

Consciousness #2



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017



UNIVERSITY OF
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newdirectionsproject.com

Seminar 2

1. Recap: physicalism, materialism & naturalism

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2. Reductionism

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2. Reductionism
3. Emergence

Physicalism and materialism

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- Everything is determined by the physical
- There are non-physical things but they are entirely fixed by fixing the physical things

What would God have to do to create *this* world?



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- See also Stephan Leuenberger, 'Ceteris Absentibus Physicalism' *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 2008

Supervenience and necessity

- Supervenience says that the physical necessitates everything else (including the mental) but the supervenience thesis is not a necessary truth
- Compare determinism: the past and the laws necessitate the future, but other futures than the actual one are possible

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- The problem of irrelevant physical differences



Irrelevant physical differences

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Irrelevant physical differences

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- Jaegwon Kim's 'Strong supervenience': A family of properties A supervenes on a family B iff:

Necessarily, if anything has property F in A, then there is some property G in B such that the thing has G, and necessarily whatever has G has F

A further problem with supervenience:
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A further problem with supervenience: mere correlation

- Supervenience of properties is compatible with a dualistic parallelism or 'pre-established harmony'
- The mental properties could be wholly distinct from anything physical

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- What should the connection be?

Supervenience + ... Conceptual analysis

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- Jackson: conceptual analysis of the supervenient concepts
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- Necessitation is explained by entailment

Example

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This plus our knowledge of physics and chemistry gives us:

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- *Not:* we know physicalism is true *a priori*

Key texts

- David Chalmers and Frank Jackson, 'Conceptual Analysis and Reductive Explanation' *Philosophical Review* 2001
- Ned Block and Robert Stalnaker, 'Conceptual Analysis, Dualism and the Explanatory Gap' *Philosophical Review* 1999

Supervenience + other proposals

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- Identity of properties

Supervenience + other proposals

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- Some stronger metaphysical relation between properties: 'constitution', 'realisation' etc.

Reduction

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- **Ontological reduction - the ‘reduction’ of entities**
- **Explanatory reduction - the ‘reduction’ of theories**

Ontological reduction

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- What is the relation between reduction and identity?
- An ontological reduction “identifies the entities of one domain with a subclass of entities of another”
Huw Price ‘Ramsey, Reference and Reductionism’
- The mental ‘reduces to the physical’

Explanatory reduction

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- NB relation to 'grounding'

Emergence

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- What is emergence?

Emergence

- Some say (e.g. Kim) emergence is just supervenience
- But then what is the difference between emergence and 'non-reductive' physicalism?

Strong and weak emergence

- Weak emergence: novelty with an explanation
- Strong emergence: novelty without an explanation