Freedom as Anomaly: A Case against Determinism

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Abstract

The question of freedom of the human mind in a physically determined nature looms large in philosophical debate, in so far as the status of an individual human being is involved as a free, rational, and moral agent. However, philosophy is confronted with ongoing research in life sciences focusing on the human brain as a seat of all conscious human activity. It becomes a serious philosophical concern to arrive at an acceptable position, keeping in view the scientific explanations. In a sense, the debate is as old as philosophy itself as to whether freedom from natural or physical laws makes sense or not. The question remains unanswered, so far, as to whether we are really free to think and act, believing ourselves to be rational creatures. This question, along with its logical implications, is now looked upon in philosophy as an issue of compatibilism or incompatibilism between freedom and physical determinism of nature. For the Incompatbilist, human freedom and physical determination of all events are two mutually contradictory views that cannot be reconciled, without being clear as to which one is true. The compatibilist thinks that our view of ourselves as free rational persons is not threatened by physical or neurological explanation of the human brain that show determination of all conscious activity by underlying brain events. The present work is an attempt to focus on a contemporary influential philosophical position called, 'anomalous monism' by Donald Davidson[1] This view takes its stand on the two parallel paradigms involving the language of mind and language of physics. Davidson seems to contend that both domains make sense in their own way, despite the fact that the mental domain is caused by the physical, in so far as the mind is the product of brain processes.This kind of compatibilism seems to rely heavily on the absence of psycho-physical laws that could bridge the gap between the mental and the physical. However, this does not give any assurance as to whether we are really free. For, the causality of the mental phenomenon by the physical phenomenon might involve the possibility of predictability of the mental by the physical. If so, then it would be quite strange to argue that we are still free, in so far as we are consciously engaged in a physical world, merely believing that our attitudes and reasoning cannot be replaced by scientific explanation, just because both languages have different purposes. Still, what Davidson has offered us as a solution to this age old dilemma involves serious issues involving causality, rationality, morality, freedom, and the supervenience of the mental over the physical. However, whether such a compatibilist monism that stands on materialistic monism succeeds or not remains to be seen. The present paper unfolds these problems by envisaging counter arguments against compatibilism.

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[1] Donald Davidson, 'Mental Events', in *Essays on Events and Actions,* Oxford. Clarendon press. 1980

Dualism

Dualism of mind and body seems to have gradually lost its appeal to many 20th century philosophers. The reasons were that the Cartesian thinking and un-extended substance could not be defended against the onslaught of unfolding scientific evidence that mind and brain are correlated in a way that shows there is a causal relation between them. Nevertheless, the problems emerged as to how freedom of mind could be defended against this causal determination. Thus, compatibilism emerged as a thesis to resolve this problem, reconciling freedom and determinism. Philosophers of mind facing the difficulty of explaining contra- causal freedom became compatibilists. Whether compatibilism succeeded remains an open question. Varieties of compatibilist approaches involve influential arguments from causing but un-compelled freedom to the impossibility of a deterministic attitude towards normal persons.

In this paper I would try to bring out a different, apparently compatibilist approach of Donald Davidson, who argued for the Anomaly of the mental, despite his contention that a disembodied mind does not exist. My purpose is to bring it about that Davidson's stance towards the mental seems to create more problems than what was expected as a solution to the age old dilemma of freedom against Determinism.

Two fundamental questions come together in Davidson's considerations. First question concerns the idea of determination of our decisions and choices. It implies that we could not have decided or chosen otherwise than what we in fact decided or chosen. If it is true then there is no difference between mental events of decisions, choices, motives, intentions beliefs, desires, wants, and the physical events. Both kinds of events are subsumable under natural laws. The second question is about the nature of thoughts, feelings, and other mental events. The question of interaction between mental and physical events in the brain remains unexplained. The mind-brain identity thesis, substantiated by neuro-physiological research, raises doubts about the independent status of the human mind. The occurrence of neural events, somehow correlated with the mental events, cannot be rejected in the light of scientific explanation about the brain.[2]

These questions involve problems about the validity or invalidity of the thesis of determinism. There are three aspects of determinism involved. The first aspect of determinism involves the idea of causal connections between mental and physical events. Desires and wants of individuals play the causal role of making things happen in the physical world. However, preceding mental or physical events in the brain causes these mental happenings themselves. The second aspect of determinism involves the nomological or law-like relationship between events in the natural world. The nature of this relationship is usually based on the idea of natural necessity. This necessity is explainable as a generalization to the effect that certain kinds of events always precede or follow certain other kinds of events. This invariable regularity may be conceived as a natural law or as a law-like generalization. The lawfulness of this is based on the verifiable general proposition that events of a certain kind would always be accompanied

[2]Ibid. , 1970, pp.79-101.

by events of another kind. It is believed that this accompaniment cannot be a matter of chance or accident.

