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Deposited in DRO:

24 October 2016

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Gibb, S. C. (2017) 'The mental causation debate and qua problems.', in Philosophical and scientific perspectives on downward causation. New York: Routledge, pp. 265-277. Routledge studies in contemporary philosophy. (91).

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.routledge.com/9781138195059>

Publisher's copyright statement:

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Philosophical and Scientific Perspectives on Downward Causation on 24/02/2017, available online: <https://www.routledge.com/9781138195059>

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The Mental Causation Debate and *Qua* Problems

It is often suggested by those in the mental causation debate that the causal closure argument is an argument that can be raised at increasingly more fine-grained levels. That is, even if one accepts the conclusion of the causal closure argument—mental causes are identical with physical causes—there are still worries about whether the mentalness of the mental cause, or the mentalness of the mentalness of the mental cause is causally redundant in the physical domain. And each such worry gives rise to a problem of causal closure. I refer to these problems as ‘*qua* problems’. And, in this paper, I aim to establish that all such *qua* problems can be dismissed or unproblematically avoided. The only problem that the causal closure argument gives rise to is the problem of how non-physical causes can have physical effects. If there is no downward causation, then there is no downward causal efficacy.

1. The Original *Qua* Problem

Let us make the plausible assumption that there is psychophysical causation—we are able to perform intentional actions that result in the movement of our bodies. It is, for example, my desire to move my arm that is, at the very least in part, causally responsible for my arm’s moving. It is because I had this desire that my arm moved. And, had I not had this desire, in normal circumstances, my arm would not have moved. The causal closure argument combines the premise that there is psychophysical causation with two further premises to yield the conclusion that mental causes (that have physical effects) are identical with physical causes. The argument can be set out as follows:

1. *Psychophysical Causation*: Some mental causes have physical effects.
2. *Closure*: Every physical effect has an immediate and complete wholly physical cause.
3. *Causal Non-Overdetermination*: There is no systematic causal overdetermination.

Therefore, mental causes (that have physical effects) are identical with physical causes.

Let us assume that events are the causal relata. To explain the causal closure argument, in accordance with *Psychophysical Causation*, say that *m* is a mental event and that it is an immediate and complete cause of a physical event, *e*. Given *Closure*, *e* must also have an immediate and complete wholly physical cause, *p*. (Event *c* is an immediate cause of event *e*, if *c* does not cause *e* by causing some further event. A complete cause is the sum of all of the partial causes of an event in a particular instance of causation. If each partial cause of an event is physical, then that event has a complete wholly physical cause.) *Closure* entails that to identify an immediate and complete cause of any physical effect we never *need* to look beyond the physical domain—that there will be a seamless causal chain of purely physical events leading to any bodily movement. But the existence of such a causal chain does not exclude the existence of additional non-physical causes of bodily movement. It is only the combination of *Closure* with *Causal Non-Overdetermination* that entails that the

cause of any physical effect *must* be physical—that there can be no downward causation from *sui generis* mental events to physical events. To give an example of causal overdetermination, two guns are independently fired and the bullets from both guns strike the victim at the same time. If each bullet striking was, on its own, a complete cause of the victim's death, the death was causally overdetermined. Given *Causal Non-Overdetermination* there may be isolated cases of causal overdetermination, but the causal overdetermination cannot be systematic—events cannot be causally overdetermined as a general rule. The kind of causal overdetermination that the combination of *Psychophysical Causation* and *Closure* gives rise to is systematic—*whenever* a mental event, *m*, causes a physical event, *e*, given *Closure*, there will be a wholly physical cause, *p*, that is enough to bring *e* about. This problem is removed if *m* is identical with *p*.¹

If events are the causal relata, the conclusion of the causal closure argument is that mental events (that have physical effects) are identical with physical events. But, as is often pointed out, if mental and physical events are identical but mental and physical properties are not, the causal closure argument is not resolved but simply relocated. Hence, say that one does combine an event monism with a property dualism—mental events are events that involve mental properties, physical events are events that involve physical properties, every event that involves a mental property is an event that involves a distinct physical property. Mental events will be causes in the physical domain because they are identical with physical events. (They are physical events because they involve physical properties). But questions about the causal relevance of the mental in the physical domain will simply re-surface at the level of properties, as opposed to the level of causes. There might not be downward causation (as *sui generis* mental events do not cause physical events), but do the *sui generis* mental properties that a mental (physical) event involves exert downward causal efficacy?

