i) "Cause" is a two-placed relation such as *x* causes *y*.

(ii) Both *x* and *y* are particular events.

(iii) The principle of substitutivity applies.  $[Fa \ \& \ (a = b)] \rightarrow Fb$

(iv) The principle of existential generalization applies.  $Fa \rightarrow \exists x(Fx)$

**§ Causation and Causal Explanation**

**Davidson:**

**Causation** — a relation between singular events that are time- and space-bound entities.

**Causal Explanation** — A description of the causal relation, picking out the type to which the causing event and the effect event each belongs.

§ Supervenience (Weak Supervenience) ⇒ The Causal Relevance of Mental Properties

Davidson's "Supervenience":

\_\_\_ Mental properties supervene on physical properties if and only if

for any two person x and y:

If [x and y are indistinguishable in physical properties] → [x and y are indistinguishable in their mental properties].

**Q:** Why is this definition a "weak" supervenience?

\*\*\* Kim: 'Supervenience for Multiple Domains'

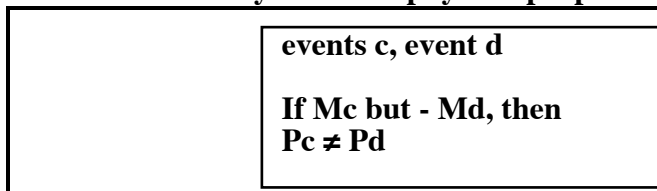
(WS) A *weakly supervenes* on B with respect to domain D just in case, for any x and y in D and for any possible world w, if x and y are B-indiscernible in w, they are A-indiscernible in w.

(SS) A *strongly supervenes* on B with respect to domain D just in case for any x and any y in D, and any worlds w and w\*, if x in w is B-indiscernible from y in w\*, then x in w is A-indiscernible from y in w\*.

§ Davidson and Kim

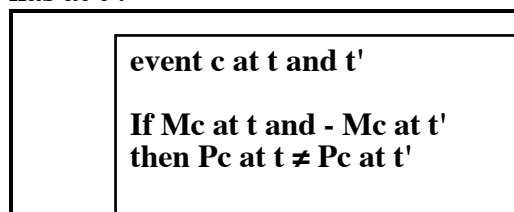
Davidson thinks that his weak supervenience implies:

(D) If one event has a mental property that another event lacks, then the events cannot have exactly the same physical properties.



(D) implies (D'):

(D') If an event has a mental property at one time t and lacks the property at another time t', then the event cannot have exactly the same physical properties at t that it has at t'.



Kim thinks that weak supervenience is consistent with:

(K) Events could have all of their physical properties and yet lacked all of their mental properties.

<p>If <math>P_c = P_d</math>  then:  (i) <math>M_c = M_d</math>, or  (ii) <math>\neg M_c = \neg M_d</math></p>
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(D')  $\neq$  (K); and (D') is compatible with K.

[Kim's Argument as Interpreted by McLaughlin]:

1. Davidson holds that *only* physical properties are required for a complete causal account of the universe.
2. Mental properties bear a weak supervenience relation to physical properties.
3. But weak supervenience is consistent with the claim that events could have all of their physical properties and yet lacked all of their mental properties.
4. Therefore, under Davidson's theory, it is possible that physical properties without mental properties are doing all the causal works.
5. Therefore, under Davidson's theory, mental properties really do not make any difference to causal relations.

[McLaughlin's Conclusion]:

\_\_\_ What Davidson should give up in the end is not the anomalism of the mental, but rather the nomological character of causality. (To reject Premiss 1 in the argument for type epiphenomenalism.)