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“DUALISM, CAUSATION AND SUPERVENIENCE”

Stewart Goetz

In this paper, I assume that the idea of a substantial soul is essential to many religions and defend against two recent critics a Cartesian dualist view that a soul can causally interact with its physical body. The two critics are Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim. Both argue that the idea of causal interaction between a soul and its physical body is problematic, if not incoherent. Because it is, a noncausal account of the relationship between the psychological and the physical must be developed. These writers suggest that the concept of supervenience be employed to explain how psychological properties/events are related to physical properties/events. This is a property or event dualism. I argue that this form of dualism is less plausible than substance dualism.

I

[A] mind-body dualism seems to be essential to most religions. The body will disintegrate after death but, according to the doctrines of many religions, the soul, the immaterial part of us which is quite distinct and different from the body, will live on eternally.... The primary philosophical problem is to find out whether dualistic interactionism or some other position is the most plausible view about the nature of a person.¹

I believe that the authors whom I have just quoted are correct about the relationship between mind-body dualism and religion. However, I will make no effort in this paper to defend their claim. Rather, assuming they are correct, I will attempt to defend against two recent critics the intelligibility of a Cartesian substance dualist's view that a self or soul can causally interact with its physical body.² These critics suggest that this view is problematic or implausible, if not impossible or unintelligible. I am not convinced that it is any of these. In the place of substance dualism, it is now common to substitute a dualism of properties and/or events and claim that psychological properties/events supervene on physical properties/events. I believe that this form of dualism is less plausible than substance dualism.

In Section II, I set out a dualist's account of what it means to say that a certain physical body is 'my body.' This account says that a certain physical body is mine because I causally interact with it. The critic of dualism maintains that causal interaction cannot be the relation which makes a particular physical body 'mine.' This is because a causal relation supervenes on a noncausal relation and there is no suitable noncausal relation between my body and me which makes it possible for it to cause events in me and for me



to cause events in it. I examine to what extent causation is a supervenient relation.

Section III consists of an investigation of whether or not the concept of supervenience is of any help in explaining the relationship between the psychological and the physical. Many believe that, in light of the problem of causal interaction for dualism, we can introduce the concept of supervenience to elucidate how the psychological is related to the physical. I believe that they are mistaken. Contrary to clarifying this relationship, accounts which invoke supervenience are totally inadequate as accounts of the relationship between the psychological and the physical. Supervenience might be of philosophical use elsewhere, but it is of no use in the mind-body problem.

II

Before setting forth the argument against causal interaction, I will briefly introduce the reader to the causal ontology I will be using in this paper. On my account, causation involves the idea of (i) a substance and the causal power had by it; (ii) a substance and the causal liability had by it; (iii) the exercise of the causal power and (iv) the actualization of the liability. Causation consists in the exercise of a causal power by a substance upon itself or another substance, where this exercise of power produces an actualization of a liability. A causal power and its corresponding liability are ontologically irreducible properties had intrinsically or *per se* by a substance or substances.

I employ this account of causation for the following reasons. First, we are entities which have powers and liabilities. For example, we have the power to think, the power to choose, the power to move, etc. We also have the liability to experience pain and the liability to be moved. Consider the liability to be moved. We have been or can conceive of being moved in one way or another by a causal power such as that which is associated with a moving fist, car, train, herd of cattle, etc. Those who doubt that there is such causal power only need place themselves in the path of these or similar entities to be convinced otherwise. Even Hume, who maintained that none of us, as agents, has an experience of the exercise of causal power, in the end had to admit that, as patients, we experience the activity of causal power on us in the determination of our minds to pass from one object to its usual attendant.³

Second, not only do we possess powers and liabilities, but also it is plausible to think that other entities possess or have associated with them powers and liabilities. For example, submicroscopic entities such as protons, electrons, etc. are conceived of as entities with positive and negative charges, where these charges are forces or powers to move other submicroscopic entities which have the liability to be moved.

With this ontology before us, I now turn to the question of causal interaction between a soul and its body.

Why is this body 'my body'? According to a dualist, it is not because I am identical with this body. Rather, it is mine because of a certain causal relationship in which I stand to it. Thus, this body is my body because, when it is causally affected, it regularly and directly causes me to have certain experiences (e.g., pain) and when I act my actions⁴ regularly directly⁵ cause its movements.⁶ On this account, were I regularly to have the experience of pain directly caused by your body or the table on which I am now writing when they were causally affected in certain ways, then I would regard either or both of them as my body. Similarly, were your body or the table regularly directly caused to move by my actions, I would regard either or both of them as my body.

