

Kim and the Pairing Problem for Dualism

In Defense of a Thomistic Dualist Substance Ontology of Agent Causation

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ABSTRACT Jaegwon Kim's pairing problem argument asserts that causal intersections require two pairing entities. Mental properties of souls being distinct are causally irrelevant since they are not reducible to physical properties. Because souls are non-spatial physical entities, they do not enter into paired causal relations. Thus, souls or irreducible mental causal interaction, is false. The author assesses and argues against Kim's pairing problem for substance dualism. Kim assumes that reality is fundamentally a physical one. Thus, the metaphysics of persons and causality is a strict physical one. The author argues from a Thomistic dualists view and a powers ontology perspective to show that agentic causality is fundamental. Lastly, physicalists have not given an adequate account of various mental states and its properties such as knowledge, phenomenal properties and free will which are subjective in nature and therefore known by the first-person point of view. Since physicalism fails to give an adequate account of the nature of consciousness and its possessor, it follows that physicalism is false. Since physicalism is false, Kim's argument against substance dualism is also false. The paper concludes that one is justified in holding to substance dualism and the coherence of mental causation.

KEYWORDS agent causation; Consciousness; free will; Kim, Jaegwon; pairing problem; physicalism; powers ontology; substance dualism

I. INTRODUCTION

The philosophical history of the metaphysics of mind can be narrowed down to two problems: mind-body causation and issues pertaining to the self or persons. Due to the rise of the scientific revolution, the nature of mental states and their possessors has been reduced to a matter of the brain and its cognitive functioning, eliminating accounts that seek instead to appeal to the soul as an ontologically basic substance. At the same time, the problem of mental causation has led to another line of criticism of soul-based accounts of identity or substance dualism. In his contribution to *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, Jaegwon Kim (2018)¹ argues against the intelligibility of Cartesian dualism, and further extends that argument to any form of substance dualism by raising the question of mental causation, or the traditional mind-body problem. His main line of attack primarily concerns the essence of mind and the causal closure of the physical, which taken together furnish an argument against the non-physical view of persons. The question “Can mental events cause physical events?” constitutes a problem for the dualist, which he calls “the pairing problem.” Since causation requires a spatiotemporal relation between two bodies, and mind and body are distinct substances or properties, there can be no cause-and-effect pairing relation between minds and physical objects or bodies. Thus, according to Kim, the essence of an immaterial thinking substance, such as a soul, is unintelligible and should be rejected, as it fails to resolve the pairing problem. However, he misconstrues substance-dualist views concerning the independent ontological status of a substantial self or soul. Furthermore, his challenge does not consider the sort of ontology of causal powers in which free, agentively causal subjects count as primitive. By contrast, I intend to argue that the soul, though embodied, is a non-material primitive substance whose basic faculties exemplify mental properties. One of the faculties of the soul is the instantiation of active agency. Moreover, the postulation of God’s existence, and with this His possession of an internal metaphysical structure and powers, provides grounds for affirming the existence of a soul with its own unified metaphysical structure, in which the dispositional properties of consciousness are located and exemplified. I conclude that mental causation is a coherent notion after all, especially given the active powers of agent causation

1. In earlier books and articles, we see him already discussing mental causation and mind-brain supervenience, arguing against dualist mind-body interaction in his 1996 Berkeley lectures published as *Mind in a Physical World: An Essay on the Mind-Body Problem and Mental Causation* (1998), as well as in *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough* (2005).

supported by substance dualism. Thus, Kim's problem of mental causation becomes no problem at all.

II. THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

What makes Cartesian Dualism different from other forms of mind-body dualism is its positing of causal interaction between the two substances (as opposed to Leibnizian pre-established harmony, or Spinoza's pantheism). In his article, Kim proceeds by first putting forward arguments for why minds and bodies are distinct (Kim 2018, 154). These are the argument from indubitability and subjectivity, and the argument from the essence of a thinking self.

The first of these asserts that you can exist independently, because it is conceivable that you exist without your body. You cannot deny that you exist, because in doing so you are affirming your existence. Given that you exist, what sort of thing are you? Something material, or something immaterial? The dualist answers by saying that if we were essentially a material substance like our bodies, then the subjective nature of mind, and the introspective nature of our own mental contents, would not be possible. I experience my own consciousness: there is a subjective aspect to being conscious. The materialist, by contrast, has a problem when it comes to giving an ontological account of subjective mental states of awareness.

The second argument for dualism is that which the Cartesian dualist invokes to arrive at their account of the essential nature of the self as a thinking substance:

My essential nature is thinking, and it does not include being a spatially extended thing.

For I can conceive of myself as a disembodied thing.

My body's essential nature is being an extended thing in space.

Therefore, I am not my body.

Since I am a thinking thing, the thinking thing that I am is not a body.