The reason why this problem arises is that properties are characterising entities, features of things. When things causally interact, the manner of their interaction depends on the properties that they involve. When a stone hits a porcelain vase, the vase smashes. This causal interaction takes place in virtue of various properties of the stone and the vase, including the stone's hardness and the vase's fragility. Standing on the broken pieces of the vase causes my foot to bleed. This causal interaction takes place in virtue of various properties of the porcelain shards and my foot, including the porcelain shards' sharpness and my foot's softness. Properties do the causal work because what an entity is like depends on which properties characterise it and which causal relations an entity can enter into depends upon what it is like. Consequently, if events are the causal relata then they can only be the causal relata insofar as they involve properties. It follows that to combine an event monism with a property dualism is simply to invite the question of whether mental events cause physical events *qua* mental or *qua* physical. That is, is a mental event causally relevant in the physical domain in virtue of mental properties that it involves

¹ Note if the causal closure principle was simply formulated as the claim that 'Every physical effect has a complete wholly physical cause', then the combination of it with *Psychophysical Causation* and *Causal Non-Overdetermination* would be compatible with a dualist model of psychophysical causation which held that neural events caused bodily movement via mental causal intermediaries. (For further defence of this point, see Lowe 2000). In *Closure*, the requirement that every physical effect has an *immediate*, complete wholly physical cause is there to rule out the possibility of there being any such gaps in causal chains of physical events for non-physical events to fill.

or in virtue of physical properties that it involves? If it is the latter, and, hence, one denies mental properties causal efficacy in the physical domain, then one abandons any serious commitment to psychophysical causation. But if it is the former, then one is forced to abandon either (a modified version of) *Closure* or *Causal Non-Overdetermination*.² Unless one does abandon one of these two principles, if the causal closure argument is valid, *sui generis* mental properties cannot exert downward causal efficacy. This problem is just as intractable as the problem of how *sui generis* mental events could be causes in the physical domain. The problem is removed if mental properties (that are causally efficacious in the physical domain) are identical with physical properties. (Note that this is a problem that *all* property dualists who are committed to psychophysical causation must face, regardless of how intimate the connection is between mental and physical properties that they propose. To avoid the problem, nothing short of identity will do. Consequently, the non-reductive physicalist who maintains that mental properties are distinct from physical properties is also faced with the problem, despite his further claim that mental properties are ontologically dependent on physical properties.) Nor is this the only *qua* problem that is thought to result from the causal closure argument. Two further, distinct *qua* problems have been raised—one at the level of ‘properties of properties’, the other at the level of ‘properties of property-instantiations’ (Noordhof 1998 and Macdonald and Macdonald 2006). Both, it is argued, are just as serious as the original *qua* problem.

Concerns about *qua* problems in the mental causation debate have, I consider, added a further layer of unnecessary complication to an already complicated debate. The second and third *qua* problem—that is, the one concerning properties of properties and the one concerning properties of property-instantiations—are ontologically confused. The only *qua* problem that isn’t ontologically confused—the original *qua* problem (which concerns the properties that a cause involves)—can be avoided with little or no metaphysical consequence to those in the mental causation debate. There are no *qua* problems in the mental causation debate, at least none that are worth worrying about. There is only one problem that needs to be addressed—the problem of how there can be mental causes in the physical domain that are not themselves physical. In this paper I hope to establish why. §2 further considers the *qua* problem concerning the properties that a cause involves. §3 discusses the *qua* problem concerning property aspects, i.e. properties of properties. §4 discusses the *qua* problem concerning properties of property-instantiations.