The third aspect of the issue involves the indeterminate nature of our decision and choices. In so far as our experience tells us, deciding and doing are not correlated like temperature and boiling are correlated. There seems to be no law-like regularity in the case of human actions that are related to the mental events of decisions and choices. If freedom could be conceived as a state of mind- body or mind-brain interaction, then this interaction makes sense only by experiencing the absence of lawfulness. It essentially means freedom from regularity such that we cannot formulate any law- like generalization that our decisions would always be followed by our actions. Davidson calls this freedom 'anomalism' of the mental.

Given this, the problem is interposed as to how these three aspects can be reconciled. The first two positions directly conflict with the third. In Davidson's views, the principle of causal interaction and the 'principle of nomological character of causality' collide with the principle of anomalism of the mental. And there seems to be no other way except to reject either causality or anomalism. Thus, the much debated conflict between dualistic and the monistic accounts of the mental events reflects the irreconcilable principles mentioned above. Even if we think that consciousness of a perceptible object and a physical change in the brain take place simultaneously. The question arises as to whether these are two kinds of occurrences, or only one? Although the occurrence of a brain event here is a fact, still, the occurrence of a mental event, distinct from this brain-event, involves questionable presuppositions. However one fact, which seems to clarify this problem, is the simultaneity of occurrence of the mental and the physical events in the case of sense perception. For instance when I notice a tree in front of me it is not that this noticing takes place and nothing else is taking place. Something else, a neural event, is also taking place, which means there is a simultaneous occurrence of a perceptual event and a neural event, somehow causally correlated with an extended world.

However under the mind-brain identity thesis, the mental events cannot be taken as distinct from the brain processes. There cannot be two occurrences but only one. Thus accordingly, the mental events are the physical events. If this is true, we are forced to admit that there cannot be any freedom from the natural necessity. It implies that it is a matter of natural law that each instance of a man's thinking of something is identical to an instance of just one kind of brain process and not with any other kind of brain process. Consequently, the determining conditions of the physical brain processes would also be the determining conditions of thoughts and feelings. If the occurrence of physical brain processes, qua physical, is a matter of necessity, it follows that, whatever a man thinks, he thinks it necessarily in the sense that he cannot think otherwise than what he actually thinks.

Nevertheless, Davidson has tried to reconcile the three apparently inconsistent principles mentioned above. For him, mental events are not only caused by the physical events in the brain, they also interact causally with the latter. At the same time, he maintains that some mental events are not determined by the laws which determine the physical events.

In fact he claims that the mental events cannot be subsumed under any strict deterministic laws. At this stage it is difficult for us to understand as to how something claimed to be physically caused is free from physical laws. However Davidson maintains that the mental events, as mental events, are not law-governed. At the same time, he maintains that these mental events as physical events (brain events), are law-governed.

This is what Davidson terms as 'Anomalous monism'. It appears to be a novel solution to the problem of determinism. However it involves the ambiguity in its position about the identity of mental and physical events. As pointed out earlier, if there is such an identity then the so called mental events must be taken as physical events. Given this, it seems strange to argue that the conception of the same events as mental makes them free from lawfulness and predictability, while conception of them as physical makes them lawful and predictable. However Davidson tries to explain, in the first section of his essay, what it means to call an event as mental or physical. He has also dealt with the problem of understanding the nature of natural law in the form of a general statement.

The central claim of Davidson's anomalous monism is that there are no strictly deterministic psycho-physical laws by which the mental and the physical events could be correlated. This claim is substantiated by the consideration that the mental and the physical terms are paradigmatically different. Therefore there is no possibility of bringing them together under the same kinds of laws which are paradigmatically 'made for each other'. Davidson, arguing for the reconciliation of deterministic principles with anomalism of the mental claims that,

> *The three principles (are) consistent with one another by describing a view of the mental and the physical that contains no inner contradiction and that entails the three principles. According to the view mental events are identical with physical events. Events are taken to be unrepeatable, dated individuals*… [3]…
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> *Anomalism reconciles the three original principles. Causality and identity are relations between individual events no matter how described. But laws are linguistic; and so events can instantiate laws and hence be explained or predicted in the light of laws, only as those events are described in one or another way. The principle of causal interaction deals with events in extension and is therefore blind to the mental-physical dichotomy: the principle of the anomalism of the mental concerns events described as mental, for events are mental only as described. The principle of nomologial character of causality must be read carefully: it says that when events are related as cause and effect, they have descriptions that instantiate a law. It does not say that every true singular statement of causality instantiates a law*. [4]