Generalizing, no thinking thing is a body. (Kim 2018, 156)

The problem facing Cartesian Dualism is visible in the assertion of the first premise of the first argument from essence: that the essential nature of a thinking substance is not characterized by spatial extension, so the essential self cannot be material, as this would require it to be spatiotemporal. Kim challenges this argument from essence by attacking the first premise: if an immaterial thinking substance is not spatiotemporal, how can it have causal interaction with the body? The dualist must either concede

that the essential self is a material substance or accept epiphenomenalism. Descartes, in his Sixth Meditation, seeks to show how mental causation works by positing the location of “the seat of the soul”—which, as he writes in his *The Passions of the Soul*, corresponds to the pineal gland as the locus of “direct mind-body interaction” (Kim 2018, 157). The gland is directed by the soul, which moves bodily fluids (described as “animal spirits”) responsible for causal interaction between the mind and physical bodies. Nevertheless, a problem arises with Descartes’ analysis of mental-to-physical causation, and Kim seeks to show this by referring to the French thinker’s epistolary correspondence with one of his pupils, Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, who challenges him to explain how there could be a flow of transferred energy of the sort necessary for change to the momentum of objects to occur, if the mind and body are fundamentally separate and distinct entities (with one possessing the essence of a spatially extended material thing, the other that of an immaterial thinking substance outside of space). Descartes fails to give a satisfactory answer where mind-to-body causal interaction is concerned, so Princess Elizabeth is left to conclude that materialism represents a more plausible account of the mind than the story of causal interaction between agents and their bodies put forward by her mentor, Descartes. Today, some philosophers and neuroscientists seek to resolve the mind-body problem by postulating the reducibility of the mind to a biological, neuronal base in the form of the brain. As Patricia Churchland has argued, “the capacities of the human mind are in fact capacities of the human brain ... I am convinced that the right strategy for understanding psychological capacities is essentially reductionist” (Churchland 1994, 23). However, the mind cannot be reduced to a non-conscious biological base of neural correlates, because relative to the latter it is ontologically superordinate—as I hope to show in the present paper.

III. KIM’S PAIRING-PROBLEM ARGUMENT

What is at issue for the Cartesian, as well as for other dualists, is mental causation that is supposed to occur between fundamentally different substances—one material, the other immaterial. Kim holds this to be a serious problem for the dualist interactionist, as causation requires a spatiotemporal relation between two bodies. There can be no cause-and-effect pairing relation between minds and physical objects, because the essence of material bodies is that they are extended in space, whereas the essence of the mind lies in its character as a thinking subject. He shows this by means of his “two-gunshot” example. Two guns are fired, producing gunshot A and gunshot B. The result is the killing of persons X and Y. A causes the death

of X, while B, fired in the vicinity of A, causes the death of Y, and not X. Why is B not the cause of X's death? Because there is no "pairing of the right cause with the right effect?" (Kim 2018, 160) The power of the gunshot example is that it shows that one can trace a causal chain back to physical causes, because individual physical objects are individuated in terms of their spatial location. One cannot do this with mental phenomena. Since, according to the Cartesian dualist, minds and bodies are fundamentally distinct kinds of entities (material and the immaterial)—in that this, precisely, is the Cartesian doctrine—there cannot be a causal pairing between these two substances. Because there is no spatiotemporal relation, there cannot be any causal connection. Thus, according to Kim, the essence of an immaterial thinking substance or soul is unintelligible, and such an idea should be rejected as it fails to resolve the pairing problem.

Kim argues forcefully for the causal inadequacy of mental phenomena. Even so, I do not think his pairing-problem argument against substance dualism is successful. The physicalist still has not given a successful account of the subjective nature of consciousness. I wish to argue, further, that the intrinsic nature of conscious mental states is irreducibly located in a substantial self. Before doing so, however, let us first just remind ourselves of his initial argument, to the effect that the soul has no spatial location:

If my soul, as a geometric point, is in my body, it must be either in the top half of my body or its bottom half. If it's in the top half, it must be either in its left or right half, and so on, and we should be able to corner the soul into as small and specific a region of my body as we like. And why should we locate all my soul in my body to begin with? Why can't we locate all the souls of this world in one tiny place, say this pencil holder on my desk, like the many thousand angels dancing on the head of a pin? It would beg the question to locate my soul where my body or brain is, on the ground that my soul and my body are in direct causal interaction with each other; the reason is that the possibility of such interaction is what is at issue, and we are considering the localizability of souls in order to make mind-body causation possible. (Kim 2005, 89)

IV. THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF THE SUBSTANTIAL SELF

The subject to which "I" refers, a substantial, unified self or soul, is a non-physical existent reality. There is an immaterial experiencer known as the subject. This is what makes intentional consciousness possible. The phenomenal object that occurs in the form of the self is a property of consciousness. If, on the other hand, I was essentially my physical brain, it

