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The problem of the conscious mind has been a thorn in the side of material naturalism since the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of logical positivism and material reductionism. Several materialist philosophers have proposed theories, but none offer a satisfactory answer to the problem faced: how can a purely material world give rise to an immaterial mental consciousness? This paper will analyse and critique two of the mainstream arguments for mind-body physicalism and will suggest a theistic Aristotelian way forward, away from reductionist physicalism, in the field of philosophy of mind.

This paper will first address the arguments of Jaegwon Kim, a Korean philosopher famous for his arguments against a mind-body distinction and his discussions of mental causation, as presented by Kim in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind* and as reconstructed by Lynne Rudder Baker in the *Oxford Handbook*. It will attack Kim's positive assertions that the physical world is a causally closed system – that is, the idea that physical effects can have nothing but

physical causes – firstly, and secondly, it will attack the general argument presented by Kim that attacks and discards downward-causation – that is, mental states non-materially causing physical states.

Secondly, this paper will address Daniel Dennett's cognitive theory called "Intentional Systems Theory" (hereafter IST) and will show that A) Dennett's theory does not address the underlying issue but more importantly B) Dennett's theory fails as an adequate explanation for why human cognition works as it does. Though humanity might work like an extraordinarily complex machine, as Dennett is wont to suggest, this explanation fails and simply does not answer *why* humanity works like a complex machine in the first place. Dennett's theory makes an observation and can tell, perhaps even predict, how certain agents will act in a given situation, and can tell why each agents acts as he does in a surface-level sort of way, but it cannot account for a non-trivial underlying reason for human cognition.

Finally, this paper will present a theistic, Aristotelian account of human cognition and show how the Aristotelian idea of human cognition better answers the shortcomings of Kim and Dennett's theories. It will answer the issues that Kim takes up with causally closed physical systems. Understanding the human mind as the form of the human body can explain why a human has thoughts, feelings, and volition outside of his physical brain and answers Kim's criticisms that the non-physical cannot causally interact with the physical; furthermore, a thoroughly theistic account of form also answers where form comes from and why humanity

is uniquely different in this regard from other created things.

Jaegwon Kim's Mental Causation Argument

Formulations of the Argument

Kim writes in the *Oxford Handbook* an essay entitled "Mental Causation" that looks at the various theories concerning mental causation. Kim rejects all arguments concerning Cartesian dualism and presents his own argument – cf. Lynne Rudder Baker's reconstruction of his overarching argument from his written body of work – that proves that mental causation is tout court epiphenomenal. Kim writes,

> Suppose that an instance of mental property M causes an instance of mental property M*. From mind-body supervenience it follows that M* has a physical property, P*, as its supervenience base. This means that the instantiation of P* at *t* is necessarily sufficient for M* to be instantiated at *t*, no matter what happened before *t*—and, in particular, as long as P* is there, M* will be there *even if the M*-instance's putative cause, the M-instance, had not been there at all*. This puts the causal status of the M-instance vis-à-vis the M*-instance in jeopardy.[1]

Baker reconstructs Kim's argument as follows, "suppose[ing] that M and M* are mental states realized by physical states P and P* respectively [Axioms 1 (A1) and 2 (A2) respectively], and that M ≠ P [Axiom 3 or A3] and M* ≠ P* [Axiom 4 or A4],"[2] that C is taken to mean "P is the only genuine cause of P*," and that a mental

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[1] Jaegwon Kim, "Mental Causation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Brian McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann, and Sven Walter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40.

[2] Baker did work in philosophy of mind and is a theist. However, she has reconstructed the strongest version of Kim's arguments in the spirit of being fair to Kim. Lynne Rudder Baker, "Non-Reductive Materialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Brian

event is "realised" by physical event if the physical event is sufficient for the mental

event – a requirement of physical causal-closure – and if the mental event

supervenes on the physical event (Axiom 5 or A5):