Hence it is clear that Davidson is defending the mind-brain identity thesis, yet arguing for freedom of the mental on the grounds that the vocabulary of the mental is not translatable into the vocabulary of the physical. When some event X is described in physical terms, it

[3]Ibid., p.209.
[4]Ibid, p. 215.

is brought under causal laws. However when an event is described in mental vocabulary, though it is still a cause or an effect, it is not, qua mental, brought under causal laws. There are no correlating laws to appeal to. This anomaly can be explained by the fact that laws, which are linguistic, 'Deal with events in extension', i.e. with events under a physical (extensional) description. It is therefore not surprising that X described in mental vocabulary, cannot be so incorporated under physical laws. Davidson above consideration might work if we concede that in place of the idea of strict deterministic laws, we may employ the idea of statistical regularities.[5] Under this view explanation of causally correlated events could be reformulated. The causal relation between mental and physical events can be construed as relations under statistical regularities. But even this does not seem to help in justifying freedom of mind, which is purely a matter of freedom from regularity and predictability of any kind.

From another perspective Davidson's argument can be seen to be providing a kind of view of causality devoid of predictability. It seems to demonstrate that although all events may be caused, it may be theoretically impossible to predict them, or to incorporate them into statements of probability expectations. This is so because what we take as mental events that can only be described under mental predicates, devoid of any physical conception of events under the statements of predictability. Thus following Davidson, an event, a mental event in this case, is an occurrence that could be conceived as caused, yet not describable under causal laws.There are counter arguments to the effect that causation necessarily entails predictability even in the case of mental. Thus, if all human actions are caused by the mental events, which in turn are caused by the neural events, it follows that all human actions are predictable. It makes no difference whether, as Davidson maintains, the mental events are described in a vocabulary unsuitable for incorporation into laws. We have the psychological laws to appeal to for predicting human Behavior. The psychological laws enable us to predict human behavior because they, being laws, derive their lawfulness from the very idea of cause as employed in physical sciences. Thus, Lucas argues in favor of 'psychological determinism'. Lucas states:

> *Psychological determinism maintains that there are certain psychological laws, which we are beginning to discover, enabling us to predict, usually on the basis of his experience in early infancy, how a man will respond to different situations throughout his later life. It is suggested that we should one day, have as much confidence in the laws of psychology as we do with the laws of physics. The basis of prediction is always intended to be limited so as to exclude the innocuous prediction we make every day. And the claim is that the predictions could be specific enough to constitute a real threat to freedom*.[6]

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[5] Statistical regularities involve the idea that probability of an event following another should be measured from what has already occurred. If whenever x has occurred, y has occurred eight of ten times, then there is a probability of .8 that, in future, y will follow x. Thus exposure to radiation does not always cause cancer but we would still identify such exposure as causing cancer in certain cases under a probability value, with reference to past cases of say 10 out of 100 cases of cancer caused by exposure to radiation. Thus, statistical regularity does not rule out causation, it only hypothesizes it. See Weslley Salmon, 'Why ask why?' in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, 51, No. 6 (August, 1978), P. 699.

[6] J.R. Lucas, *The Freedom of the Will*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 65-66.

On the other hand, if Davidson defends the principle of causal interaction as well as the principle of anomaly of the mental, then his view can be placed within the philosophical position called compatibilism. Although he does not appear to be defending compatibilism, but the way he states his views in the beginning and end of the following passage from his essay suggest that he does so. Davidson states:

> *Mental events such as perceiving, remembering, decisions, and actions resist capture in the nomological net of physical theory. How can this fact be reconciled with the causal role of mental events in the physical world? Reconciling freedom with causal determinism is a special case of the problem if we suppose that causal determinism entails capture in and freedom requires escape from the nomological net. But the broader issue can remain alive even for someone who believes a correct analysis of free action reveals no conflict with determinism. Autonomy (freedom, self-rule) may or may not clash with determinism: anomaly (failure to fall under a law) is, it would seem, another matter*.
> *I start from the assumption that both the causal dependence and the anomalousness, of mental events are undeniable facts. My aim is therefore to explain, in the face of apparent difficulties, how this can be.*
> *Generalize human actions to mental events, substitute anomaly for freedom, and this is a description of my problem. And of course the connection is closer, since Kant believed freedom entails anomaly*. [7]

This affiliation with Kant's view shows that Davidson accepts that freedom involves morality. But the difficulty is that the moral freedom requires exemption from causal determinism. And this does not seem to be the kind of freedom that could be found in Davidson. His mind-body identity theory cannot support a freedom from causality. Rather, his identity theory seems to be consistent with causality. As Davidson says:

> *Two features of mental events in their relation to the physical causal dependence and nomological independence- combine, then, to dissolve what has often seemed a paradox, the efficacy of thought and purpose in the material world, and their freedom from law. When we portray events as perceiving, remembering, decisions and actions, we necessarily locate them amid physical happenings through the relation of cause and effect; but the same mode of portrayal insulates mental events, as long as we do not change the idiom, from the strict laws that can in principle be called upon to explain and predict physical phenomena*.[8]

It can be seen in the above passage that the feature of causal dependence bars Davidson's view from entering the domain of moral freedom. This is so despite his other point about the nomological independence of the mental events.