A dualist analyzes what it is for my physical body to be 'my body' in terms of causation. Ernest Sosa has acknowledged that this is a promising analysis of ownership until we consider what it is in virtue of which a causal relation obtains. According to Sosa, a causal relation obtains only if the appropriate noncausal conditions obtain. Consider the following two examples:

Someone takes a picture of you, a photograph. Your image is imprinted on a piece of film. The film is imprinted with an image of a face that looks a certain way *because* you have a certain physiognomy. But your physiognomy causes the image on the film only in virtue of the fact that certain conditions hold at a given time with respect to you and the piece of film. The film is in a camera aimed in your direction, and you and the camera are not too far apart, there are no obstacles obstructing the line of sight, you are facing the camera at the time, and there is enough light, and so on; and it is only in virtue of the fact that these conditions all hold that your facial appearance causes the image on the film....

Take another example. A karate expert hits a board and splits it in two. The board splits in two *because* of the blow by the man. And if this is so it is presumably in virtue of certain noncausal conditions that hold at the time, including the board's thickness; its composition; the angle, speed, and force of the blow, etc. And it seems quite evident, moreover, that if anything noncausally a perfect twin of that board, is hit by anyone noncausally a perfect twin of that man, with a blow exactly like that blow in all noncausal respects, then that new board must also split just as did the old, because of the blow.⁷

Now, according to the substance dualist, there are many physical bodies and many souls. What noncausal properties and/or relations make events in one physical body causally relevant to a specified soul, and events in a specified soul causally relevant to a particular physical body? Could it be the noncausal relationship of ownership, so that a particular soul and a particular physical body causally interact only if that soul owns that body? But what is the sense of 'owns' here? Is it legal or moral? Did the soul inherit its physical body or earn it as the fruits of its labors? The obvious answer is, 'No.'

At this point, says Sosa, many dualists explicate ownership in terms of

direct causal interaction. We are told by them that what makes a particular physical body the body of a specific soul is that the two directly causally interact. But if we then go on to ask in virtue of what noncausal relation it is that the two directly causally interact, the dualist is unable to provide us with an answer. The answer cannot be that a particular physical body and a specific soul causally interact in virtue of the fact that that body is owned by that soul, because ownership is supposed to be explained in terms of causal interaction. Moreover, ownership cannot be explained in terms of a certain spatial relation, because a soul is supposedly not in space. In the end, it seems as if all that can be said is that the physical body which is supposedly the body of a particular soul causally interacts with that soul, period. But this will not do.

For it is useless to be told that what makes something subject to direct causal interaction with something else is that it is indeed subject to direct causal interaction with it. And that is precisely what the answer by reference to ownership [explained in terms of causation]...resolves to under analysis.

Our picture begins to look bleak for immortal souls. What pairs physical objects as proper mates for causal interaction is in general their places in the all-encompassing spatial framework of physical reality. It is their spatial relations that pair the piece of film with the man photographed, and distinguishes him as the cause from the billions of other men in existence including exact look-alikes. One consequence for interactionism is that there can be no interaction between an immaterial soul and a material body. That of course has been the view of so many, since Gassendi to the present, that it is firmly settled as a platitude of introductory philosophy.⁸

In conclusion, Sosa says that causation is a relation between events, but not between events of souls and physical bodies. According to him, the causal relation between the mental and the physical is a supervenient relation between mental and physical events. As a supervenient relation, the causal relation between any two events x and y goes something like this:

The having of property P [where P is, say, mental in nature] by event x ...causes event y to have property Q [where Q is, say, physical in nature]...iff there are [noncausal] properties of x , including P , and noncausal properties of y , and a [noncausal] relation R between x and y , such that it is nomologically necessary that whenever an event has such properties of x and bears relation R to some other event with such properties of y , then that other event also has Q .⁹

Now, I do not believe it is the case that one object is subject to the causal influence of another object *only* in virtue of their noncausal relations to one another and their noncausal properties. On Sosa's view, the causal terms of a causal relation are not able to enter into such a relation in virtue of any causal properties they possess intrinsically or *per se*, but they only acquire their causal properties by first entering into a noncausal relation which is,

say, spatial in nature. Stated differently, all causal properties are possessed extrinsically or in dependence upon the entrance into a noncausal spatial relation. This view is very similar to the more general ontological thesis that substantial objects or entities, including causal agents and affected patients, do not possess their numerical identity intrinsically (they are not intrinsically individuated), but rather they possess their numerical identity in terms of their spatial relations to other subjects (they are extrinsically individuated). On both views, being a spatial relation is the primary ontological category, not the substantial objects and their causal properties which are the terms of the relations.