2. Coarse-grained versus fine-grained accounts

First, a note about some of the above phrasing. I have purposefully spoken only of events *involving* properties. I adopt this loose form of speech because I do not want to imply that events *have* properties.³ I find the idea that properties could characterise events to be confused. Properties only characterise objects, or, in other words, substances. It might be the case, as Kim holds, that events just *are* property-instantiations—that is, that an event is the instantiation of a property by a substance (at a time) (Kim 1993b).⁴ In that case events involve properties. But the claim that

² Such a modified version of *Closure* might be as follows: Every physical effect has an immediate and complete wholly physical cause, where each physical effect that a physical cause brings about is wholly explainable in terms of purely physical properties that the physical cause involves.

³ Some metaphysicians are, it would appear, happy to accept this implication. (See, for example Ehring 1987).

⁴ In what follows, for simplicity when referring to Kimean events, I shall omit the time reference.

events are property-instantiations is not to be confused with the claim that events instantiate properties. Properties are not instantiated by events—they are instantiated by substances. It is *the stone* that is hard and *the vase* that is fragile. Property-instantiations, the stone-instantiating-hardness or the vase-instantiating-fragility, do not instantiate properties and any suggestion to the contrary seems to be guilty of a category mistake. (The claim that property-instantiations do not instantiate properties is one that I shall return to and defend in §4, which discusses the third *qua* problem.)

Given these considerations, we can now clarify what it means for an event to ‘involve’ a property and how this differs from the sense in which substances ‘involve’ properties. Substances involve properties because they have properties. Events involve properties because an event just is a substance instantiating a property or, given less fine-grained accounts of events, a substance instantiating several properties or some complex of substances instantiating various properties.

Let us now turn to the distinction between ‘fine-grained’ and ‘coarse-grained’ entities. To accept that events are Kimean—that is, that an event is the instantiation of a property by a substance—is to advance a fine-grained account of events. This is because each Kimean event involves only one property. (This is, of course, not to suggest that, if Kimean events are the causal relata, the complete cause of an event will therefore only involve one property. The complete cause of an event in most cases will be a complex of Kimean events.) Alternatively, one might advance an account of the nature of an event according to which events are qualitatively dense—each event involves several properties as opposed to just one. (For example, given a coarse-grained account of events, one might hold that Kate’s party is an event and that it is an event which involves the property of being on the 27th May, the property of having thirty guests, etc.).⁵ But in light of what has just been said—namely, that it is *substances* that properties characterise—a far more obvious example of a coarse-grained entity is a substance.

Contrast the claim that Kimean events are causes with the claim that substances are. While Kim would claim that it is *the stone instantiating the property of hardness* that caused the vase to be cracked, those who accept that substances are causes would claim that it is *the stone* that caused the vase to be cracked. That is, it is the stone considered in all of its entirety that is the cause, not some cross-section of the stone as Kim’s property-instantiation account of the causal relata suggests. (As an aside, note the claim here is that substances are always causes, not that substances are also always effects. In the above example, the suggestion that a substance is an effect is implausible, for the claim that the stone caused the vase makes no sense. Rather, a substance, the stone, caused the vase to be cracked, which is a property-instantiation, a Kimean event.)

⁵ The *locus classicus* of a coarse-grained theory of events is commonly thought to be Davidson’s. Given this interpretation of a Davidsonian event, critics of Davidson’s position in the mental causation debate—that of anomalous monism—take it to be one that combines an event monism with a property dualism. As a consequence, they consider that Davidson’s anomalous monism must face the problem of whether a mental event is causally relevant in the physical domain in virtue of the mental properties that it involves or the physical properties that it involves. Their conclusion is that, given the premises of anomalous monism, Davidson cannot resolve this problem and his position must ultimately collapse into a property epiphenomenalism. For Davidson’s position see, for example, Davidson 1980b, 1993. For this criticism of Davidson’s anomalous monism see, for example, Kim 1993c and Honderich 1982. Contrary to this, I argue that Davidsonian events are not coarse-grained. They in fact lack any grain at all, because Davidson is a nominalist. Consequently, anomalous monism cannot be accused of property epiphenomenalism (Gibb 2006).

