

ANOMALOUS MONISM AND INTENTIONAL CAUSATION

Anomalous Monism

Davidson takes a more radical view of the split between the token identity thesis (for mental and neurophysiological states or events) and the Identity Theorists' type thesis. He gives his novel and ingenious argument for token identity, based on his "Principle of the Anomalism of the Mental": "There are no strict and deterministic laws on the basis of which mental events can be predicted and explained": Since mental events interact causally with physical events and causality requires strict laws, the mental events must have physical descriptions under which they are related to other physical events by strict laws. Therefore the mental events *are physical*.

But then Davidson uses the same principle to argue that in the matter of type identification, mental events are even worse off than the Machine Functionalist had suggested: Since mental types do not, as such, figure in natural laws, they will not coincide with any types that are designated in scientific terms, not even computational terms, let alone neurophysiological types. Thus, there will be no interesting type-identification of mental states or events with anything found in any science at all. That's why his theory of mind is called "Anomalous Monism": though it's monist and materialist, there is no type-identification; mental types are *sui generis*.

He gives many arguments for the Anomalism, but we considered only two. First, the aggravated Cycle argument on p. 251. The point against Behaviorism is familiar: What a person will do, given that s/he is in mental state M1, depends on what other mental states s/he is in. Now, the same is true even if we know s/he is M1 and M2. And so for M1 and M2 and M3, *and so on forever*; Davidson claims that no list of mental states, however long, will guarantee a particular behavior.

The Machine Functionalist of course disputes this, because a machine program doesn't go on forever. If the machine isn't broken, a set of inputs plus a set of internal states certainly will determine a particular behavioral output.

The second argument points out that our epistemology for ascribing beliefs and desires to others absolutely requires the working assumption of basic rationality. But that assumption (as I interpret it) is *normative*; we assume that the other believes pretty much what s/he *ought* to believe and wants pretty much what she *ought* to want, and makes good inferences. When we investigate neural and

other of nature's mechanisms (including computers) to see how they work, we observe; we test; we use Mill's Methods, statistical reasoning and other styles of inference; we don't use anything with an "ought" in it. That the epistemology of belief or desire is ineliminably normative at least strongly suggests that *belief* and *desire* are not natural kinds—from which it would follow that they figure (as such) in no laws, not even computational laws.

A few words on Kim

Kim begins with the interesting idea of "epiphenomenal" or pseudo-causation. (Better example: You're watching an animated Western. The good guy slugs the bad guy, knocking him to the floor. Looks like a thoroughly causal process, but of course it isn't; the shapes and colors projected onto one part of the screen have no effect whatever on any other part of the screen.) Then he puts forward a shocking thesis (pp. 260-61), that all macrocausation, including mental-physical interaction, is epiphenomenal (Edwards was right!, save possibly about God.) But he takes it back on p. 262: The macrocausation is at least "supervenient" causation, which pseudocausation isn't.

But now comes a real issue between Kim and Davidson (p. 263): On Davidson's view, although beliefs and desires cause behavior, they do not cause it *qua* beliefs and desires. It's not because she *wants beer and believes there's one under the sofa* that Grannie is on her knees reaching along the floor. Those mental properties, on Davidson's view, are "entirely irrelevant" to the state's causing the behavior.

Kim has what he says is a fix (p. 264): to recognize that *all* macrocausation is merely supervenient causation, so that mental-to-physical causation is no worse off, "no less real or substantial," than any other kind.

But I don't see how that addresses the problem he sees for Davidson. Even if the causal efficacy of Grannie's belief and desire are no less real or substantial than that of any other macro-state of a thing, it remains true that it's not *in virtue of their mental properties* that they do their causing.

Possibly what Kim is thinking is that when a baseball bat hits a baseball, it's not in virtue of its being a baseball bat that it causes the ball to move, and we don't think that's a big deal. But we do have some investment in the commonsense view that people do what they do because of *what* they believe and *what* they want.