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[7] Donald Davidson, 'Mental Events', op. cit., p. 207.
[8] Ibid.

Actions, Reasons, and Causes

In another famous article Davidson projects the same view when the question of the relation of mental events with rational actions arises. The mental events relevant for the actions of a rational agent fall into the category of reasons for actions. Since Davidson defends the principle of causal interaction between mental and physical events, the reasons for actions must also be regarded as the causes of actions.

Whether reasons of a rational agent are the causes of actions in the same sense in which physical event is a cause of another physical event is disputable. But Davidson claims that the rational explanation of actions is a 'species of causal explanation'. For Davidson, reasons are causes of actions because actions are explainable in terms of agent's desires and beliefs, which, as mental events, cause the particular bodily movements. Since reasons for actions are not simply isolated individual events therefore Davidson refers to them as 'pro-attitudes' of a person. He states:

> *Whenever someone does something for a reason… he can be characterized as (a) having some sort of pro-attitude toward actions of a certain kind and (b) believing (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) that his action is of that kind. Under (a) are to be included desires, wanting, urges, promptings, and a great variety of moral views, aesthetic principles, economic prejudices, social conventions, and public and private goals and values in so far as these can be interpreted as attitudes of an agent directed towards actions of a certain kind.. Giving the reasons why an agent did something is often a matter of naming the pro-attitude (a) or the related belief (b) or both*.[9]

It seems that Davidson has overlooked the fact that identifying reasons with causes entails determinism, which seems to do violence to our conception of ourselves as rational agents. Reasons cannot be the causes of actions in the same sense in which blowing of the wind is the cause of movements of curtains. The first point about the difference between reasons and causes involves a qualitative distinction. Several qualitative dissimilarities can be pointed out between reasons and causes. For instance, reason involves intentionality while causes do not. Causes may or may not be known but the reasons are necessarily known by the agent because they are his reasons. Secondly, the connection between reasons and actions is logical while the causes and effects are empirically related with each other.

Intentionality of Reasons

Considering the intentionality of reasons, in contrast to the non-intentionality of the causes, if an agent does X for a reason such that it is his reason for doing X, the action is explainable by that reason. But the nature of this explanation, keeping in view the

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[9] Donald Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons and Causes', in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. Ix. No. 23, (Nov.7) pp. 1-2. A related account can be seen in W.D Gean, 'Reasons and Causes', In *Reviews of metaphysics*, 19,1995, p. 672.

intentionality factor, must be different. The explanation, contrary to Davidson, cannot be regarded as causal, because his entails that the reasons are subsume able under laws. As Hart and Honore state:

> *The statement that one person did something because, for example, another threatened him, carries no implication or covert assertion that if the circumstances were repeated the same action would follow*.[10]

Thus, it is clear that the reason - action relation is not as lawful as the cause- effect relation. Given similar circumstances the former relation does not necessarily recur. Further, bringing the reasons under laws implies that we can have a general proposition which can be verified through observation of the similar particular instances of reasons ensuing into similar kind of actions under similar circumstances. But this is manifestly impossible. Firstly, there is no possibility of observing reasons, and secondly, there is no possibility of knowing that the particular instances of reasons, like one's particular desires and beliefs, are similar to those which one offered earlier. Given this, we can see that Davidson's position on the intentionality of actions seems to confuse two incompatible views here. On the one hand, he argues for the efficacy of intentions in the performance of actions, and, on the other, he allows that intentions are physically caused. It appears that he is trying to reconcile causality and intentionality together. The following passage of Davidson reveals this confusion strikingly.

> *What depends on the agent is the intentional performance of an act of a certain sort. It is true that it may sometimes be the case that what a man does intentionally he might have been caused to do it anyway, by alien forces. But in that case what he would have done would not have been intentional. So even in the over determined case, something rests with the agent. Not, as it happens, what he does (when described in a way that leaves open whether it was intentional) but whether he does it intentionally. His action, in the sense in which action depends on intentionality, occurs or not as he wills; what he does, in the broader sense, may occur whether or not he will it.*[11]

This leads to further difficulties. His acceptance of the intentionality of the mental events allows him to broaden the scope of the metal events. He includes also the sensations of pain and perception of an after-image as intentional His view of confined to the extent that these mental events are directed towards something. But this does not exhaust the meaning of intentionality since the part of agent is missing. It is not simply that the mental events are directed towards something, as Davidson seems to believe, but that they are intentionally directed towards their objects by the self-conscious individual who deliberates and reflects on them.