Clearly, proponents of the claim that substances are causes would not wish to deny that substances enter into the causal relationships that they do because of the properties that characterise them. As Lowe, a substance causation theorist puts it, objects participate in causal relationships, and ‘an object participates in such relationships in different ways according to its different properties.’ (Lowe 2006, 15) Nor would they wish to deny that (usually, if not always) when a substance participates in a given causal relationship, not all of its properties will be causally relevant to its participation in that causal relationship. The stone caused the vase to be cracked *in virtue of* its hardness, not, say, in virtue of its colour.

Are the causal relata coarse-grained or fine-grained entities? Where s_1 and s_2 are substances and p_1 and p_2 are properties, a proponent of the claim that substances are causes will say that s_1 causes s_2 ’s instantiating p_2 in virtue of s_1 instantiating p_1 . A proponent of the claim that property-instantiations are causes will instead say that s_1 instantiating p_1 causes s_2 ’s instantiating p_2 . The difference between these two positions is, I consider, simply one of approach. The first starts with the idea that substances are causes, the ‘engines’ of causation, and then, due to the qualitative specificity of causation, ‘works in’ by supplementing their claim with an ‘in virtue of principle. The second starts by identifying the causally efficacious property and then ‘works out’ from this property, specifying what the instantiation of this property is an instantiation by.

However, for the purpose of the mental causation debate, assuming that causes are fine-grained entities removes a layer of unnecessary complication that this debate does not need. Say that one combines a substance monism with a property dualism—mental and physical properties are distinct properties of the body. If substances are causes, then this gives rise to the previously discussed *qua* problem. If mental substances are physical, and, hence, mental causes are physical, the combination of *Closure* and *Causal Non-Overdetermination* is consistent with mental causes having physical effects. But do mental causes ever have physical effects in virtue of their mental properties? Is there downward causal efficacy from mental properties?

If the causal relata are fine-grained entities, property-instantiations, there is no such *qua* problem. If the causal relata are property-instantiations, then causes do not have epiphenomenal properties. A mental cause is the instantiation of a mental property by a substance and a physical cause is the instantiation of a physical property by a substance. If a mental event is a cause in the physical domain, then the mental property that it is an instantiation of must be causally efficacious in the physical domain. Moreover, if events are property-instantiations, then one cannot combine an event monism with a property dualism. If a mental event is identical with a physical event, then the mental property that it is an instantiation of must be physical, because for two property-instantiations to be identical, they must be the instantiation of the same property. Consequently, if there are mental causes in the physical domain but these are identical with physical causes (and, hence, there is no downward causation) there is no further worry to be raised about whether ‘the mentalness’ of the mental cause is in some sense causally redundant in the physical domain. The causal closure argument cannot plausibly be re-asserted at some more fine-grained level.

3. Property aspects

I have suggested that if the causal relata are fine-grained entities, that is, property-instantiations, the causal closure argument generates one problem only—the problem of how there can be non-physical causes in the physical domain. Others in the mental

causation debate would disagree with this claim. According to them, the causal closure argument still generates *qua* problems even if property-instantiations are causes and mental property-instantiations are identical with physical property-instantiations. Three different versions of the *qua* problem have in fact been presented in the mental causation debate. These are as follows:

- 1) If mental causes are identical with physical causes, but a mental cause involves physical properties and *sui generis* mental properties, then is a mental cause a cause in the physical domain in virtue of the physical or mental properties that it involves?
- 2) If mental properties are identical with physical properties, but a mental property has physical aspects and *sui generis* mental aspects, then are mental properties causally efficacious in the physical domain in virtue of their physical or mental aspects? (See Noordhof 1998 and Macdonald and Macdonald 2006, p. 552-3).
- 3) If mental property-instantiations are identical with physical property-instantiations, but a mental property-instantiation has mental and physical properties, then is a mental property-instantiation a cause in the physical domain in virtue of its physical or mental properties? (Macdonald and Macdonald 2006, §4).