would not make sense to say that a physical object possesses the property of a conscious intentional experience. Why is this? Because the capacity of minds to exemplify mental properties is grounded in, or uniquely possessed by, a subject. Exemplified properties belong to substances, of which I am one, being essentially a substantive self or soul. Thus, if thinking entails abstraction, and matter cannot actualize this type of conscious capacity, then it follows that abstract thinking is not possible given a physicalist ontology, as matter is always divisible and analyzable in terms of third-person descriptions. Furthermore, the ability to introspect and have awareness of intentional properties is not a function of the brain. If it were, there would be too many thinkers: both a mentally introspective and a brain-based physically introspective one, whereas there cannot be two bodies in one place. However, if the brain were the sole introspecting entity, we would have this problem of two substances, a mind and a brain, each introspecting, which is not possible as (1) abstract thought is an essential feature of the mind, and thus not fundamentally physical, and (2) there cannot be two entities introspecting in a single subject—the brain, after all, does not exhibit self-awareness with regard to its own neural functionality. Rather, the person, a soul intrinsically constituted with a brain, has awareness of its own thoughts, experiences and sensations, as the possessor of such conscious properties and thus of their own mental life. Since the brain cannot have awareness of its own sentience, it follows that something else must have such awareness, and this—I would submit—is the substantive, irreducible soul that makes me, me.

Pursuing my point further, since the subject has an inner private world of phenomenal and intentional mental concepts that are not publicly verifiable, consciousness must be something qualitatively different from the material realm. The phenomenal properties of consciousness are immediately and directly known to the self. The possession of a mental image need not involve a direct causal relation with an object: I can have grounded knowledge of something thanks to an intuitive awareness of it, as with our awareness of abstract objects such as universals, the rules of logic (through which we can arrive at conclusions logically entailed by premises), or the principles of mathematics. So, then, inferences or steps of logical reasoning take place within the conscious awareness of a self. Physicalism, on the other hand, cannot account for the conscious, unified, enduring self. The dualist, meanwhile, can easily respond by adopting the Thomistic approach to personhood, asserting that there is, after all, an ontologically basic substance—namely, the soul or self—that is a primitive entity not composed of parts, nor spatially extended as material kinds are,

but nevertheless forming or animating the body in such a way that the idea of its being moved causally by the volitional activity or goal-directed actions of an agent will count as an empirical explanation.

Kim argues that the non-spatiality of the soul or the mind constitutes a problem for dualism. As he puts it:

All these difficulties with the pairing problem arise because of the radically nonspatial nature of minds in traditional substance dualism. Not only are minds supposed to lack spatial properties but also not to be in space at all. (Kim 2018, 162)

Aristotelian-Thomistic dualism has a response to this: namely, hylomorphic dualism. Aquinas (1225–1274), let us remind ourselves, was a scholastic philosophical theologian who did not see reason as opposed to Christian faith:

Now although the truth of the Christian ... surpasses the capacity of reason, nevertheless, the truth that the human reason is naturally endowed to know cannot be opposed to the truth of the Christian faith. For that with which the human reason is naturally endowed is clearly most true; so much so, that it is impossible for us to think of such truths as false. Nor is it permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith, since this is confirmed in a way that is so clearly divine. Since, therefore, only the false is opposed to the true, as is clearly evident from an examination of their definitions, it is impossible that the truth of faith should be opposed to those principles that the human reason knows naturally. (*Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 7)²

I agree with Aquinas that there are things that we come to know naturally, or introspectively, via the use of the soul's rational capacity. Through a priori reflection, I come to know of facts about me that are metaphysically important, such as the intrinsic nature of the soul as an entity that lends itself to exemplifying mental properties, holistically unifying such properties, and exhibiting an enduring and irreducible first-person point of view as an enduring mental continuant. The soul is that substance which is essentially characterized by the actual and dispositional properties of

2. Further on Aquinas says: "Now, the knowledge of the principles that are known to us naturally have been implanted in us by God; for God is the author of our nature. These principles, therefore, are also contained by the divine wisdom. Hence, whatever is opposed to them is opposed to the divine wisdom, and, therefore, cannot come from God. That which we hold by faith as divinely revealed, therefore, cannot be contrary to our natural knowledge" (*SCGI*, 7).

consciousness. Regarding its relation to the body, it is the individuated essence that makes the body a human body, and the vital force or principle that occupies and animates the latter. As regards Aristotelian-Thomistic dualism, we find an important distinction articulated in the form of its hylomorphic structure.

Where the soul and its hollenmeric character (in the sense of its being fully present within its container or body) are concerned, it is neither measured, quantified, nor divisible. A soul is individuated. What we mean by this is that the soul is an individual entity (each one of us has a soul³), and the soul that we each *are* remains the same over time, through change. Because of this fact, the soul is individuated, and cannot be divided or show up in percentages as physically divisible aggregated parts do. Given this analysis, the soul is a substantial reality. The medieval conception of the nature of persons holds that the soul is the prime mover and agent intellect of the body. Aquinas believed that the soul is that which gives life to the body. The medieval Cistercian, Bernard of Clairvaux, asserted this when he wrote that “the life of the body is the soul, by which it moves and feels” (Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones Per Annum Pasc* 2.1) Thus Bernard, like Aquinas, has a dualistic doctrine of body and soul, but also a particular view on this, taking it to be hylomorphic according to the model of Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas’ conception of human personhood as consisting of a soul, meanwhile, is more that of a vital force. He believes that we have a material body, and that the soul is distinct from that, but also that the soul is “the first principle of life in living beings. The soul is whatever makes the difference between animate and inanimate objects” (Kenny 2000, 129). He argues that the human soul is non-material and subsistent (Kenny 2000, 131).