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[10] H.L.A. Hart and A.M. Honore, *Causation in the Law*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 52. A similar argument may be found in M.F Cohen's 'Motives, Causal Necessity and Moral Accountability', in *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 42, 1964, pp. 326- 329.

[11] Donald Davidson, 'Freedom to Act', in Ted Honderich, *Essays on Freedom of Action*, London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, pp. 149-50.

The Logical Connection Argument

The arguments' involving the logical connection of reasons and actions,[12] in contrast to the empirical connection of causes and effect, has two aspects. Firstly, as A.I Meldon has argued, it is essential that a cause be 'logically distinct from its alleged effects'[13]. But this is not true about the relation between reasons and actions. Meldon claims that sometimes an action is explainable by reasons in such a way that the alleged reason is merely a re-description of the action itself. In other words the explanation of action only informs us as to how the action was performed and not telling us why it was performed. Meldon gives the example of 'signaling' by raising one's arms. Thus the explanation 'I raised my arm to signal a turn' involves are-description of the 'the arms rising' in terms of the reason 'signaling a turn'. Both phrases are identical in the sense that the latter is a re description of the former, and cannot be logically distinct from it. These are not two distinct events, the one 'signaling' and the other 'raising the arm' but only one, that is the raising of the arm having the meaning 'signaling a turn'. Following Meldon, it turns out that reason-action relation is logical, and cause effect relation is empirical, since the cause is a distinct event from the effect while reason for action is a re-description of bodily movement. However, Davidson contends that,

> *In any case there is something very odd in the idea that causal relations are empirical rather than logical. What can this mean? Surely not that every true causal statement is empirical. For suppose 'A caused B' is true. Then the cause of B=A; so, substituting we have 'The cause of B Caused B, Which is analytic. The truth of a causal statement depends on what events are described; its status as analytic or synthetic depends on how the events are described*. [14]

Consequently Meldon's case of reason of actions as 're-description' and thus involving 'logical' rather than causal relations becomes weak when a complete reason for the action is demanded. This fuller reason would necessarily include statements of desires and beliefs associated with the actions. Thus raising the arm to signal necessarily involves a desire to turn and belief that raising the arm would depict signaling for turning. But since desires and beliefs cannot be identical with actions, as they stand distinct from the actions as being mental states only, therefore it seems we have a mind-body distinction between reasons and action. However, Meldonargues that,

> *As Humean cause or internal impression,(desiring) must be describable without reference to anything else—object desired, the action of getting or the action of trying to get the thing desired; but as desire this is impossible. Any description of the desire involves a logically necessary connection with the thing desired.* [15]

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[12] These arguments can be found in Stuart Hampshire, *Thought and Action*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1959, Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and the Will*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963, R.S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959, P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.

[13] A.I. Meldon, *Free Action*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, p.52.

[14] Donald Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', op. cit., p. 234 (Emphasis is mine)

[15] A. I. Meldon, op. cit., p. 114.

> *If the relation were causal, the wanting to do would be, indeed must be, describable independently of any reference to the doing. But it is logically essential to the wanting that it is the wanting to do something of the required sort with the thing one has. Hence the relation between the wanting to do and the doing cannot be a causal one*. [16]

This means that the thing one desires or wants necessarily includes reference to the subjective mental event of desire and vice versa. If the desire cannot be fulfilled without doing something, then the desire necessarily includes reference to the action which is required for its fulfillment. Now if someone does X because it was necessary for the fulfillment of a particular desired, then there is a logical connection involved in the sense that a desire is always a desire for something. In other words, there cannot be a desire which is a desire for nothing. Thus we cannot describe a desire which is not a desire for something.The impossibility of such a description is the logical proof that desire is not something distinct from the object of desire. In case the object of desire is an activity, such as drinking water for quenching thirst, the desire cannot be described independently of this activity. Therefore, Meldon argues that in such cases it makes no sense to say that the desire is the cause of drinking because in this case there are not two independent events related to each other as cause and effect. The desire is the desire of drinking.

In contrast, a cause, for instance an explosion, is describable independently of the shattering of window glasses in a building. It is clear that the explosion can occur without the shattering of window glasses and the latter event can also occur without the explosion. This makes the relation between cause and effect not logically necessary. Contrarily, one cannot quench one's thirst without drinking and normally one does not drink without desiring to do so.