The first *qua* problem is the original *qua* problem and the one that has so far been my focus. But what of the second and third less commonly recognised *qua* problems? Both are, I consider, implausible from an ontological point of view.

Let us begin with (2). To claim that a property has aspects is to claim that a property has properties. Given this claim, properties characterise substances, but properties can also characterise other properties. I shall refer to properties of properties as ‘second-order’ properties, where a second-order property is a property of a first-order property. (Note, a second-order property should not be confused with a higher-level property—that is, a property that a *substance* instantiates because the substance instantiates a distinct lower-level property upon which the higher-level property depends.)

To explain the *qua* problem involving second-order properties: The conclusion of the causal closure argument is that mental causes are identical with physical causes. If a cause is the instantiation of a property by a substance, and mental causes are physical it follows that mental properties are physical. Hence, mental properties are causally efficacious in the physical domain because they are identical with physical properties. But, then, are those mental properties causally efficacious *qua* mental or *qua* physical? That is, is it in virtue of its mental or physical properties that a first-order mental property is causally efficacious in the physical domain? If it is in virtue of *sui generis* mental properties, and, hence, there is downward causal efficacy at the level of property aspects, then one is forced to deny either (a modified version of) *Closure* or *Causal Non-Overdetermination*. If it is in virtue of its physical properties then one is forced to deny a (modified version of) *Psychophysical Causation*. According to the original *qua* problem, the claim that mental causes are physical relocates the question of whether the mental is causally redundant in the physical domain to the level of properties. According to this *qua* problem, the claim that mental properties are physical relocates the question of whether the mental is causally redundant in the physical domain to the level of second-order properties. Moreover, if second-order properties themselves have properties, to identify second-order mental properties of first-order mental properties with second-order physical properties of first-order mental properties does not provide a way out, for then one can simply raise

the question of whether second-order mental properties are causally efficacious in the physical domain in virtue of *their* mental or physical properties, *ad infinitum*.

I do not take this *qua* problem to be a troubling one because I do not consider that second-order properties should be admitted in one's ontology. Traditionally one way of characterising the distinction between substance and property is that substances are entities that bear properties, whereas properties are entities that are borne by substances. (See Lowe 2006, p. 9). If properties bear properties this cannot be correct for then the former properties would have to be classified as substances. This might be taken simply to suggest that this way of characterising the distinction between substance and property needs adjusting. Hence, one might instead adopt Aristotle's characterization of an individual substance, according to which an individual substance is one that bears properties but is not borne by *anything*. (Once again, see Lowe 2006, p. 9). But the idea that properties can play the role that is typically ascribed to substances—that is, that they can bear properties—raises the suspicion that the claim that properties have properties involves a category mistake. This suspicion is borne out when one considers supposed examples of second-order properties.

In his defence of the claim that it is legitimate to raise the question of whether a mental *property* is causally efficacious in the physical domain *qua* mental or *qua* physical, Noordhof provides two examples of what he takes to be second-order properties. First, Noordhof claims that the constituents of a complex property are aspects of it. Noordhof gives the example of the property of being air, which has, he claims, the property of being part oxygen. Moreover, if a house were to burn down, it would be legitimate, Noordhof claims, to ask which aspect of the property of being air was causally relevant and to answer that it was in virtue of it having the property of being part oxygen. Second, Noordhof considers that if 'two properties stand as determinate to determinable, we can ask 'Which is relevant?' Hence, '(w)e might allow that the red ball causes a dent *qua* having mass, but go on to say that, more specifically, it was *qua* having a mass of 5lb. rather than just *qua* mass'. Noordhof's conclusion is that we therefore 'have two perfectly clear senses in which properties can have aspects which raise questions of causal relevance' (Noordhof 1998, p.223).⁶