I believe that Sosa is largely mistaken in his account of causation. Just as a spatial relation is not the individuating principle of the substantial objects which are its terms, but those objects are intrinsically individuated, so also a spatial relation is not the individuating principle of the relevant causal properties possessed by the terms of the causal relation, but these are individuated intrinsically and possessed essentially by their bearers. As I stated at the beginning of this section, a causal relation obtains or is primarily a function of the *causal power* and *liability* of the agent and patient objects, respectively. A causal relation obtains when a substance which possesses causal power exercises that power to produce the actualization of a liability. The power of an agent and the liability of a patient are ontologically irreducible and intrinsic or *per se* causal features of those objects. They are not derivative or supervenient properties. A causal agent has a power to produce an effect and a patient has the liability to be affected by a causal agent before entering into a causal relation. In Sosa's terminology, what 'pairs' the agent and the patient objects in a causal relation is the agent's exercise of its causal power upon the patient, where this exercise of causal power actualizes the respective liability of the patient. Like the causal properties of which it is a function, the causal relation is irreducible.¹⁰

In light of these comments about the nature of causal properties, let us consider Sosa's examples of the physiognomy and film and the board and karate expert. How could these examples be explicated in terms of causal powers and liabilities? With regard to the physiognomy and film, the former has the causal power to imprint its image on the film which has the liability to receive this image. The provision of light can reasonably be understood as the exercise of a causal power by some agent. In the case of the board and karate expert, the board has a causal liability to break which is a function of its thickness and composition. The board's thickness and composition can reasonably be understood as determined by the organization or arrangement of the parts of the board. Each part of the board is immediately spatially related to a contiguous part and has the causal liability to be split apart from its contiguous part. Therefore, the causal liability of the board to be split can

be explained in terms of the liabilities of the parts which compose it to be separated from their respective immediately contiguous parts. The liability to be separated or split apart is identical with the liability to be moved, the liability to be moved being possessed by any body *per se*¹¹. The liability to be moved is properly understood as causal in nature in that it is actualized by a causal power. Thus, a liability to be separated from a contiguous part is actualized by a causal power. If the parts of the board are themselves complex, their liabilities to be split apart (moved) will be further explained in the way that the original board's liability to be broken is explained. Therefore, contrary to Sosa, rather than the thickness and composition of the board being noncausal conditions of the board's splitting upon being hit by someone or something such as the karate expert, they are explicable or analyzable in terms of causal liabilities.

With regard to the speed and force of the karate expert's blow, I believe that these are causal, not noncausal, features of the action. The speed and force of the blow are characteristics of the karate expert's exercising of his power to move. The angle of the blow is a spatial relation between the board and the hand's movement.

Enough has been said about these specific examples. In general, a causal relation obtains when a causal power is exercised and actualizes a liability. This is an irreducible relation which cannot be explained in noncausal terms. But is it, nevertheless, a dependent relation in the sense that it cannot obtain unless some other noncausal relation obtains? After all, Sosa could accept everything I have said about causation up to this point, yet maintain that an agent can only exercise its causal power upon a patient when the two objects are spatially related. In this case, causation would be an irreducible but dependent relation.

I believe the causal relation is dependent in nature. When there are two objects, one with the causal power to affect the other, these two objects must stand in a relation which is such that the patient is 'accessible to' the agent's exercised causal power in the sense that it can be causally affected by it. Were no such accessibility relation to obtain, the agent would exercise its causal power without affecting the patient. However, what is not evident is that this accessibility relation upon which the causal relation depends must be spatial in nature.

It seems false to maintain that standing in a spatial relation is sufficient for standing in a causal relation. While being spatialized imposes the condition that the agent of a causal relation stands in a spatial relation to the patient of that relation, this does not imply, as Sosa suggests, that it is because or in virtue of this spatial relation that the causal agent is causally paired with the affected patient. As I have already explained, they are causally paired in virtue of the agent's exercise of its causal power which is directed upon and

actualizes the patient's liability, and the agent has the power to do this and the patient has the liability to have this done to it (logically, if not temporally) prior to their entering into this spatial relation. Thus, if an agent and patient are in space, they will have to be in a spatial relation with each other when they enter into a causal relation. But their being spatially related is not sufficient for their being causally related. They could exist in the spatial relation without being causally related because the one is not exercising its causal power upon the other.