Since the soul contains consciousness and its various mental properties and powers, and metaphysical analysis shows that the proper ontology of states and powers is not one that takes them to be physical entities, it follows that the soul and its conscious mental properties and powers cannot be physical as the body is. Kim has misunderstood the dualist view of the self, person, or soul. The mind is not spatially extended, but it does have a deep and complex internal structure, even though no aspect of the latter requires its bearer to be extended in space. J.P. Moreland explicates this metaphysical spatial extension of the relation that is the soul’s being “in” the body as follows:

3. More specifically, each human existent entity or substance is a soul.

Regarding the way the soul is in the body and vice versa, the soul is “in” the body as the individuated essence that stands under, informs, animates, develops and unifies all the body’s parts and functions and makes the body human. And the body is “in” the soul in that the body is a spatially extended set of internally related heterogeneous parts that is an external expression of the soul’s “exigency” for a body, that is, of the non-extended law (structural set of capacities) for forming a body to realize certain functions latent within the soul itself ... Now the individual soul is constituted by a human essence and consists in a very complicated and hierarchically ordered internal structure of capacities. As the organism is nourished, the soul develops the body as a physically extended structure of parts, which are internally related to each other and to the soul’s essence and through which the various biological functions of the human organism (respiration, digestion and so on) can be realized. (Moreland and Rae 2000, 205–6)

V. AN ONTOLOGY OF AGENTIVE CAUSAL POWERS

The gun example deployed by Kim in the context of his causal argument involving the pairing problem makes use of an intuitive notion: that the firing of the gun is only possible thanks to some volitional activity, i.e., a subjective agent. It does not matter if the gun is a .22 or a double-barreled shotgun, the weapon is not going to load itself! While Kim tries to show that the gunshot event has a physical cause that can be traced to a prior and sufficient spatiotemporal cause (Kim 2018, 160), it does not follow that there are no immaterial causal agents having the property that is freedom—and therefore no self-determining causal acts. There is, after all, something that is *what it feels like* to have a volition, or will an effect, as an agent. Actions are a special kind of causal process: behind causal agency and powers there always stands a self or agent. This will involve the person’s exhibiting genuine freedom of the will.

Mental causation is possible because of a subject’s volitional activity, which is prior to the exercising of such bodily activity as the raising of one’s arm. This volitional activity also works in conjunction with the body to bring about a state of affairs like a physical event. We have good intuitive reasons to believe that a causal agent’s mental activity in willing a causal act is not something physical or spatially extended, and yet we indubitably see and feel the immediacy of connection between such mental activity and the teleological end manifested in some material event or other, such as the raising of one’s arm. Hence, the dualist is justified in holding to their belief in mind-to-body interaction and vice versa, in that we have our own experiences of what it feels like to be initiators of agentive causal powers, from

which we know intuitively that we are dealing with not a material but an immaterial event. The reason for my choosing to raise my arm when I do, and for the next person's doing likewise or refraining from doing so, is not to be found in physical determinism: rather, it reflects the fact that each of us is the possessor of a unified consciousness, and our own causal initiator.

The physicalist, however, will argue that physical brain events cause the raising of my arm. The problem with such an appeal to causal determinism can be captured by considering a gathering of philosophers in a room at a metaphysics conference. We each have different thoughts about philosophical subjects, have our own take or unique way to present a paper (whether for or against something), and thus each have our own beliefs and desires—for instance, a simple desire, such as to raise our arms by choice. Do these occur uncontrollably, via the firing of random brain events, or are they exercised by our choosing to act? Yet a strict physicalist view of the desire, and thus of its outcome, takes it to be the result of determined brain events. If I simply were my physical body, I am not sure how it would be possible for me to have the desire to raise my arm, and freely do so, since, according to the determinist conception of strict physicalism all material bodies are subject to the laws of nature. Indeed, neither could I know that it is a case of *my* personally willing that my arm be raised. What is there to decide that it was I, as an individual subject, who intentionally raised my arm? For the dualist, on the other hand, it is the self, a primitive or basic entity, that chooses to instantiate causal activity (as a mental or immaterial event) in conjunction with the body, to carry out a physical activity like the raising of one's arm (a material event).

Given the experiential nature of persons as causal agents, mental causation, as a nonphysical event, is therefore by no means incoherent. Those adhering to substance-dualist views about interaction are quite within their epistemic rights to do so. The essence of material bodies is that they are extended in space, whereas the essence of the mind is a thinking subject. The mind is not spatially extended, but it does have a complex structure—one which does not require its possessor to be extended in space. Consciousness, and the bearers of faculties and causal powers, are not spatially extended, but do have a location within the immaterial substance of the soul. There is, after all, something that is *what it is like* to be a conscious subject.