Let us begin with Noordhof's second example. I do not think that this provides a satisfactory example of a second-order property. Even if we allow that the distinction between determinable and determinate predicates reflects a distinction between properties (a claim that I would question) and, hence, that 'having a mass' and 'having a 5lb. mass' are both properties and that they are distinct, it does not follow that one is a higher-order property of the other. Say that a ball is 5lb. It is not that the ball has the property of having a 5lb. mass, and that the property of having a 5lb. mass, in turn, has the property of having a mass. Rather, it is *the ball* that has a mass and *the ball* that has a 5lb. mass. Noordhof has, I think, confused the claim that determinables are higher-*order* properties with the claim that determinables are higher-*level* properties. If the distinction between determinable and determinate predicates does reflect a distinction between properties, then plausibly 'having a mass' is a higher-level property. Having a mass is a property that a 5lb. object instantiates because the object instantiates a distinct lower-level property (having a 5lb mass) upon which it, the higher-level property, depends. Because both properties

⁶Noordhof raise this *qua* problem in response to Robb's trope solution to the problem of mental causation (Robb 1997). Robb reject's Noordhof's argument for the same reason that I do—he does not think that there are second-order properties (Robb 2001).

are properties of the object (as opposed to one being a property of the other), the *qua* problem that this really raises is nothing other than the original *qua* problem. Is the 5lb ball a cause in virtue of its determinable property (having a mass) or its determinate property (having a mass of 5lb.)? More generally, is an object causally relevant *qua* having property p or *qua* having property y (where p is a higher-level property of the object and y a lower-level property of the object)? It does not raise a *qua* problem concerning property aspects—that is a problem about whether property p is causally relevant *qua* having property y or *qua* having property x.

Now let us turn to Noordhof's first example of a second-order property. Noordhof's thought is that the property of being air has the property of being part oxygen. Once again I do not think that this provides a satisfactory example of a second-order property. Let us allow that 'being air' and 'being oxygen' are both properties and that they are distinct. Certainly, the relationship between these properties is not the relationship between property bearer and property borne. Consider the stuff air. It is composed of oxygen, together with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, etc. Hence, air is partly constituted by oxygen. Insofar as the properties 'being air' and 'being oxygen' exist, it is the stuff that is air that has the property of being air and the stuff that is oxygen that has the property of being oxygen. The relationship between the property of being air and the property of being oxygen is therefore the relationship between the property of a whole and the property of a part (where the term 'whole' and 'part' range over substances, not properties.) But does this mean, as Noordhof claims that, the property of being air has the property of being *part* oxygen? This claim does not follow. If one accepts that 'being part oxygen' is a property then it is a property of the *stuff* that is air, not a property of the *property* of being air.

I therefore conclude that Noordhof fails to demonstrate that there are second-order properties and, hence, that he fails to demonstrate that version (2) of the *qua* problem is plausible. Unless a convincing example of a second-order property can be given—and I cannot see what that could be—version (2) of the *qua* problem can be dismissed.

4. Event aspects

Now let us turn to the third and final *qua* problem. This *qua* problem is one raised by Cynthia and Graham Macdonald (2006, §4). According to them, the claim that there is no *qua* problem if causes are property-instantiations and mental property-instantiations are identical with physical property-instantiations is false. Macdonald and Macdonald consider that even then one can still raise the following question: Is a mental property-instantiation a cause in the physical domain in virtue of its mental or physical properties? If it is in virtue of a *sui generis* mental property and, hence, there is downward causal efficacy, then one is forced to deny either (a modified version of) *Closure* or *Causal Non-Overdetermination*. If it is only in virtue of its physical properties then one is forced to deny (a modified version of) *Psychophysical Causation*.

Let us attempt to unpack this argument. Macdonald and Macdonald claim that if events are property-instantiations one can distinguish between the property that an event is an *exemplifying of* and the properties that an event *has*, at least some of which the event will have in virtue of the constitutive property of the event—that is in virtue of the property that the event is an exemplifying of. Hence, for example, take the event that is Tom instantiating pain. The constitutive property of the event—that is,

the property that the event is an *exemplifying of*—is the property of being in pain. One of the properties that the event *has*, according to them, is the property of being a mental event. That is, the property of being an instantiation of the property pain.