A spatial relation between two objects is not a sufficient condition of a causal relation obtaining between them. Is it a necessary condition? Not obviously. An important issue here is the existence of a nonspatial object. If such an object can exist, then it is not obvious that it cannot interact causally with an object located in space. If a philosopher such as Descartes has good reason for believing that he is a soul which is nonspatial in nature, and if he also has good reason to believe that a certain physical body is his in virtue of causally interacting with it, then he has good reason to believe that there must be another relation in which he stands to his body, where this relation is distinct from yet makes possible the causal interaction between his soul and body. This is the case, even if he cannot state what this relation is. Moreover, this position is different from that which says "that what makes something subject to direct causal interaction with something else is that it is indeed subject to direct causal interaction with it."¹²

What reason does a dualist have for believing that he is a nonspatial entity? Classically, the reason given is that the self is a simple entity with no separable parts. Because it is simple in this way, it is indivisible and that which is indivisible is nonextended and, thereby, nonspatial.¹³ Moreover, it is important to stress that the dualist's belief about the soul's simplicity is not a philosophical aberration. On the contrary, opponents of dualism recognize that this belief is implicitly held by every ordinary person. Thus, Thomas Nagel maintains that, in concept at least, the identity of the self is apparently strict, perfect, and unanalyzable. The self has an apparent unique simplicity and indivisibility which are seemingly nonnegotiable essential features.¹⁴ Derek Parfit is another philosopher who recognizes that it is natural to believe that the self is a separately existing entity which is both distinct from its brain and body and has a simple and indivisible nature.¹⁵ Given (1) the truth of the 'simple' view of the self and the fact that what is simple is indivisible, nonextended and, thereby, nonspatial and (2) the truth that a soul and its body causally interact, the dualist has strong support for his belief that there must be an accessibility relation between the two which makes their causal interaction possible.

In response, Sosa might claim that no person who has a good reason for believing that he is a nonspatial entity can have an additional good reason

for believing that he causally interacts with a certain physical body, without also having a knowledge of another noncausal relation in which he stands to that body and which makes it causally accessible to him. However, it seems to me that such a claim is no more obvious than the nonobvious claim that a spatial relation is a necessary condition of causal interaction between two entities. Therefore, if a dualist is correctly convinced that his reasons for believing that he is a nonspatial entity and that he causally interacts with a physical body are better than any reasons he is given for believing that there can be no relation between a nonspatial soul and a physical body which makes possible causal interaction between the two, then he will be justified in asserting the possibility of such a relation, even though he does not know what it is.¹⁶

III

Many philosophers will be very uncomfortable with understanding causation as an ultimate and irreducible relation insofar as it makes possible a view such as substance dualism. It makes such a view possible insofar as it grounds the possibility of causal interaction between a physical body and a nonphysical self or soul. As long as the two kinds of entity have the requisite powers and liabilities and the patient's liability is accessible to the agent's exercised causal power, causal interaction between them is possible.

Opponents of substance dualism have often insisted that the irreducible nature of causation, as it relates to the interaction issue, makes the latter a brute relation and, therefore, unintelligible. It is simply incomprehensible how a nonphysical or spiritual entity could causally interact with a physical entity. For example, according to Jaegwon Kim, there is "the sheer impossibility of coherently imagining the details of what might have to be the case if some nonphysical agency is going to affect the course of purely physical events...."¹⁷ Acknowledging some nonphysical agency

would force us to accept a conception of the physical in which to give a causal account of, say, the motion of a physical particle, it is sometimes necessary to go outside the physical system and appeal to some nonphysical agency and invoke some irreducible psychophysical law. Many will find this just not credible.¹⁸

In the end, substance dualist interactionists can only say that the agent and her physical body causally interact, and that is that, period. The interaction is just a brute fact that has to be acknowledged. For many philosophers such as Kim, this is very difficult to accept.

For the moment, let us assume that Kim's difficulty in accepting substance dualism because of the irreducible nature of psychophysical causation on that view is justified and let us also assume, as he does, that the psychological and physical worlds causally influence each other. In Kim's terms, there is

psychophysical causation, but it is not between psychological and physical substances. Now, what are the alternatives to substance dualism? Like Sosa, Kim proposes that we regard the psychological as supervening upon the physical. Psychological causal relations are supervenient causal relations. According to Kim, the supervenience thesis is an expression of the broader metaphysical thesis (what I will term 'physicalism') that the psychological world is the way that it is because the physical world is the way that it is. It is Kim's conviction that the psychological is ultimately and completely dependent on or determined by the physical, and the concept of supervenience is invoked in an attempt to explicate this dependence.