Awareness of agentive causal activity is possible, and it is immediate, given the essential nature of the first-personal point of view of a unifying consciousness. At the same time, the primitive substance of a unified consciousness poses a problem for materialism. The strict physicalist denies that *a priori* knowledge constitutes a credible source of information, as it

conflicts with the possibility of giving a description from the third-person standpoint. Consider a red wooden block: there is the physical object, rich in color and having texture and shape, and one can pick it up, rotate it to investigate its rear side, and so on. But there is another adequate yet distinct kind of knowledge that one becomes duly aware of here, too: this is knowledge of what it is like to perceive redness, to experience in tactile terms a rough or a smooth surface, etc.—where all such qualities internal to experience take place within the conscious self. Reporting of my own mental content can only be accomplished by a conscious subject capable of having introspective awareness of mental properties that are in essence subjective and immaterial. I do not experience these inner states as a third-person-accessible object. I do not have to causally interact with any object to know them. Instead, I am the holder of epistemic authority with respect to my own self, both as experiencer of my reality and as causal first-mover.

VI. MORE ARGUMENTS AGAINST PHYSICALISM

My intention here is not to take issue with physicalism on the grounds that it postulates that there is no such thing as consciousness. Rather, I am concerned to show that the physicalist, in adopting a supervenience-based view of emergence according to which consciousness is created by the complexity of matter, embraces a position that is untenable as it ultimately can only lead in one direction: namely, to the thesis of its reducibility to its physical base. I shall now offer some additional arguments in favor of dualism that speak against physicalism: these appeal to the priority of the irreducible and intrinsic first-person point of view, and to the reality of freedom of the will as conceived in libertarian terms. I shall afterwards deal with certain counterarguments involving notions of emergence and panpsychism.

a) Problems for Physicalism I: The Subjective Priority of the First-Personal Point of View.

Physicalists argue that instances of having a phenomenal experience such as pain refer to nothing more than a linguistically articulated concept of the subject's "quasi-experience," where this is ultimately grounded in a physical property. The idea is that these putative states are realized functionally by the brain to produce phenomenal pains, and so on, but there is no simple substance underlying such experiences. Even so, neither Kim's view of persons, nor that of physicalism, is adequate. Nonphysical properties can only be discovered through conscious experience. Qualia are subjective properties, which are non-physical. The possibility of referring to oneself

as a thinking subject, as when one says that “*I am* seeing a red after-image,” strongly entails an independent possessor of those conscious experiences, whose essence is nonphysical. There must be a possessor of consciousness in order to make referents out of second-order properties, as such properties are self-presenting for the subject. Consider the capacity to exemplify mental states. When I examine the contents of my mind, I am immediately acquainted with a particular fact about myself: that I am a self-aware, thinking agent that is different from my physical body. Physical things like brains cannot introspect themselves, but we have a capacity for conscious thinking of a kind that takes as its referent the owner of those very thoughts and causal powers. A thinker must have a unified consciousness, otherwise thought would not be possible, so the essence of a person, which includes thought and its implication of a unified consciousness, will consist in their conscious powers. The self is rigidly designated as an experiencer. A condition of being a self is that one be a subject of experience. Even if I were blind, I would still have an experiential awareness of my own mental contents. I know they belong to me, because I am not having one and the same experience of a red₁ in contradistinction from a red₂ that belongs to other minds—therefore, my experiences of my own states belong to me. This fact, moreover, must be obtained in the actual world, as there are a number of experiencers exemplifying mental states of their own. At the same time, that exemplification is an ontological constituent not of the physical world, but of our non-physical conscious selves. Hence, physicalism does not obtain in the actual world, as there are conscious persons who are possessors of powers and a whole range of capacities: all of which refer to a simple substance characterized by intrinsically indexical content—this being, in turn, a feature lacking from physicalistically conceived reality. We thus have the following argument:

1. There are facts about my own existence and the existence of physical properties.
2. I experience myself as a thinking subject; I possess an awareness of this fact about me.
3. Physical properties do not have subjective qualitative properties and are devoid of powers like thought and agentive causality. (1) (2)
4. As a thinking subject, I have capacities and a range of powers. (2) (3)
5. But my powers to exemplify mental properties, involved in phenomenal experiences, are properties not of brain states but of a conscious self. (3) (4)

6. So, then, my powers to exemplify mental states are not physical. (3) (5)

Therefore, physicalism is false.

There are properties about me—such as entertaining a conscious mental event, or being in a particular phenomenal state, of being appeared to redly—that cannot truly be held to be identical to a property of my body. Therefore, I am not identical to the properties of my body: there is something *essential* about me that physicalism leaves out. Instead, whenever one refers to a person one is referring to a substantive basic subject capable of conscious experience and a whole range of powers. One's own awareness of something that is "what it is like" to be conscious is a non-physical fact. Secondary qualities exist not as physical properties (in the way that primary qualities do), but as mental entities.

b) Problems for Physicalism II: Inadequacies Exhibited by Scientific Explanations of Consciousness and the Ontology of Persons