If someone misunderstands the meaning of logical connection between reason and action, he might object that logical connection entails necessary outcome, in the form of action, of the given reasons. That is, if the desire and the action are logically connected then given the desire the action should necessarily take place. And the objection might be that since this does not happen, that is, since given the desire it is not necessary that one would act accordingly, therefore the so called logical necessity is not there. But this objection fails because it is based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of logical connection involved between the reasons and actions. The meaning of logically necessaryconnection is not that given the reasons the action necessarily follows. It is simply that the reason is not describable independently of the action. Thus, we see that both Meldon, and Davidson, seem to be right is so far as for Meldon, desire is a re-description of the action, while for Davidson desire, as reason for action, is the cause of action despite this re-description, since one can desire something without necessarily following it.

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[16] Ibid, p. 128.

Events and Non-Events

The more controversial argument in the problem of reasons and causes is that since the causes are events and since reasons are not events, reasons cannot be the causes of actions. As Davidson has also pointed out, this argument has two historically distinct forms.

- Only events can be the cause of other events. Reasons arenot events therefore reasons cannot be the causes.
- Pointing out the causal condition for some event presupposes preceding events. Pointing out reasons for actions does not presuppose preceding event. Therefore reasons cannot be causes.

The first form of the argument, the claim that causes must be events is disputable. Some philosophers like Ryle and C.J .Ducasse[17]believe that causes are necessarily events but John Stuart Mill thinks otherwise. For Mill, taking one particular causal condition of certain phenomenon as the cause of that phenomenon is too whimsical.

> *Nothing can better show the absence of any scientific ground for the distinction between the cause of a phenomenon and its conditions, than the capricious manner in which we select from among the conditions that which we choose to dominate the cause*…. [18]

However one can argue against Mill that even if the cause is the sum total of the antecedent conditions, there must be one specific event which triggers the ensuing effect to take place. And so, despite consideration of the many conditions, the cause must be a specific event which immediately precedes the effect.The second form of the argument that reasons are not causes involves the claim that it is implicit in the meaning of cause that it is preceded by other event in a chain of events connected together as causes and effects. This is true because we cannot take an event as a cause as if it itself occurred out of nothing. If the cause is an event then it must be the result of some prior event otherwise it would be a miraculous event and thus unintelligible. Davidson argues that it does not mean there are no such preceding events. For Davidson, it means that we are ignorant of the preceding events, just like we are ignorant of the preceding events of some physical incident. He states:

> *In many cases it is not difficult at all to find events very closely associated with the primary reason. States and dispositions are not events but the onslaught of state or disposition is. A desire to hurt your feelings may spring up at the moments you anger me….*
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> *However, there also seem to be cases of intentional action where we cannot explain at all why we acted when we did. In such cases, explanations in terms of*

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[17] Gilbert Ryle, *The concept of Mind*, Hutchinson, London, 1949. See also C.J. Ducasse, *Causation and the Type of Necessity*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1924.

[18] J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, Longmans, London, 1961, p 214.

> *the primary reasons parallels the explanation of the collapse of the bridge from structural defect; we are ignorant of the event or sequence of events that led up to (caused) the collapse, but there was such an event*. [19]

But this construction of reasons on the causal model seems an oversimplification. Of course, it seems true that the reasons on which agent acts are connected with the prior reasons, formingimmense background knowledge of the agent.[20] It is also true, as Davidson maintains, that we cannot point out prior reasons of the agent because we could be ignorant of them. But this does not imply that the existence of prior reasons is just like the existence of prior causes. As if explanation of a 'collapse of bridge' is parallel to the explanation of an intentional action. Perhaps Davidson must do this for the sake of consistency of his views. If mental events are themselves caused by the physical events in the brain then, it is difficult to understand their independent efficacy for actions. This problem leads to further considerations in what follows.

The Causes of Reasons

It is clear that in mind-brain identity thesis, rationality cannot play an independent role. It must be explicated by offering a causal explanation of reasons. Thus Davidson's theory of causal explanation implicitly involves this double approach. On the one hand reason is taken by him as playing a causal role in the performance of actions, and on the other, these reasons are themselves taken as caused by preceding mental events. Davidson's position is obvious from his following account.