1. M → M*   Supposition for *reductio*
2. (M → M*) → (M → P*)   1, A2
3. M → P*   1, 2 modus ponens
4. P → M   A5
5. P → P*   1, 4 hypothetical syllogism
6. (M → P*) → (P → P*)   1, 5 conjunction
7. ∴ [(M → P*) → (P → P*)] → C
8. C   6, 7 modus ponens
9. C → A3   8, A3 conjunction
10. [C → (A3)] → ~(M → P*)
11. ~(M → P*)   9, 10 modus ponens
12. ~(M → P*) → ~(M → M*)   2 transposition
13. ∴ ~(M → M*)   11, 12 modus ponens[3]

Line (7) does not has a justification as it is a brute fact. If P causes M and M causes

P* but P also causes P*, then P is the only possible cause for P*. Line (10) is also

a brute fact as P being the only legitimate cause of P* necessitates the insufficiency

of M as a cause for P*. With either argument (Baker's reconstruction or Kim's),

Kim writes that "[what it] purport[s] to show is that the following four propositions

are together inconsistent: (i) the physical domain is causally closed, (ii) Mental

properties supervene on physical properties, (iii) mental properties, states, events,

etc. are causally efficacious, and (iv) mental properties do not reduce to physical

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McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann, and Sven Walter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009),
114.

[3] Lynne Rudder Baker, "Non-Reductive Materialism," 115.

properties."[4] Therefore, a position on the mind-body problem must reject at least one of these premises if it wishes to avoid epiphenomenalism.

Analysis and Critique of Kim's Arguments

Firstly, Kim's argument holds strong if one takes the four premises (i)-(iv) together simultaneously. However, for the theist, there seems to be no strong reason to hold either premise (i) or (ii). In fact, the theist is *a priori* committed to a rejection of (i) as theistic thinkers rarely consider God as metaphysically equal to the created world – with the exceptions of Berkeleyan-type idealism and other schools of thought like Spinozan pantheism. Additionally, premise (ii) seems a dubious premise at best. While it is abundantly clear that the physical domain heavily influences the mental domain, a claim of supervenience – for each mental property M there is a family of physical properties P such that (1) necessarily, if M is instantiated, then some member of P is instantiated and (2) necessarily, if some member of P is instantiated, then M is instantiated (with respect to the same time, place, and subject)[5] – seems far too strong a claim to make. It seems that there are certainly instances of mental events or properties that have no dependence on a physical state of being, and it is clearly true that there are certain physical events in one's body that have no dependence on mental states. While hunger causes a mental

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[4] Jaegwon Kim, "Mental Causation," 41.

[5] Thomas Kroedel and Moritz Schulz, "Grounding Mental Causation," *Synthese* 193, no. 6 (June 2016): 1910, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11229-015-0820-3

event, the actions of individual cells to produce energy cause no such mental events. Even large-scale actions like heartbeats or breathing rarely cause mental events; conversely, mental events do not always have a corresponding physical event either. A powerful desire to raise one's arm does not always result – ceteris paribus – in the lifting of one's arm. One can have a strong mental desire to cause a physical event, but the physical event does not always happen as or when desired.

Additionally, Baker's reconstruction shows that Kim's argument rests on five axioms. Questioning the axioms is the surest way to call into question the soundness of the entire argument, and indeed, Axiom 5 is the most questionable of all the axioms; calling into question A5 also calls into question Axioms 1 and 2. While it is true that this paper has an *a priori* commitment to theism, it does not seem that it is impossible for a mental-something to act on a physical system per se. Explaining the causal relationship physical to physical is certainly easier than the very difficult task of explaining how the mental might causally interact with the physical, but all that is needed to shake A5 is the *possibility* of mental causation resulting in physical domain effects without a prior sufficient physical cause of the mental event. Axiom 5's principle of realisation – that physical events are sufficient conditions for mental events – does not seem to be an axiom worth holding.

Calling into question A5 then calls into question A1 and A2. By ridding the argument of A5, one cannot base Axioms 1 and 2 on Axiom 5, and because of this, lines in Baker's reconstruction of Kim's argument fail, and the argument fails.

Specifically, lines (2) and (4) fail because their justification either partly or entirely rests on an axiom in question. Without these lines, however, the rest of the argument fails. Being unable to move past line (2) is a non-starter, and the argument should be reformulated if it is to show anything or the axioms on which the argument rest should be argued for and established, as in their current state they are unacceptable and shed considerable doubt on the validity of the argument.