Another objection that Kim and physicalists have to dualism takes the form of the claim that since the dualist view of the self does not fit into a scientific theory, it lacks explanatory power and so should be rejected. Substance dualism, though, consists in the postulating of a simple soul in order to cast explanatory light on *metaphysical* problems, such as the grounding of a unified self, free will, or psychological changes. It is not meant to serve as a scientific theory. Rather, it is a metaphysical claim about the ontological status of conscious persons. The claim that brain states are identical to mental states, meanwhile, is based on faith in science and an appeal to epistemic simplicity. Epistemic simplicity would favor type-based physicalism: a mental state just is a certain type of physical or brain state. The problem with this is that these two states, the mental one and the brain or physical state, amount to different properties. There is a "what-it-is-like" phenomenal property for one, the mental property, but no "what-it-is-like" phenomenal experience of the other, the physical property. Since there is intentionality with respect to one, the subjective mental state, but no intentionality with respect to the other, the physical or brain state, it follows that all these properties and states that on a supervenience-based account of the mental are supposed to be equal and must just amount to physical brain states are unequal, in which case simplicity as an epistemic criterion cannot be applied. Because there is no phenomenologically rich texture in our first-personal awareness of our conscious states that is also to be found in brain or physical states, the idea that neural scientific data

can be invoked to suggest that subjective mental states are just brain or physical states must be false. The problem evinced by Kim and others who reject dualism is that their own strong commitment to physicalism and reliance upon scientific knowledge are elevated to primary status, with the consequence that metaphysical or ontological solutions drawing on substance dualism are relegated to secondary importance or not even considered. Hence, what we are really dealing with in the philosophy of mind is a firmly entrenched materialist worldview.

Kim's pairing problem of mental causation is the result of a misunderstanding as regards the ontological substance of a primitive self or soul, while the fact that he is operating based on the idea that the only truly intelligible knowledge is that furnished by the scientific method constitutes a second issue. This is problematic, as the strict sciences prove inadequate when it comes to furnishing knowledge of (1) the nature of consciousness and (2) the question of who or what its possessor is. Furthermore, the sciences cannot supply us with any ontological ground for the mental faculties of free agentive causation. Hence, it seems fair to assert that Kim faces more problems than does the substance dualist—especially if the latter happens to also be committed to the Christian faith.

c) Problems for Physicalism III: The Freedom of the Will

When it comes to invoking some sort of philosophical anthropology, I believe that an agentive powers approach will suffice—especially for issues pertaining to freedom and moral responsibility.⁴ At the same time, it seems to me that my argument for the ontological substance of selves based on the exemplification of agentive powers makes a strong case not only for dualism, but also for God's existence. God provides the sole explanation for the human faculties and operative powers, but also for the immortality of the rational soul. An important feature, if one adopts a physicalist ontology, is that there is no strict personal identity, meaning that the person or self does not survive the death of the body. But if God exists, then a supernatural reality is an actualized state of affairs, and so the human soul, being causally dependent upon the causal powers of God's sustaining power, is possible. God is the cause of the human person and its powers.

Mental causation is possible, as the notion of mental experience is an intuitive one that each of us is intimately aware of as a conscious subject. Such causation corresponds to the capacity of persons to exercise their will to cause an effect. Since mental causes issuing from an agent can

4. According to Koons, "normativity is generated by teleology" (2021, 885–903).

bring about physical effects, the principle of causal closure is undermined, and mind-to-body interaction ceases to be unintelligible. Kim's argument against mental causation is a commonsensical one for the physicalist, or something near enough, and so he seems to be presupposing that the only rational view of persons and existing reality is the physicalist one. However, when one considers the power of dualism to make explanatory sense of other factors, such as the intrinsic nature of a unified self (exhibiting the property of freedom as a causal agent), it is dualism that seems to fit neatly with the data to be explained.

The Thomistic account of action proposes that the agent intellect makes use of instrumental causes, the body, to interact with its sense-perceptible world. A temporal conception of causation, however, need not be required—especially when it comes to the instantiation of agentive causality. According to Aquinas's *Commentary on Sentences*:

For a principal agent acts according to the requirements of its own form; and thus the active power in it is a certain form or quality possessing complete being in its nature. But an instrument act as moved by another; and thus its power is proportionate to the motion. Now motion is not a complete being but is a way towards being, like something between pure potency and pure act, as is said in Physics 3. And thus the power of an instrument as such, according to which it acts for an effect beyond what it is capable of according to its own nature, is not a complete being having being fixed in nature, but a certain incomplete being, like the air's power of acting upon sight, inasmuch as air is the instrument moved by the external visible object. And beings like this are commonly called intentions, and have a certain likeness to the being that is in the soul. (*Sent IV d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, ad. 2*)

The agent, being a substantial soul, is the appropriate ontological entity, able to exercise its active powers of agency and thus teleologically guide one purposefully toward an end. Even if the agent relies instrumentally on the body to act to bring about causal effects in the physical realm, as with the pushing of an object, it will still be the case that the causal initiator is one's own personal agency.