They construe one of the problems of the causal relevance of the mental in the physical domain to concern the question of whether a mental event is a cause in the physical domain in virtue of mental properties that the mental event *has* or in virtue of physical properties that the mental event *has*. If the mental event that is Tom's instantiating pain is identical with a physical event, then the constitutive property of this event—namely, the property of being in pain—must be identical with a physical property. But because this mental event is identical with a physical event, the Macdonalds will, I take it, claim that the event has the property of being a physical event and, also, that it has the property of being a mental event. Hence, one can ask whether 'Tom's instantiating pain' is a cause in the physical domain in virtue of having the property of being a mental event or in virtue of having the property of being a physical event. That is, whether 'Tom's instantiating pain' is a cause in the physical domain in virtue of having the property of being an instantiation of the property pain or in virtue of having the property of being an instantiation of a physical property.

I consider this argument to be confused because, as I observed earlier in this paper, the assumption upon which it rests—namely, that events have properties—is one that I find implausible. As I claimed there, those who consider events to have properties are guilty of a category mistake. It is only substances that have properties. Property-instantiations involve what the Macdonalds refer to as 'constitutive properties' but they do not *have* properties.

Surely, one might reply, we talk as though events (that is, property-instantiations) have properties? We might say that my foot's being cut is painful, or, that the vase being chipped is annoying, or, that the sky being bright blue is uplifting, or, that the computer being broken is disastrous. Taking the first example, isn't this to ascribe a property (being painful) to an event (my foot having the property of being cut)? I consider such talk to be ontologically misleading. It is not that the event that is my foot being cut has the property of being painful, but rather that the event that is my foot being cut causes the event that is me being in pain. That is, I (a substance) have the property of being in pain and my being in pain was caused by the event that is my foot being cut. For exactly the same kind of reason, the truthmaker of the sentence 'The vase being chipped is annoying' or 'The sky being bright blue is uplifting' or 'The computer being broken is disastrous' is not an event having a property.

However, the examples that the Macdonalds provide of event aspects are different from the ones above. They offer the following examples:

- 1) My having pain has the property of being an instantiation of the property pain (Macdonald and Macdonald 2006, p. 560).

And:

- 2) Jones firing a gun has the property of being an instantiation of the property firing (Macdonald and Macdonald 2006, p. 557, fn. 31).

But, nor does this kind of example carry any ontological weight. Consider (1). 'Being an instantiation of the property pain' is a perfectly meaningful predicate, and it is correct to describe the event that is my having pain as being an instantiation of the property pain. The Macdonalds' assumption would appear to be that from this it follows that 'being an instantiation of the property pain' picks out a property, which the event 'my having pain' bears. But, first note that unless one mistakenly thinks that every meaningful predicate expresses a property and that if an entity falls under that

predicate it is in virtue of having that property, we have no automatic right to any such assumption. Moreover, the Macdonalds are here confusing the ‘is’ of predication with the ‘is’ of identity. It is not the case that my having pain *has* an instantiation of the property pain. Rather my having pain *is* an instantiation of the property pain. The event ‘my having pain’ can be described as being an instantiation of the property pain. But this is nothing other than a redescription of the event ‘my having pain’, whose truthmaker is simply that event, not some property of that event. The same points apply to (2).

I therefore conclude that the claim that events have properties is metaphysically implausible. Attempts to provide examples of event aspects—including those that the Macdonalds offer—fail to demonstrate otherwise. As the third *qua* problem rests on the assumption that events have properties, it can be rejected. Given the implausibility of both this *qua* problem and the previous *qua* problem concerning property aspects, I conclude that if causes are property-instantiations, then the one and only problem that the causal closure argument raises is how there can be non-physical causes in the physical domain.

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