> *Anomalous monism resembles materialism in its claim that all events are physical, but rejects the thesis, usually considered essential to materialism, that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations. Anomalous monism shows an ontological bias only in that it allows the possibility that not all events are mental, while insisting that all events are physical. Such a bland monism, un-buttressed by correlating laws or conceptual economies, does not seem to merit the term reductionism; in any case it is not apt to inspire to nothing- but reflex (Conceiving the Art of the Fugue was nothing but a complex neural event, and so forth.)*
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> *Although the position I describe denies there are psychophysical laws, it is consistent with the view that mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics. Such supervenience might be taken to mean that there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in any mental respect without altering in some physical respect. Dependence or supervenience of this kind does not entail reducibility through law or definition: if it did, we could reduce moral properties to descriptive, and this, there is good reason to believe cannot be done; and we might be able to reduce truth in a*

[19] Donald Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', op. cit., p. 231-233.
[20] Stuart Hampshire,*Thought and Action*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1965, p. 29-31.

> *formal system to syntactical properties, and this we know cannot in general be done.* [21]

Thus anomalous monism is allegedly a non-reductionist account of the mental. Yet it is not clear how Davidson can avoid reductionism, given the dependency of the mental on the physical. Davidson seems to avoidreductionismon linguistic grounds in spite of this materialistic monism. But it seems that he is not successful in avoiding reductionism on these grounds. It might appear justified to claim that ordinary language is irreducible to the language of physics or neurophysiology. But it does not,byitself, justify the alleged freedom from natural laws. Material dependency and anomaly of the mentalareincompatiblebecause they are contradictory. The difficulty intensifies with the additional attempt to fit this anomaly in the paradigm of causal explanation. As we have seen Davidson equates rational explanation with causal explanation.

Davidson's thesis of Anomalism of the mental, his thesis of the dependency of the mental on the physical, and his thesis of reason-action relation, involves more problems than what he intends to solve through them. For Davidson reasons are mental events and thus they must have preceding mental events as causes. In Davidson's theory there is no place for a disembodied mind because he rejects the possibility of there being mental events without physical events. It follows that ultimately all mental events must be caused by physical events in the brain which again must be caused by prior physical events outside the brain. Thus we have a full-fledged determinism disguised as anomalism.Keeping this in view, it is difficult to concede how Davidson's claim about the anomalism of the mental can be justified. As pointed out earlier one can, like Davidson, contend that the structure of language and meaning is irreducible to determinism. But this does not absolve the difficulty. If, ultimately everything originates physically, including the mental events of judgments, beliefs, desires, as well as the propositions expressing them, it is difficult to see how Davidson can justify his own claims. Lucas exposes this issue.Hestates:

> *If what he (the Determinist) says is true, he says it merely as the result of his heredity and environment, and of nothing else. He does not hold his determinist views because they are true, but because he has such and such a genetic make-up, and has received such and such stimuli; that is not because the structure of the universe is such and such but because the configuration of only part of the universe, together with the structure of the determinist's brain is such as to produce that result.. (Determinists) find their intellectual attitudes belying their determinist beliefs. They are committed to the view that whether or not determinism is true, they will believe that it is, as a result of certain physical variable havinghad certain values at a certain antecedent time. Even if determinism is false, they will, according to them, still say that it is true, and therefore their saying that it is true affords us no reason whatever for supposing that it really is true, but is to be construed solely as the end product of some physical process…*

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[21] Donald Davidson,'Mental Events', in *Philosophy As it Is*, ed. Ted Honderich, Penguin books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England. 1979.P.225.

> *Determinism therefore cannot be true, because if it was, we should not take the determinist's arguments as really arguments but as being only conditioned reflexes. Their statements should not be regarded as really claiming to be true, but only as seeking to cause us to respond in some way desired by them. And equally, if I myself come to believe in determinism, it would be because I had been subject to certain pressures or counter pressures, not because the arguments were valid or the conclusion true. And therefore I cannot take determinism whether in the mouth of another or believed by myself, seriously, for if it were true, it wouldd*estroy *the possibility of being rationally considered and recognized as such. Only a free agent can be a rational one. Reasoning, and hence truth, presupposes freedom just as much as deliberation and moral choice do.* [22]

This makes it clear that if the deterministic stance toward the mental is accepted, truthandfalsity of statements and the beliefs expressed by them would be as much determined as a full-fledged determinism of the physical. If the process of decisions, choices, beliefs and desires, are physically caused, and if the factors involved in this causal process are, in their turn, caused by some prior physical events, states, and processes, then all claims of rationality, are compromised. Accordingly, Lucas comes to grips with it more elaborately:

