

**Phil 397  
The Mind/Body Problem**

**Fall 1995  
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**Jaegwon Kim: *The Myth of Nonreductive Materialism*  
[Handout #10]**

**§ Introduction**

**Ontological physicalism (= materialism): the claim that all that exists in space-time is physical.**

**Property dualism: a dualism about psychological and physical attributes, insisting that psychological concepts or properties form an irreducible, autonomous domain.**

**Q: Are ontological physicalism and property dualism compatible?**

**Kim: No.**

**§ Two Main Reasons for the Decline of Reductionism**

**I. Davidson**

**[A] Davidson's First Thesis: "Anomalism of the Mental"**

**\_\_\_ (i) There are no precise or strict laws about mental events (i.e. laws connecting psychological events with other psychological events.)**

**\_\_\_ (ii) There are no laws connecting psychological events with physical events [= "psychological anomalism"].**

**[Davidson's Argument for the Anomalism of the Mental]:**

- 1. Reduction of psychology to physics requires that psychological laws be derivable from physical laws.**
- 2. For reduction to be possible, there must be bridge principles which either define psychological terms in terms of physics; or express lawlike correlations between psychological events and physical events.**
- 3. But psychological terms cannot be definitionally reduced to physical terms.**
- 4. Furthermore, there are no laws connecting psychological events with physical events.**
- 5. Therefore, reductionism from psychology to physics is impossible.**

**[B] Davidson's Second Thesis: Materialist Monism**

**\_\_\_ All events enter into at least one causal relation.**

**\_\_\_ Causal relations are all physical relations.**

**\_\_\_ All events are physical events.**

**[Davidson's Argument for Materialist Monism]**

1. Mental events enter into causal relations with physical events.
2. But causal relations must be backed by laws (i.e. causal relations between individual events must instantiate lawful regularities.)
3. There are no laws about the mental, any causal relation involving a mental event must instantiate a physical law.
4. Thus the mental event has a physical description, or falls under a physical event kind.
5. Therefore, mental events are physical events.

[A] + [B] = Davidson's "Anomalous Monism"

\* Kim's criticism: Davidson's "Anomalous Monism" ==> Eliminativism

## II. Putnam

\* The "Multiple realizability" Problem:

\_\_\_ i) Any psychological event-type can be "physically realized" or "instantiated" or "implemented" in endlessly diverse ways, depending on the physical-biological nature of the organism or system involved.

\_\_\_ ii) Thus, we can't expect a psychological event to correlate uniformly with, and thus be identifiable with, some "single" type of neural or physical state.

\* Kim's Answer to the Multiple Realizability Problem:

\_\_\_ "Species-specific reduction" (Local reduction)

[Kim's Argument]:

(i) There are "species-specific biconditional laws" in the form of " $S_i \leftrightarrow (M \leftrightarrow P_i)$ ".

(ii) Species-specific biconditional laws guarantees species-specific strong connectibility.

(iii) And species-specific strong connectibility establishes species-specific reduction (local reduction) for human psychology.

§ Supervenience ==> Nonreductive Materialism?

1. Davidson: "Supervenience"

(i) the relation must be nonreductive

(ii) the relation must be out of dependence.

2. Kim on Global Supervenience:

\_\_\_ Worlds that are indiscernible in all physical respects are indiscernible in mental respects; in fact, physically indiscernible worlds are one and the same world.

3. Kim's Claim:

\_\_\_ Global supervenience is too weak to yield an appropriate relation of dependency between the mental and the physical, and thus cannot be taken to be in the spirit of physicalism.

\_\_\_ Global supervenience needs to have specific psychophysical dependencies holding for individuals (i.e. local supervenience) as both evidence and an explanatory ground.

\_\_\_ Correlations and dependencies between specific psychological and physical properties  $\implies$  psychophysical laws  $\implies$  reductionism.

### § Kim's Argument Against Nonreductive Physicalism

\* Three assumptions made by the nonreductive materialists:

I. To be a mental realist, your mental properties must be causal properties-- properties in virtue of which an event enters into causal relations it would otherwise not have entered into.

II. There is psychophysical causation, i.e. some mental events do cause physical events.

III. "The causal closure of the physical domain": Any physical event that has a cause at time  $t$  has a physical cause at  $t$ .

Question: What is the relationship between these two causes, one mental and the other physical?

Three Possible Answers:

(i) the mental cause and the physical cause are each only a partial cause, and together they make up one sufficient cause.  $\implies$  Kim: This violates the causal closure principle

(ii) the mental causes and the physical causes are each an independent sufficient cause of the physical effect.  $\implies$  Kim: the problem of over-determination

§ Kim's Proposal:

\_\_\_ "Supervenient causal relations": causal relations involving macro-events are supervenient on micro-causal processes.

\_\_\_ A mental event is cause, or an effect, of another event in virtue of the fact that it is supervenient on some physical event standing in an appropriate causal relation to this event. Thus, mental properties are seen as deriving their causal potential from the physical properties on which they supervene.

[Kim's Conclusion]:

Nonreductive materialism is not a stable position:

Dualism <----- Nonreductive Materialism -----> Eliminativism