For the strict naturalist, on the other hand, causation resides in no more than the constancy of certain sequences of events, without any reference to an agentive power. One account of causation that has been somewhat favored in contemporary times belongs in the tradition of Hume, who held that causal relations are events, and thus instances of event-causation. Hence, only events occurring in time can cause things. Therefore, the agent

is not the primary or principal cause. But agent causes, I maintain, are sufficient as causal initiators, having the power to bring about actual causal effects in the physical world. The causal acts of an agent occur thanks to its powers. The mental capacity or potential to act is related to the agent and its powers. In that case, event-causation is not the only causal principle in reality, as there is actually also agent-causation, grounded in the personal agency of subjects' powers. Thus, agent causes amount to a viable and real option where genuine causes are concerned. This is because the agent is a substance with a rational nature, along with the causal capacity for originating purposive endeavors.

When I reflect on myself, I become aware of things about me that are different from my physical body. I truly know that I, as an agent, exercise my volition or will freely (Reid 1969, 602). I can actualize my active power to directly cause an effect (Reid 1969, 65)—such as the raising of my arm—freely, via the volitional capacity of the immaterial soul. Mental activities like *reasons*, *intentions*, or *wanting* may function as a cause. Furthermore, human persons, having a rational soul, can make moral judgments: they can even contemplate the moral choices they themselves make. As Aquinas affirms:

Now judgment is in the power of the one judging in so far as he can judge about his own judgment; for we can pass judgment upon the things which are in our power. But to judge about one's own judgment belongs only to reason, which reflects upon its own act and knows the relationships of the things about which it judges and of those by which it judges. Hence the whole root of freedom is located in reason. (*De ver.* q. 24, a. 2)

Free will, then, is a capacity of the soul that is activated by an agent's active intention. It governs the body while also carrying ethical implications, in that human persons are morally responsible for their decisions—for whether they are good or bad.⁵ As Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann remark: "Because 'Choice is completed in a kind of movement of the soul toward the good that is chosen,' and because will is the agent of movement of that kind, choice 'is clearly an act of the appetitive power'" (Kretzmann 1993, 148–9).

Hence, there are causes that are not necessitated by the physical. It is coherent to conceive of humans as having freedom of choice. Many events

5. Bernard writes: "the will, not the sword, therefore, pushed the will into its guilty decision." (Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 7).

and situations are caused by agents. This is an aspect of the self that I am directly acquainted with—we really do cause things to happen. There are constitutive features of reality involving actual cases of agentive causality, yet physicalism omits this important dimension. Since physicalism fails to account for that which is *what it is like* to have freedom or to entertain purposive causes, it must be false.

If I were a physical object, then a third-person physical description would be capable of capturing all the facts that hold true of me. But since it is the case that no third-person physical description can capture all the facts that are true for me, I cannot be a physical object. Rather, I am a soul. From the standpoint of a generically dualist understanding, it is the case that pain presents itself to consciousness as simply one's first-person experience of it: that there is something it is like to be in pain. Physical states, however, do not admit these sorts of first-personal facts. Therefore, pain cannot be a physical state. The dualist treats the first-person perspective as authoritative regarding *what it is like* to be in a pain state, in contrast to the materialist, who claims to only know physical objects and the like from a third-person perspective.

As the owner of my first-personal experiences and an enduring self, I am aware of a number of things that I would not be intimately aware of if I were just a physical body. More importantly, I am aware of my own agency—that I bring it about that certain things occur or obtain via my very own causality. Thus, I must be something more than just a physical constituent of the body. Again, on a Thomistic variant of dualism, the immaterial soul will be the enduring life force that resides in the physical body. Since neither strict physicalism, nor any other type of physicalism, can adequately account for the substantive self that endures and is responsible for a number of my powers (such as my free, agentive causal agency), it follows that neither that sort of physicalism, nor anything approximating to it, will be able to adequately ground an enduring substantive self or free agentive causation. Therefore physicalism, along with its close relatives, must be false.

VII. SOME COUNTER-ARGUMENTS CONSIDERED: EMERGENCE AND PANPSYCHISM

Kim holds to a physicalist view. His exclusion argument purports to conclude that mind and brain are ultimately identical. This is argued for on the basis of the causal-closure principle and mind-brain supervenience. Physicalists want to maintain that brain states and mental states are ultimately equivalent. The exclusion problem proposed by Kim seems to show that one is left facing an ultimatum when it comes to mental states: either (1 B-states

and M-states are equivalent, entailing physicalism, or (2) M-states are epiphenomenal, in which case given the causal-closure principle everything is explained by the physical, which in turn validates physicalism. Even if one accepts that mental states can causally interact with brain states and vice versa, those states are ultimately to be reduced to a physical structure of sorts. This, though, is to treat the problem as exhausted by issues of (1) ontological materialism and (2) property reductionism.

Nevertheless, if consciousness were an emergent property, there would be things added to it—like mass, for instance. Consciousness does not have mass, shape, or color, so it cannot be a physical thing. And if consciousness were an emergent property, it would be localized in different regions of the brain. But what physical conditions would need to be met for higher-order states such as consciousness to emerge? And if it does emerge, does each region of the brain then have its own consciousness? Beyond this, there would also be the problem of a unified possessor: if consciousness emerges from the brain, what is it that unifies conscious experiences? How can I know that I am the possessor of my own thoughts and not someone else's? Now consider what it would mean for panpsychism—the view that every object has a soul or mind—to be true: would it be the case that someone else's conscious experience was my conscious experience? Would the universe as a whole have its own conscious mind, given that every physical object would have the potential to actualize conscious states?

