

# Does anomalous monism account for the causal efficacy of mental states?

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## 1 Davidson's anomalous monism

**Idea:** To understand distinct character of mental, it isn't required to claim that mental states are *not* physical states. Rather, it is sufficient to claim that there are no strict deterministic psycho-physical laws. In contrast to the first claim, the latter is consistent with principle of mental causation, principle of causal closure of physics, and principle of nomological character of causation.

**Anomalous mental states:** The key premise to anomalous monism is that events have different descriptions. There are physical descriptions for *all* events, but there are *some* events, which additionally enable mental descriptions. Thus, mental events can be described mentally *and* physically. If described physically, they are identical to physical events (monism), causally efficacious and covered by strict deterministic laws. If described mentally, no such laws exist. Thus, mental events are anomalous: whereas they are identical to physical events if physically described, they differ in properties (property dualism) if mentally described. Although mental events are physical (if physically described), mental descriptions aren't reducible to physical, since mental and physical differ in nature (non-reductive physicalism).

**Holism, principle of rationality and charity:** The holistic nature of mental is the primary reason why psycho-physical laws don't exist. Why is it so? The meaning of each mental state, e.g. a belief, depends on meaning of other mental states. Thus, to interpret a person's belief requires its semantical interference from a system of other beliefs (semantical holism) which involves inter-subjectivity and social practice (social holism). Thus, mental states aren't mere inner states (internalism). They are embedded in our physical-social world (externalism). Holism is an anti-realistic position claiming coherence theory of trueness, instead of correspondence theory. Thus, a belief is regarded as true, if consistent with other beliefs. A single true belief is impossible. If someone claims „this flower is red“, he must at least have beliefs about what flowers and what colours are. Holism involves principle of rationality, i.e. to presuppose that person's beliefs aren't systematically wrong or contradictory. This, in turn, implies principle of charity, i.e. to interpret person's belief as consistent. If we wouldn't do so, our interpretation would be wrong in majority of cases. All these features make mental different from physical, particularly incapable to cover by laws.

**Synoptic view:** Anomalous monism integrates monism and dualism in one synoptic view. It combines ontological monism providing a single physical basis with epistemic property dualism providing different non-reductive descriptions of mental and physical.

## 2 Objects and problems

**Problem of causally inert mental properties:** Davidson's position may suggest that causal work is done by physical properties only, whereas mental properties are causally inert. This, in my view, is based on a misinterpretation. Because mental events have mental *and* physical descriptions, they are causally efficacious in virtue of their physical descriptions. They aren't causally inert.

**Problem of over-determination:** If mental events cause physical events, and, if mental events are physical events, then there are two causes for one physical effect. To solve this dilemma, three solutions seem to be there: claiming that (1) mental is identical to physical (reductive physicalism), (2) mental doesn't exist (eliminativism) or (3) mental causation doesn't exist (epiphenomenalism). Whereas (1) yields well known problems of type-identity theory, (2) and (3) are against our self-understanding as unique human being. Is there in fact a dilemma? No, since mental events cause physical events under physical description only. There is no causation under mental description. It isn't the mental event as a mental event which is the cause. It is the mental event in its physical description which is the cause. Thus, there aren't two causes, but two descriptions. There is an analogy in physics itself. Light has two descriptions: wave *and* particle description. Whereas the former describes interference pattern, the latter scattering phenomena. Vice versa, reasons describe *why* persons act and reason as causes *how* persons act.

**Problem of supervenience:** Mental properties (M) supervene on physical (P). Hence, there are supervenience relations between M1 and P1 and M2 and P2, respectively. If P1 causes P2, this causal relation is covered by laws. Thus, three of four relations are properly defined. But, how are M1 and M2 related? This question remains open.

**Problem of emotional mental properties:** Davidson only considers intentional mental states, e.g. I believe that or I intend that. However, intentionality isn't a general feature of all mental states. Feeling pain isn't intentional, it is a qualia experience. Mental states of qualia or emotion are excluded from his theory, displaying a deficit.

**Problem of strict laws:** (1) Davidson claims that strict laws exist in physical descriptions only. This claim, in my view, is too strong. Because, even in physics itself, there are no strict deterministic laws explaining and predicting phenomena of real world. Physics operates with idealized models and experiments and laws are strict and deterministic within this idealized framework only. Regarding real world, we only have approximations and probabilistic estimations. Thus, there are no strict laws neither in real mental nor in real physical domain. We only have idealized models. Hence, primary question is: What distinguishes physical and mental models (e.g. homo oeconomicus)?

(2) There is another crucial point. In Kant's view, causation isn't a feature of nature, rather an a priori category of human being. Thus, man itself puts causation into the world and construes appropriated laws. Therefore, it isn't true that where is causation there is a law. It might be worth to prove, how both issues (1) and (2) influence anomalous monism.

### **3 Conclusion**

Davidson doesn't solve problem of mental causation finally. Some problems still remain. However, they aren't as crucial as Kim argued. Davidson presents a sophisticated approach which accounts different nature of both physical and mental. Whereas the former is made intelligible in terms of laws providing predicative and explanatory power, the latter in terms of holistic considerations providing power for understanding acting persons. Davidson demonstrates, how to preserve autonomy of mental<sup>3</sup> as a condition of free will.