The problem for the supervenience theorist is this. He has charged that the substance dualist's interactionist position is problematic because the substance dualist allegedly cannot coherently say how or in virtue of what it is that a psychological entity causes an effect event in a physical entity (or *vice versa*). All he can say is that it does. The alleged bruteness of this causal relation is supposedly a significant problem for the substance dualist's view of the world. However, *prima facie*, the asserted ultimate and complete dependence of the psychological on the physical in the physicalist's view of the world seems to be no less brute than the bruteness of the causal relation in the substance dualist's world view.

Ultimately, how or why a fundamental physical event causes another physical event may be as much of a mystery as how or why raw feels and perceptual images emerge from the electro-chemical activities going on within the gray matter in our skulls.¹⁹

Thus, if in response to the question 'How, or in virtue of what does the psychological depend on the physical?' the physicalist can say no more than 'It just does,' his view seems to have at its heart just as serious a problem as it is claimed the substance dualist has at the heart of his view. But why, then, jettison substance dualism for physicalism?

Does the concept of supervenience explain to us how the physical determines the psychological? I do not believe that it does. To understand why it does not, consider the following explanation of supervenience by Kim: For families of properties A and B, to say that A supervenes on B is to say that, necessarily, for each object x and each property F in A, if x has F, then there is a property G in B such that x has G and, necessarily, if any y has G, it has F. When properties F and G are related in the specified way, F is supervenient upon G and G is a supervenience base of F. With regard to the question of the psychological supervening on the physical, we can think of the psychological and physical as families of properties and let A be the psychological family of properties and B be the physical family.²⁰

On this account of supervenience, says Kim, it is possible to interpret the first occurrence of 'necessarily' as metaphysical necessity and the second as

nomological; it is also possible to interpret both as metaphysical, or both as nomological.²¹ Moreover, a property in A can have multiple supervenient bases in B. Thus, one object x has F and its supervenience base is G. However, some other object y can have F and not have G but G* as its supervenience base. What is necessarily the case is that when certain properties account for F in one case, any other case in which those properties are exemplified must also be a case in which F is exemplified. In addition, event supervenience can be explained in terms of property supervenience. An event, x's having F, supervenes on the event, x's having G, if and only if x has G and G is a supervenience base for F.²²

With this explanation of supervenience before us, we can now ask: What does the supervenience thesis *explain* about how the psychological world is determined by or dependent on the physical world? Do we know or have we learned anything about *how*, or *in virtue of* what it is that the physical world is primary and completely determines the psychological world? So far as I can determine, we have not learned anything with regard to this issue. We have simply been told that, necessarily, whenever an object has a psychological property F, there is some physical property G on which it depends and, necessarily, anything else which has G will also have F. But having said this, we have not had it explained to us how the psychological world is determined in the way that it is by the physical world. It is one thing to say that all things having the same supervened upon properties must have the same supervenient properties. It is another thing to say that the former *explain* the latter, or that something has the latter *in virtue of* or *because* it has the former. Is not the supervenience theorist merely saying the first thing and no more? It would certainly seem so.²³

Not only does the concept of supervenience not explain anything to us about the alleged dependence of the psychological on the physical, but also it is doubtful that the concept of supervenience captures an essential feature of this alleged dependency. The dependency which Kim claims obtains between the psychological and the physical is an asymmetric relation: the psychological family of properties is dependent upon the physical, but not *vice versa*. Now, if we consider Kim's concept of supervenience, it becomes clear that properties related via supervenience need not be related asymmetrically. For the sake of argument, I will stipulate that the nature of things is such that not only is it true that (i) necessarily, in any world where an entity exemplifies a psychological property F, that entity also exemplifies a physical property G, and, necessarily, if any other object has G, it also has F, but also it is true that (ii) necessarily, in any world where an entity exemplifies a physical property G, that entity also exemplifies a psychological property F, and, necessarily, if any other object exemplifies F, it also exemplifies G. In other words, the psychological and physical families of properties are coextensive.

I will call this view of the nature of things the 'animist view.' Not only does the animist think that whenever there is a psychological property, there must also be a related physical property, but also he believes that whenever there is a physical property there must also be a related psychological property. On the animist's view, not only is every physical object in this world necessarily 'ensouled,' but also any physical object in any world is necessarily ensouled. The animist believes that the following statement by Kim is false: "[A]lthough psychophysical supervenience is an arguable view, it would be manifestly implausible to hold that the physical supervenes on the psychological."²⁴ Perhaps Thales was an animist when he said that all things are full of gods and the magnet has a soul because it moves iron.