> *One may accept a proposition as logically true because he recognizes its logical truth. Alternatively, one may accept a proposition as logically true simply because that is what "heredity an environment" strongly or softly suggests that he affirm. But if determinism is true, recognizing a proposition's logical truth is always also a matter of what, and only what, "heredity and environment" may happen to suggest. Now it is possible that "heredity and environment" are so beneficent as always to suggest the right things, and it is possible that, even if they do not, they should sometimes, or always, contrive that we fail to affirm their false suggestions; but neither of these is in the least likely, and even if either were likely, we could not have any reason to think so beyond what "heredity and environment" themselves suggest. Therefore, if all events have sufficient causal conditions such as "heredity and environment," any warrantable acceptance of logical truths, and of arguments as valid; is impossible, and there can be no justifiable argument for any thesis, including determinism.*
>
> *Now, of course the argument is capable of wider deployment than this… it need not be viewed as applying to the recognition of logical truths only or to arguments abiding by them. It's essential point is that if determinism is true, we can have no reasonable assurance that any of our various criteria of truth or warranted assertion are cogent. Only an unbelievable pre-established harmony could insure that what "character and circumstances" give us to believe is in*

[22] J.R. Lucas, *Freedom of the Will*, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

> *accord with what ought to be believed if we are to believe truly. This holds for any theory of truth that does not make truth a function of "subjective passion." If there is to be a distinction, knowledgeably applicable by us, between justifiable belief and baseless opinion, we must be in a position to assess our judgments independently of "foreign influences," felt or unfelt, and to do this in recognized consonancewith criteria that we do not just happen to have but for which we can offer justification itself free from irrelevant, or not assuredly relevant, causal conditions*.[23]

Thus if the process of our reasoning is caused, then we are all the time under the illusion that we arrive at truth by arguments. Moreover, it also implies that what we hold as true because we think so, gives usnocredit since we are pre-determined to hold it as true. And this leads to skepticism. However, Lucas further contends that,

> *The argument does not deny that, even if determinism is true, one can adopt beliefs and do so for the reasons one cites. Its point is rather that. If determinism is true, what one considers relevant to ascertaining the cogency of a belief is governed by conditions whose conformity with the criteria of what ought to be believed in the realm would be merely fortuitous*. [24]

Accordingly, the crux of the matter is that given the truth of determinism, or Davidson's physicalist monism, there are no grounds left for the assurance about the correctness of any criteria of truth. This is so because then, one's beliefs, as well as one's rational assessments, are themselves caused by the hereditary andenvironmentalfactors lying outside one's reasoning.In other words, we reach a contradictory position that rationality is itself the product of non-rational factors. Sincethese factors are determined, not by the individual, but by the physical brain process, connected causally with heredity and environment, therefore, for Lucas, one's assurance that certain criteria ought to be believed becomes groundless. Thus we can see that Davidson's thesis does not seem to rescue freedom of the mental. We have seen that in Davidson's scheme of causal explanation there seems to be no place for the explanation of the occurrence of mental events independently of the physical events.

Moreover, Davidson is defending the causality of the mental events both ways; forwardly as causes of other mental andphysicalevents, and backwardly as the effects of prior physical events. Placing the mental events in between the prior and the later physical events and then arguing for their 'anomaly' seems to create irresolvabledifficulties. As Lucas has pointed out above, Davidson cannot defend the freedom of the mental if he contends that mental events are caused by physical events in the brain. Because then the problem of causal necessity of the mental events arises despite Davidson's claim of the irreducibility of the mental to the physical on linguistic grounds. It makes no difference to the causal necessity if the mental events are indescribable in physical vocabulary, as under Davidson, they are causally necessitated. Given this, Davidson's thesis of anomaly cannot help him in avoiding these deterministic consequences. There are further

[23] Ibid, pp. 55-56.
[24] Ibid. p. 61 (Emphasis is mine).

unacceptable consequences of holding a causal and therefore deterministic view of the mental. If the mental events are caused and therefore determined by the physical events in the brain then, as Lucas has argued, a man's judgments are completely determined by the physical events in his brain. We can see that it undermines the whole foundation of knowledge irrespective of whether it is scientific knowledge or a philosophical one. Morris Ginsberg also argues, likewise. He states:

> *… if all judgments were causally necessitated, they would all be on the same level and it would be impossible to distinguish some as true and others as false. Sense and nonsense would lose all its meaning, if in forming a judgment we were completely unable to resist the violence of present desire, the effects of past habits, the persistence of ancient prejudices or the forces of the unconscious*. [25]

From such implications, it follows that Davidson must offer a thesis of the mental events that precedethephysicaleventsascauses. However, this would make sense only when the mental event is either itself uncaused, or it is caused by other mental events following a reasoning process, independently of what goes on in the brain. Unfortunately, such a thesis would be dualism, while Davidson thesis is a materialistic monism that is shown to be incompatible with the kind of freedom required for being a rational agent.

[25] Morris Ginsberg, 'On the Diversity of the Morals' in *Essays on Sociology and social Philosophy*, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1957, vol. I, p. 82.