

The Causal Closure of the Physical and Mental Causation: On the Possibility of Their Coexistence

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Abstract

In studying Mind – Body Problem, many scholars suppose the “closed character” of the physical world, which means that physical matter is never affected by consciousness. This supposition seems scientifically indubitable.

Based on the supposition, some philosophers maintain that events of consciousness, if exist, must be determined by ones of brain. They say consciousness “supervenies” on physical matter as a base.

While the closedness of the physical world seems obvious, it also seems obvious that mind events cause physical effects (“downward” causation). In this paper, I struggle with this contradiction.

In the second section, I criticize Kim's concept of supervenience. Kim tries to make the closedness of the physical world and the downward causation compatible with each other. But I conclude that his “frontal” attack is not successful.

I propose another option of the compatibility. While the physical closedness is on objective level, the “downward” causality is on subjective level. Might the “contradiction” of the two be avoidable, making use of this difference of the levels?

Because physical system producing consciousness is a kind of “complex system”, small changes in its initial condition give rise to big differences. Then, since we can not accumulate all physical information about a person in everyday life, we can not predict his/her physical movement from the physical information about the person. Though the “downward” causality is subjective, it could not be reduced to physical causality. It is not only practical but also theoretical difficulty. (§ 3)

I examine eliminativism next, because it is against my proposition that does not take mind reducible to matter. Then I reject eliminativism.(§ 4)

However, my proposition has two serious difficulties. One is evolutionary difficulty. According to my proposal, consciousness would have only subjective existence, and no function to live. But without adaptational merit, consciousness could not have survived.(§ 5) Another difficulty is the following: the supervenient theory that my supposition draws on has unexpected result, that supervenient consciousness would be newly produced every moment, and be momentary without continuity.(§ 6)

These difficulties are invincible as long as we take the “downward” causality for a mere seeming one. That is, the “downward” causality must be real one.

A breakthrough must be found by the rocky road, that is, we have to defeat the closeness of the physical theory and explicate the mechanism of the downward causation.

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Berkeley and Reid as common-sense philosophers

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Abstract

In this paper, I will consider the relationship between philosophy and common sense. For this purpose, I will take up the philosophy of George Berkeley, a major ideal theorist of the early modern period, and that of Thomas Reid, a major philosopher of the Scottish common-sense school, and then compare the two philosophies. Berkeley and Reid shared a respect for common sense, which they introduced into their philosophy. However, Berkeley's philosophy was often considered not to be common-sensical, despite his intention. On the other hand, Reid is recognized as a representative common-sense philosopher.

It is often said that Reid's philosophy has two characteristics: foundationalism and fallibilism. I will focus on several first principles by Reid and examine their problems. I will then argue that, if he accepted fallibilism, then his foundationalism is problematic.

I think the problem in Reid's philosophy arises from his way of understanding common sense and his confounding the origin and foundation of our knowledge. My point is that common-sensical principles, as Reid believed, may be the origin of our knowledge, but our knowledge can be justified not only by those principles but also by many other beliefs. To support my argument, I will refer to Karl Popper and William James.

From these considerations, I will return to Berkeley, and compare him and Reid. I will then argue from a different viewpoint from the traditional interpretation that Berkeley's philosophy qualifies as common-sense philosophy.

Lastly, I will mention my idea about the relationship between philosophy and common sense based on the above considerations.

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The Source of Ethicality On the Role of “Enlightenment” in Watsuji’s Ethics

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Abstract

In this essay, I consider the relationship between ethicality (compassion) and the enlightenment of Buddha as described in Watsuji Tetsuro’s Buddhist research. My aim is to demonstrate that this idea can be found in his major ethical writings. It has been frequently noted that within Watsuji’s ethical writing he makes use of his Buddhist research at various points. However, there is little detailed research which touches on their relationship from the perspective of ethicality. In this essay, I consider what it means that Watsuji’s ethics is completed by taking Buddhist compassion as a model of good and evil, and conscience as its base.

First, to clarify the point at issue, I provide an exegesis of the basic arrangement of good and evil in Watsuji’s ethics, as well as of their presupposition, namely, Watsuji’s “human being” as subject. By ‘human being,’ Watsuji understands diverse modes of existentially cooperative being .

Next, I consider what kinds of problems regarding ethics and good/evil may arise within Watsuji’s proposed subject as ‘human being’. In Watsuji’s ethics, the good and evil of actions, as well as our conscience, are taken as things determined by their relation to emptiness as the origin of human being. But why is emptiness the origin of ethics? I consider this while introducing Buddhist compassion, which is thought to be the origin of Watsuji’s conception of ethics.

At last, I show that Watsuji interprets the origin of Buddhist ethicality to be compassion, a comprehending of emptiness which eliminates the distinction between the suffering of the self and other and directs one to extinguishing the suffering of the other.

What Watsuji concerned himself with in his own Buddhist research was finding Madhyamaka’s (Nagarjuna) teaching of emptiness and the Gautama Buddha’s teaching to be logically consistent, and, from there, making sense of Buddhism as an ethics. Finding Buddhist essence as ethical by explaining the contents of Buddha’s enlightenment through the emptiness of Nagatjuna is indicative of Watsuji’s extremely Mahayana Buddhist stance.

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Was Reid a Fallibilist?: The Problem of Constitution and Intuition

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Abstract

Recently, Thomas Reid has been considered an 18th-century fallibilist philosopher. However, some commentators claim that Reid was not, in fact, a fallibilist. They reach this conclusion because Reid defines common sense knowledge as intuitive beliefs, and these beliefs are derived from the seemingly unalterable constitution of human nature. According to this view, Reidian common sense is rather fixed and does not allow for revision. This paper will examine this problem of constitution and intuition, and defend the view that Reid actually was a kind of fallibilist.

When he asserts that our common sense beliefs have a just claim to knowledge, Reid often seems to appeal to our constitution and intuition, attempting to frame this assertion as the ultimate grounds for justification of human knowledge. However, this appeal is not so naive as one may assume. Reid also provides us with some criteria which can discern true constitutional knowledge from other types of beliefs (prejudices, vulgar error, inferential knowledge, etc.), and warns readers not to mistake apparent intuitive knowledge for truly intuitive knowledge. While appealing to constitution and intuition, he clearly intends to examine closely the components of real common sense beliefs and keep them under constant review.

It seems strange that our constitutional and intuitive knowledge leaves space for revision. Yet, this paper suggests that there are at least two reasons why Reid acknowledges the possibility of such revision. First, Reid supposes that we cannot determine a boundary line between common sense knowledge and other beliefs. This may make one inquire whether a belief is a part of common sense or not. More importantly, his theory of knowledge is deeply connected with the idea that our mental faculties are capable of improvement and culture. When people improve their mental faculties, they are able to use them not only to detect errors but also to analyse and discover knowledge more minutely and precisely. This means that human knowledge is always provisional and may be revised upon the improvement of one's faculties. Thus, it is his belief in humans' ongoing capacity for improvement that makes Reid a fallibilist.

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