Regardless of how one understands Thales, what is clear is that given the animist's view and Kim's definition of supervenience, not only would it be true to say that the psychological supervenes on the physical, but also it would be true to say that the physical supervenes on the psychological. In order to convert the animist's view into the physicalist's view, the physicalist would have to add the further condition that the physical determines the psychological or the latter is in some way asymmetrically dependent upon the former. But were he to say this, it would indicate that, in the end, an asymmetric dependence relation must be used to explicate physicalism and this dependence cannot itself be understood in terms of supervenience.²⁵

I am not advocating the animist's view. Rather, I am making reference to it to illustrate a case where supervenience is present, but symmetry is as well. So supervenience does not guarantee asymmetry. Hence, insofar as asymmetry is needed for dependence, supervenience does not guarantee dependence either. Kim might respond that all my argument demonstrates is that dependence is present only in those cases where the properties are in fact related asymmetrically via supervenience. But this is not adequate because an animist might want to endorse physicalism, i.e., he might want to say that, though the physical and psychological families of properties are coextensive, it is the physical which determines the psychological. Surely such an animist position makes sense. But it would not make sense on the suggested response by Kim. Thus, Kim seems to have no way to get dependence out of supervenience alone.

In the end, the dependency of the psychological on the physical in the physicalist's view is ultimate and irreducible. Moreover, if the ultimate and irreducible nature of the causal relation between the psychological and the physical is a fatal flaw in the dualist's view, the ultimate and irreducible nature of the dependence relation between the psychological and the physical is equally fatal for the physicalist's view. To say that the ultimate nature of the relation between the psychological and the physical is not as fatal for the physicalist as it is for the dualist would imply that such an ultimacy in the

former's dependence relation is more intelligible than such an ultimacy in the latter's causal relation. But I am not aware of any reason for saying this that is supported by an examination of the natures of the relations themselves. Indeed, I believe that the ultimate nature of the causal relation in the dualist's view is more intelligible than the ultimate nature of the dependency relation in the physicalist's understanding of things. What is characteristic of both relations is that they are asymmetric in nature. But the dualist can say more about this asymmetry than the physicalist can. For the dualist, the causal relation is asymmetric because the causal entity (whether a soul or a physical entity) exercises its causal power to produce an effect event in the patient entity. It is the exercise of causal power which accounts for the asymmetry and makes the effect's occurrence dependent in nature. Unlike the dualist, the physicalist can only say that the psychological is dependent upon the physical, and that is the end of the matter. If either view involves a relation characterized by bruteness, it is the physicalist's view and not the dualist's.

In the end, it is only the physicalist's prior assent to the broader metaphysical thesis that the psychological world is the way that it is because the physical world is the way that it is that supports his belief in the superiority of the dependence relation between the psychological and the physical over the dualist's causal dependence relation. How plausible, then, is this broader metaphysical thesis? I do not believe that it is plausible at all. Indeed, I believe that it is inherently implausible. The implausibility of the physicalist position becomes clear when one discovers that, on the physicalist view, psychological events have no genuine explanatory role to play in the world. I quote Kim at some length on the explanatory role of the psychological:

The delicate task is to find an account that will give the mental a substantial enough causal role to let us avoid "the great paradox of epiphenomenalism" without infringing upon the closedness of physical causal systems. I suggest that we view psychological causal relations—in fact, all causal relations involving psychological events—as epiphenomenal supervenient causal relations. More specifically, when a mental event *M* causes a physical event *P*, this is so because *M* is supervenient upon a physical event, *P**, and *P** causes *P*. This latter may itself be a supervenient causal relation, but that is no matter: what is important is that, at some point, purely physical causal processes take over. Similarly, when mental event *M* causes another mental event *M**, this is so because *M* supervenes on a physical state *P*, and similarly *M** and *P**, and *P* causes *P**.

Thus, if a pain causes the sensation of fear an instant later, this account tells the following story: the pain is supervenient on a brain state, this brain state causes another appropriate brain state, and given this second brain state, the fear sensation must occur, for it is supervenient upon that brain state....