Daniel Dennett's Intentional Systems Theory of Cognition

Formulation of the Argument

Daniel Dennett's theory of Intentional Systems is a way of categorising and making sense of the behaviour of other entities. Extending all the way from amoeba to computers to complex animals and to humans, Dennett's theory "is in the first place an analysis of the meanings of such everyday 'mentalistic' terms as 'believe,' 'desire,' 'expect,' 'decide,' and 'intend': the terms of 'folk-psychology' that we use to interpret, explain, and predict the behaviours of other human beings, animals, and some artefacts such as robots and computers."[6]

> "According to intentional systems theory, these questions [questions of when a thing can be said to have a mind or have beliefs or desires or any related question] can be best answered by analysing the logical presuppositions and methods of our attribution practices, when we *adopt the intentional stance* toward something. Anything that is **usefully** and voluminously predictable from the intentional stance is, by definition, an intentional system. The intentional stance is the strategy of interpreting the

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[6] Daniel Dennett, "Intentional Systems Theory," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Brian McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann, and Sven Walter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 339.

behaviour of an entity by treating it *as if* it were a rational agent who governed its 'choice' of 'action' by a 'consideration' of its '**beliefs**' and '**desires**,'" (emphasis added in bold).[7]

It is important to note that Dennett has genuinely made no argument here: he has simply described a way that could, in theory, better explain the uses of words attributed to things than other theories could. As such, Dennett's position is only quasi-philosophical at best and one could reject Dennett's theory outright. In Dennett's view, "the designed thing is treated as an agent of sorts, with beliefs and desires and enough rationality to do what it ought to do given those beliefs and desires… Consider chess playing computers…: just think of them as rational agents who *want* to win, and who *know* the rules and principles of chess."[8] The point at which agency should be attributed to an intentional system is never discussed; rather, an actual agent should treat entities "*as if*" they were rational agents and only when it is pragmatically useful to do so.

Analysis and Critique of Dennett's Argument

Dennett's theory is not without its criticisms. Primarily, Dennett's theory, while an explanation for behaviours, does not answer key questions about how cognition even could have arisen. Neither does it answer questions that it raises concerning agency. Additionally, Dennett's theory seems unable to distinguish between a conscious, intelligent agent and what might be termed a "philosophical

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[7] Daniel Dennett, "Intentional Systems Theory," 339.

[8] Ibid., 340.

zombie."[9] Furthermore, the issues that a pragmatic predication of "is an intentional system" – Dennett writes that whatever is "*usefully*… predictable… [is] an intentional system"[10] – combined with the fuzzy rules concerning application of agency result in theoretically realistic cases where one party would benefit from an application of both agency and "intentional system" but the other would not. One cannot easily solve these contradicting views with the tools that Dennett has provided.

Dennett responds to Ned Block's idea of a machine that has an essentially infinite look-up table of preprogramed responses to certain inputs. Such a machine would pass any Turing test with flying colours. The only moving part is a mechanical selector that selects responses from the table of alphabetised responses. Such a machine would also pass Dennett's qualification of voluminous predictability, thereby qualifying it as an intentional system; however, a single moving part that chooses a response based on an input *barely* seems to be "intentional." Dennett's response to Block's criticism is simply that such a machine is not metaphysically possible, as it would break rules of physics and could never happen, but that hardly constitutes a legitimate response to Block's thought experiment.[11] Dennett also notes that the table of responses either came from two

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[9] Ned Block, "Psychologism and Behaviorism," *The Philosophical Review* 90, no. 1 (1981), 43, doi:10.2307/2184371

[10] Daniel Dennett, "Intentional Systems Theory," 339.

places: chance, or the machine was built and the responses crafted by other intelligences. The former he regards as an impossibility, so he responds only to the later. "Why should it matter *when* cognition is done, if it is all designed to meet the needs of a time-pressured world in an efficient way?... The intentional stance is maximally neutral about how (or where, or when) the hard work of cognition gets done, but guarantees that the work *is* done by testing for success."[12] All Dennett has done here is divert attention from the original problem. It does not matter that intelligence has designed such a machine or when the "hard work of cognition" is done. What matters is that the machine passes all tests for qualifying as an intentional system but intuitively is quite far from being an intelligent, intentional system.