An important element within substance dualism is the Aristotelian idea that substances cannot be composed of smaller substances, or of separable parts. The reason for this is that were it to be so, it would breach the unity of the substance, thus making it into an aggregate. The physical brain, taken as a whole, is configured in terms of its parts. On the other hand, the essence of persons is that they do not come in aggregate parts, but instead are simple, basic, primitive entities. Properties of a complex whole, like the brain, are what they are by virtue of the properties of each part going to constitute it. To be sure, the brain exhibits its properties directly. However, where consciousness is concerned, what I encounter directly are conscious states of awareness. There is a certain kind of unity to an entity that has consciousness, and this means that I am not conscious in virtue of different physical parts' being themselves conscious but am instead myself—as an intrinsic soul—the possessor of my conscious life.

Even if one were to argue that there could exist an atomic simple that was conscious, this would still present us with physical properties such as extension, and so be divisible. But consciousness is just not the sort of thing that can come in parts, and so is not divisible. In this regard, panpsychism

faces the following difficulty, known as the “combination problem”: how can you talk of a unified collection of parts that are individually conscious beings, if the whole system is itself conscious? Yet I do experience my own sentience: when I introspect into myself, I become immediately aware of the fact that I am the owner of my first-personal point of view and enjoy my own mental life. So, then, these counterarguments against substance dualism can hardly be considered persuasive, given the genuine priority of the mental and our very real awareness of the distinction between the nature of consciousness and its bearers. Since these arguments appealing to supervenience and panpsychism do not strike me as plausible, and since physicalism fails to make sense of the issue, it would seem to follow that substance dualism must be correct.

IX. CONCLUSION

The lack of a pairing interaction between physical bodies and souls does at first sight seem problematic. But if a Thomistic view of persons is entertained, according to which the soul forms and enlivens the body, then mental-to-physical interaction becomes causally possible, as the soul is fully present at every location of the body. Without the soul, the body has no causal activity, since the *agent intellect* is a distinct power specific to the soul itself. If we endorse an ontology of powers instantiated by agents as the real initiators of causal activity, then I see no difficulties with the pairing problem, in that action-at-a-distance seems plausible.

A conscious subject exhibits intrinsic properties in the form of irreducibly mental states. These are immaterial states known from the first-person point of view. Hence, our epistemic access to knowledge of mental states will be tantamount to an *a priori* awareness of what it is like to be a conscious self. To reduce the self and the properties of conscious mental states to attributes of the structure of the brain taken as a whole is to be guilty of a fallacy. Brains are not ontological parts of persons. A substantive self does have a brain, but that person’s basic identity corresponds to their soul. The soul is the essence of your or my entire existence. For the Thomist, there exists a modally significant distinction between the soul and the body. If two things differ by virtue of such a distinction, then A can exist without B, but not conversely—just as, for example, there is such a differentiation as to modal status between the sun and one of its rays, the latter being modally dependent on the former for its existence, but not vice versa. Thus, the body is dependent upon the soul for its being. The ontological status of the mind is that of a mental substance irreducible to the physical, and causation need not therefore always require spatial extension, in that agents

are themselves sufficient as causal initiators. Consciousness, along with these faculties and powers, are such that they do not require an extended object to exist. Thoughts are not spatially extended. Hence, the substance dualist—whether Thomistic, interactionist, or of some generic sort—can be considered justified in conceiving of the essential nature of the self as being that of a primitive substance, conferring identity at the level of the soul, where this is precisely what is required if we are to make sense of bodily movement in intentional terms with reference to the idea of there being an underlying possessor of a conscious self capable of willing, or of exercising powers, in order to bring about teleological ends.

I have attempted in the present paper to show that Kim's pairing problem does not pose difficulties for dualism, especially when one considers a realist ontology of human persons and powers. My personal view is that an Aristotelian-Thomistic view of the nature of persons, as located in their identity as souls with intrinsic powers of the intellect, proves ontologically and epistemically powerful when it comes to accounting for the nature of consciousness—and thus, also, for mental causation in a physical world. The unique metaphysical structure of the subject consists in their being an agent capable of mental causation. Agents are, intrinsically, causal initiators, by virtue of the reasons and active intentions they entertain. Kim's objections fall flat in this regard, and so mental causation turns out to be a coherent notion after all—especially in light of the active powers of agent causation. The substance dualist will therefore be rationally justified in holding to their conception of the essence of persons as a non-spatially extended soul, in which a primitive agentively causal subject directly manifests itself. In that case, then, dualism remains a coherent notion of the self. Since physicalism cannot ground the essence of powers, especially the intrinsic powers of personal agency, it can only be false, and the pairing problem for dualism ceases to be a problem at all.

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