Does this proposal satisfy the desiderata we set for an adequate account of psychophysical causation? It would be foolish to pretend that the proposed account accords to the mental the full causal potency we accord to funda-

mental physical processes.... Mental causation does take place; it is only that it is epiphenomenal causation, that is, a causal relation that is reducible to, or explainable by, the causal processes taking place at a more basic physical level.²⁶

Kim says that the supervenience theorist's account of psychophysical causation does not accord to the mental the full causal potency accorded to fundamental physical processes. Mental causation does take place, but it is reducible to causal processes taking place at a more basic physical level. As far as I can ascertain, Kim's account accords *no* real explanatory role to the psychological at all. His description of all causal relations involving psychological events as 'epiphenomenal' supervenient causal relations accurately indicates the lack of any explanatory role for the psychological. If any so-called psychophysical causation only occurs because the 'causal' psychological event is supervenient upon a causal physical event, it is difficult to understand how the psychological event is any more than an idle by-product of the physical system. Indeed, to ascribe any causal influence to the psychological event is to do so in name only. The fact that the psychological event supervenes on the causally efficacious physical event is not sufficient to make it true to say that the psychological event caused the effect. The psychological event played no part in bringing about the effect because, had the psychological event been absent, no difference in the course of events would have resulted. The psychological is no more than an epiphenomenon.

In accord with his explication of supervenience, Kim will maintain that the psychological event could not have been absent and the same physical event have occurred. To this extent, the psychological has some causal role to play. But this is no genuine causal role and if we ask why the psychological event could not have been absent and the same physical event have occurred, there seems to be no other answer than that this is just the way the world is on the physicalist's broad metaphysical conception of things. The psychological just rides piggyback on the physical, period.

Kim himself is not entirely convinced by his account of the relation between the physical and psychological in terms of supervenience. He also senses that his account leaves no genuine explanatory role for the psychological.²⁷ Thus, he says it seems that the only way to preserve a genuine explanatory role for the psychological, other than advocating substance dualism, is to adopt the position that psychological properties (and, thus, psychological events, for Kim regards an event as the exemplification of a property by an object at a time) are identical with the physical properties with which they are nomologically correlated. However, he recognizes that there are strong intuitions which suggest that the identity thesis is false.²⁸ Following Descartes, Saul Kripke has convincingly argued that there is the strong intuition that a psychological property (or event) is essentially what it is and what

it is not any kind of physical property. Any correlation between a psychological property and a physical property has an obvious element of contingency about it. There is nothing incoherent in the supposition that one could be exemplified without the latter. Given the plausible assumption that any 'two' things that are identical are necessarily so, it follows that no psychological property is identical with a physical property.²⁹

My uneasiness with Kim's physicalism arises out of my commitment to the view that, on at least some occasions, psychological processes are fundamental and physical processes are secondary. As an advocate of an agency theory which accords a noncausal yet full explanatory role to psychological reasons for acting, I believe that Kim's understanding of the psychological as epiphenomenal in nature is totally inadequate.³⁰ On the occasions when human souls act, what happens in the physical world is, in Kim's terms, completely and ultimately dependent upon what happens in the psychological world. Thus, a choice, being a free and uncaused psychological event, does not occur because it supervenes on a physical correlate. Rather, any physical correlate of the choice occurs because the choice occurs, and any events caused by that physical correlate occur only because the choice occurs.

IV

I conclude that there is no good reason for rejecting substance dualism on the basis of a supposed unintelligibility of the causal relation between the psychological and physical. There may be other problems with dualism, but this is not one of them. While the causal relation between the psychological and the physical is ultimate and irreducible, this is not a good reason for rejecting the view that the two causally interact. Those who employ the concept of supervenience to explicate the relation between the psychological and the physical also make use of an ultimate and irreducible dependency relation. There is nothing in the nature of this dependency relation which recommends it over the causal relation of the dualist. In fact, the nature of the dualist's causal relation recommends it over the physicalist's dependency relation. Moreover, when one reflects upon what explanatory role the psychological has in the physicalist's view of the world, one begins to realize that the dualist view of the world is not all that implausible. And this is good news for those who also have certain religious beliefs about the soul and life after death.³¹

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NOTES

1. James W. Cornman and Keith Lehrer, *Philosophical Problems and Arguments: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 238-39.

2. I purposefully say 'a Cartesian substance dualist view.' The view to be discussed in this paper is that a self or soul is a nonspatial entity that causally interacts with a spatial physical body. This was Descartes' view and it is widely shared by other dualists. However, I believe it is possible to argue that a self or soul has spatial location and is spatially related to its physical body. This is a different substance dualist view of the self. Which view is more plausible is, in part, a function of what reasons a substance dualist has to think that he is or is not a spatial entity. Throughout the rest of this paper, I regard the Cartesian view as the substance dualist or, for short, dualist view of the self or soul.

3. See Hume's *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Section VII, pp. 60-79; and *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Book I, Section xiv, pp. 155-72. I believe that Hume was right to say that, as patients, we experience the exercise of causal power in our mental lives, but he could have gone on to point out that, as patients, we also experience the exercise of causal power in our bodily lives.

