Phil 397
The Mind/Body Problem

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Ernest Sosa: *Davidson's Thinking Causes*
[Handout #16]

§ Davidson and Sosa on 'Loudness' of the Shot

Davidson:
(a) both loud and silent (single) shots can cause a death; but not the same death.

Sosa: first analysis of (a):
(b) If (i) s caused d and s is a loud shot and no other shot causes d, and
    (ii) s' causes d' and s' is a silent shot and no other shot causes d',
    then
    (iii) — (d = d')

This is true enough but trivial and uncontroversial.

Sosa: second analysis of (a):
(c) If (i) s causes d and s is a loud shot and no other shot causes d,
    then
    (ii) if there *had been* some shot s' that *had caused* a death d' and s' *had been* silent
    and no other shot had caused d', then d' *would have been* distinct from d (i.e. d' ≠ d).
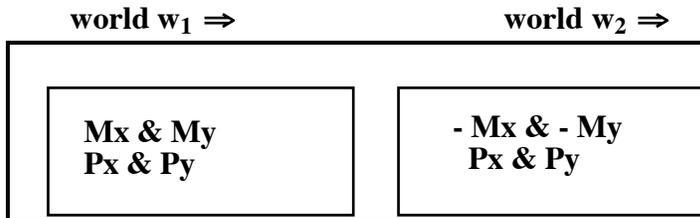
* Sosa's Criticism:
(i) (c) is based on a kind of "essentialism" which holds that all properties are *essential to*
the object such that without any of these properties, the object would no longer be the same
object.
(ii) This kind of essentialism would make the causal efficacy of mental properties
insignificant since all other properties would all be essential.

§ Sosa's Interpretation of the Debate between Davidson and Kim on 'Modality'

* Davidson ⟹ temporal (concerning two cross-sections of history in the same world)
world w_1 ⟹

T1	T2
Mx & My	- Mx & - My
Px & Py	Px & Py

* Kim ⟹ modal (concerning two possible worlds)

world w_1 $\Rightarrow$	world w_2 $\Rightarrow$
Mx & My Px & Py	- Mx & - My Px & Py

§ Davidson's Reasoning (According to Sosa)
___ **How the thesis of supervenience "save" the mental properties from being causally inert:**

[Argument D]:
   (a) Mental properties supervene on physical properties: i.e. no events e and e' differ mentally without differing physically (by assumption).
   (b) Mental properties of events therefore make a difference to their physical properties (from (a)).
   (c) Physical properties of events make a difference to their causal relations (by assumption).
   (d) Mental properties of event therefore make a difference to their causal relations (from (b), (c)).

[Argument S]:
   (a') Mental properties of events supervene on their physical properties: i.e. no mental difference without a physical difference (assumption).
   (b') Mental properties of events make a difference to their physical properties: i.e. *events that are mentally different must be physically different* (from a').
   (c') Physical properties of events make a difference to their causal relations: i.e. *events that are physically different must be differently causally related to some event* (assumption).
   (d') Mental properties of events make a difference to their causal relations: i.e. *events that are mentally different must be differently causally related to some event* (from b', c')

[Q: What is the difference between Argument D and Argument S?]
___ **S is explaining "making a difference" that was unexplained in D.**

* Sosa's addition:
(i) "Making a difference" applied to two sets of properties (e.g. mental properties and physical properties)
     <u>**M-properties make a difference to P-properties**</u> **iff**
     for all x, y,
     <u>**x and y are M-distinct $\rightarrow$ x and y are P-distinct**</u>**.**
(ii) "Making a difference" applied to a set of properties and a relation (e.g. physical properties and the causal relation).

<u>**P-properties** *make a difference* **to R**</u> **iff**
for all x, y (x and y belong to a set E),
<u>**x and y are P-distinct**</u> **→** <u>**x and y are R-distinct**</u> **in the sense that for some z of E, [—**
(x bears relation R to z iff y bears relation R to z) or — (z bears relation R to x iff z
bears relation R to y)] (e.g. x and y are causally distinct in the sense that it is not the
case that [x causes z iff y causes z] or it is not the case that [z causes x iff z causes y]).

⇒ Sosa's Critique:
___ This "making a difference" is too weak for the mental properties to be causally
efficacious, since almost all properties could be said to "make a difference.

[Sosa's Argument]:
* locational properties: the properties which specify the coordinates of an event in space
and time

events e and e':
[e ≠ e'] → [It is not the case that e and e' have the same locational properties]
[It is not the case that e and e' have the same locational properties] → [e ≠ e']

1. Locational properties make a difference to causal relations among events.
2. But every property of an event would make a difference to the locational properties
(every property weakly supervenes on the locational properties).
3. Therefore, every property of an event would make a difference to the causal relations.
⇒ It is only in so weak a sense of *making a difference* **that Davidson allows for mental**
properties of events to make a difference to their causal relations.

§ Causation and the Strict Covering Principle

* the extensional analysis of causation: c causes e
* the covering principle (U):
> **(U) the causal relation cannot relate events c and e unless these events fall under a**
> **strict (physical) law when appropriately described.**
> **___ Q: Are they compatible?**

Sosa's Suggestion:
(AC) c causes e iff (for some C and E)(C covers c and E covers e, and there is a strict law
> **between C and E).**

___ Causation would remain an extensional relation, since the two principles would still
hold with full generality:
(i) (c causes e & d = c) → (d causes e)
(ii) (c causes e and d = e) → (c causes d)

§ What differentiates the eliminativist from the anomalous monist:

___ Eliminativist: Mental phenomena (e.g. having a pain) are <u>in principle</u> *scientifically explainable*.

___ Anomalous monist: There can be mental phenomena even if an ultimate scientific explanation is impossible.

§ Sosa's Conclusion

___ If we insist on a strict covering law for all cases of causation, then causal explanation should also be based on strict causal relations. If we grant that some causal explanations (e.g. psychological causal explanation) can be based on non-strict law, then it is not clear why causation must be covered under strict causal laws. Davidson's distinction between causation and causal explanation is not well-supported by our ordinary vocabulary.