A Theistic Aristotelian Alternative to the Reductionist Theory of Consciousness

"Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science. The existence of consciousness seems to imply that the physical description of the universe, in spite of its richness and explanatory power, is only part of the truth," wrote Thomas Nagel, "and that the natural order is far less austere than it would be if physics and

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[11] Ibid., 347.

[12] Ibid, 438.

chemistry accounted for everything. If we take this problem seriously, and follow out its implications, it threatens to unravel the entire naturalistic worldview. Yet it is very difficult to imagine viable alternatives."[13] For the theist, however, the arguments attacking mental separation from the physical fail. As noted, regarding Jaegwon Kim's argument, the theist does not have an *a priori* commitment to a physical-reductionist explanation – quite the contrary! The struggle for the physicalist to explain what is going on with the mind and the counterintuitive notions of epiphenomenalism that is the only answer is not a struggle for the theist.

While Thomas Nagel has trouble imagining a viable solution for the physicalist, the theist does not. A theistic Aristotelian view of the mind-body problem solves all the issues that the physicalist has and dodges interactionist problems that the dualist faces. The theist is committed to the existence of a God who is distinct and separate from his creation but who still causally interacts with his creation. Furthermore, the theist is committed to the existence of a mind or soul for every individual human agent, and that mind must be able to causally interact with the physical body that houses the soul. An Aristotelian view of the mind is an easy solution to this problem. The Aristotelian view that one should understand form in the human as the human mind. Form constitutes mind in humanity. However, because form is intrinsically linked with matter and is not a separate

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[13] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35.

substance like the dualist thinks, form does not suffer the same problem of causal interaction between a material and immaterial substance. How *exactly* form interacts with matter is a question for another paper, but it seems a sufficient answer to the mind-body problem.

As Nagel said so well, the physical-reductionist account of consciousness is severely lacking and cannot be well explained by the naturalist, "threaten[ing] to unravel the entire naturalistic worldview."[14] Nagel has had a sense of this since at least 1974 when he wrote a journal article entitled "What is it like to be a bat?," arguing that because scientists have never experienced life as a bat, no matter how accurate their measurements get and no matter how hard scientists empirically observe what life is like for a bat, they will never have experiential knowledge of life as a bat because they have never *been* a bat.[15] Nagel is not alone in his opinion of the failings of naturalism, either: numerous authors have realised the inadequacy of the purely natural worldview and have offered alternatives. Antony Flew, one of the most prominent atheists of the 20th century, publicly renounced atheism in 2004 following the realisation that naturalism could not do everything it claimed it was able to do.[16] Indeed, many authors and scientists have proposed solutions of a sort

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[14] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 35.

[15] Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (1974) 435-50, doi:10.2307/2183914

[16] Antony Flew, *There Is a God* (New York City: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

of teleological bent to try to fix the current naturalistic system. However, it seems dubious how one could have natural teleology that just "happened," by chance, to arise in this universe. A clear way forward is through theistic Aristotelianism and away from a system the shortcomings of which thinkers are increasingly bringing to light.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has shown that two prominent arguments for a physical explanation of consciousness fail. While the exact solution for the problem is not immediately forthcoming, the Aristotelian view of the mind easily solves the mind-body problem and problems related to the causal interaction between mind and body. The theist's position in rejecting Kim's argument because of the argument's axiomatic foundation is justified given the philosophical evidence for the existence of a God, and the theist's rejection of Dennett's theory of cognition is justified in light of Dennett's lack of adequate responses to criticisms and the shortcomings of intentional systems theory. Men like Nagel and Antony Flew have caught on to the fact that the naturalistic explanation of consciousness is not a satisfactory or adequate explanation. Indeed, with Antony Flew's rejection of atheism in 2004 and in light of Nagel's most recent work, it is a safe assumption to say that the physical-reductionist view of consciousness is not adequate and that a new Aristotelian way is needed to forge forward the path in philosophy of mind.

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