4. On the dualist view, the action I perform which causes my body to move is the act of willing or exercising my power of volition. Descartes held this view (cf. "Letter to Arnauld," 29 July 1648, p. 235 in *Descartes: Philosophical Letters*, trans. and ed. Anthony Kenny [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970] as does John Foster in his recent book, *The Immaterial Self: A Defense of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 264.

5. The dualist says 'directly cause' to make clear that an entity such as a chair is not part of an agent's body because he causes it to move. The chair is not part of the agent's body because its movements are only indirectly caused by him—he causes it to move by directly causing movement in his body.

6. In this paper, I consider an interactionist dualist account of the soul-body relation. This is for the sake of simplicity. Even on an occasionalist dualist view, where a human soul and its physical body do not causally interact, some other soul (e.g., God) causally interacts with physical entities. Thus, even an occasionalist must deal with the charge that causal interaction is problematic on a dualist view.

7. Ernest Sosa, "Mind-Body Interaction and Supervenient Causation," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, volume ix, edited by Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr. and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 273.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75, 278.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

10. Someone might argue that it is implausible to maintain that a causal power is an essential property of its bearer. For example, while I have the causal power to raise my arm, it is unreasonable to think that it is an essential property of mine. I could lose this property and still be me.

A brief comment is in order. As I pointed out in endnote 4, the dualist maintains that an agent has the power to will movements in his physical body. Strictly speaking, an agent does not have the causal power to raise his arm. Rather, he has the causal power to will, where this power can be exercised by the agent with the result that his arm rises. An agent which can no longer raise his arm has not lost his power to will. Such a power is essential to him. What has happened is that for some reason or other (e.g., a physiological problem), the appropriate act of will does not produce the effect of the arm's rising.

11. Consider the following objection: 'The claim that the liability to be split apart is identical to the liability to be moved is implausible. The former seems to require that, say, electron bonds be overcome, while the latter only requires overcoming gravity.'

I believe this 'objection' is actually a good illustration of my view. When electrons are split apart, an exercised causal power is introduced which overcomes their bond and, in virtue of their liability to be moved, they are moved apart spatially. Similarly, when an entity is moved in opposition to the power of gravity, an exercised causal power is introduced which overcomes the power of gravity and the entity is moved in light of its liability to be moved. Moreover, the thickness and composition of an entity which can be split apart is reasonably understood in terms of the spatial relations among its proper parts, where these spatial relations hold among these parts in virtue of the bonds between them.

12. Sosa, "Mind-Body Interaction and Supervenient Causation," pp. 274-75.

13. Cf. Descartes' *Meditations* I, II, and VI.

14. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 33, 43.

15. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 273, 472, 473.

16. Consider the following three propositions:

(1) Two entities can be causally related only if they are spatially related.

(2) A soul is a nonspatial entity.

(3) A soul cannot be causally related to a physical body.

Sosa might argue that (1) and (2) entail (3). In response, the dualist can employ the 'G. E. Moore Shift' and argue that $\sim(3)$ and (2) entail $\sim(1)$. Sosa might claim that the dualist cannot reasonably assert $\sim(3)$ without being able to specify the / or a noncausal relation between a soul and a physical body which makes causal interaction between the two possible. The dualist will deny this claim.

17. Jaegwon Kim, "Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, volume ix, edited by Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr. and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 266.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Jaegwon Kim, "Causality, Identity, and Supervenience in the Mind-Body Problem," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, volume iv, edited by Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr. and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), p. 32.

20. Kim, "Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation," p. 262.

21. Jaegwon Kim, "Concepts of Supervenience," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 45 (1984), pp. 165-66.

22. Kim, "Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation," p. 262.

23. Thomas Flint has reminded me that my point here is not entirely novel. Locke's comments (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, Chapter III, Sections 12-13) on the lack of any 'discoverable connection' between primary and secondary qualities are akin to my remarks on the bruteness of the physicalist's physical-psychological dependence relation.

24. Kim, "Concepts of Supervenience," p. 166.
25. Michael DePaul makes a similar point about the alleged supervenience of moral properties in his article "Supervenience and Moral Dependence," *Philosophical Studies* 51 (1985), pp. 425-39.
26. Kim, "Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation," pp. 267-68.
27. Jaegwon Kim, "The Myth of Nonreductive Materialism," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 63 (1989), p. 46.
28. Kim, "Causality, Identity, and Supervenience in the Mind-Body Problem," p. 40.
29. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980).
30. See my "A Noncausal Theory of Agency," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1988), pp. 303-16.
31. I want to thank Thomas Flint for reading an earlier draft of this paper and a referee for helping me to clarify some points.