

# Minds and Machines

spring 2003

Mental causation, contd.

# preliminaries

- recitation as usual



## from the philosophical toolkit:

**causally efficacious** and **causally inefficacious** properties (with respect to some effect)

*efficacious* (with respect to the destruction of the apple)

- the bullet's velocity, mass,...

*inefficacious* (with respect to the destruction of the apple)

- the bullet's color, place of manufacture,...

# causally efficacious/ inefficacious properties

- the distinction is a bit underexplained, but clear enough for present purposes
- mental properties (believing that it's time for lunch, wanting to burn one's copy of *Elements of Mind*, etc.) are surely causally efficacious with respect to various effects (one's body being at the food trucks, one's copy of *Elements of Mind* being in flames, etc.)
- "...if it isn't literally true that my wanting is causally responsible for my reaching...then practically everything I believe about anything is false and it's the end of the world" (Fodor, quoted in Kim, p. 171)

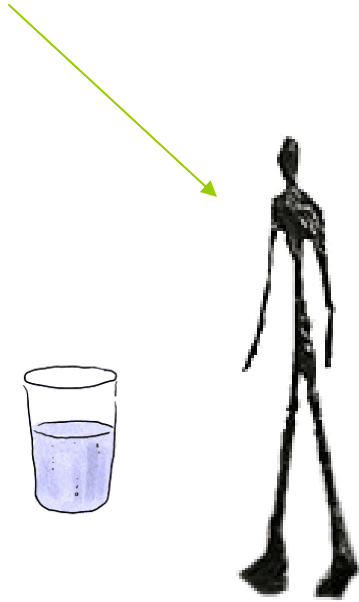
# “The many problems of mental causation”

- the problem of anomalous mental properties
- the problem of extrinsic mental properties
- the problem of causal exclusion

# the problem of extrinsic mental properties

- causally efficacious:  
momentum
- causally inefficacious:  
made in Ohio
- aren't causally  
efficacious properties  
intrinsic?

Oscar wants water



Oscar on earth

Twin-Oscar doesn't want water



Twin-Oscar on twin-earth

surely the causal explanation of Oscar's reaching out is the *same* as the causal explanation of Twin-Oscar's reaching out

# the problem of causal exclusion

- “Given that every physical event that has a cause has a physical cause, how is a mental cause also possible?” (p. 174)
- Kim’s worry is that (a) mental properties are not identical to physical properties (for “multiple realization” reasons), and that (b) only physical properties are needed to give causal explanations





from the philosophical toolkit:

## supervenience

### *mind-body supervenience*

if S has mental property M, there is a physical property P such that S has P, and necessarily anything with P has M

(Kim, pp. 174-5, simplified)

- the basic idea (subject to many variations):  
the A-properties *supervene on* the B-properties iff any two possible worlds alike with respect to the distribution of B-properties are alike with respect to the distribution of A-properties



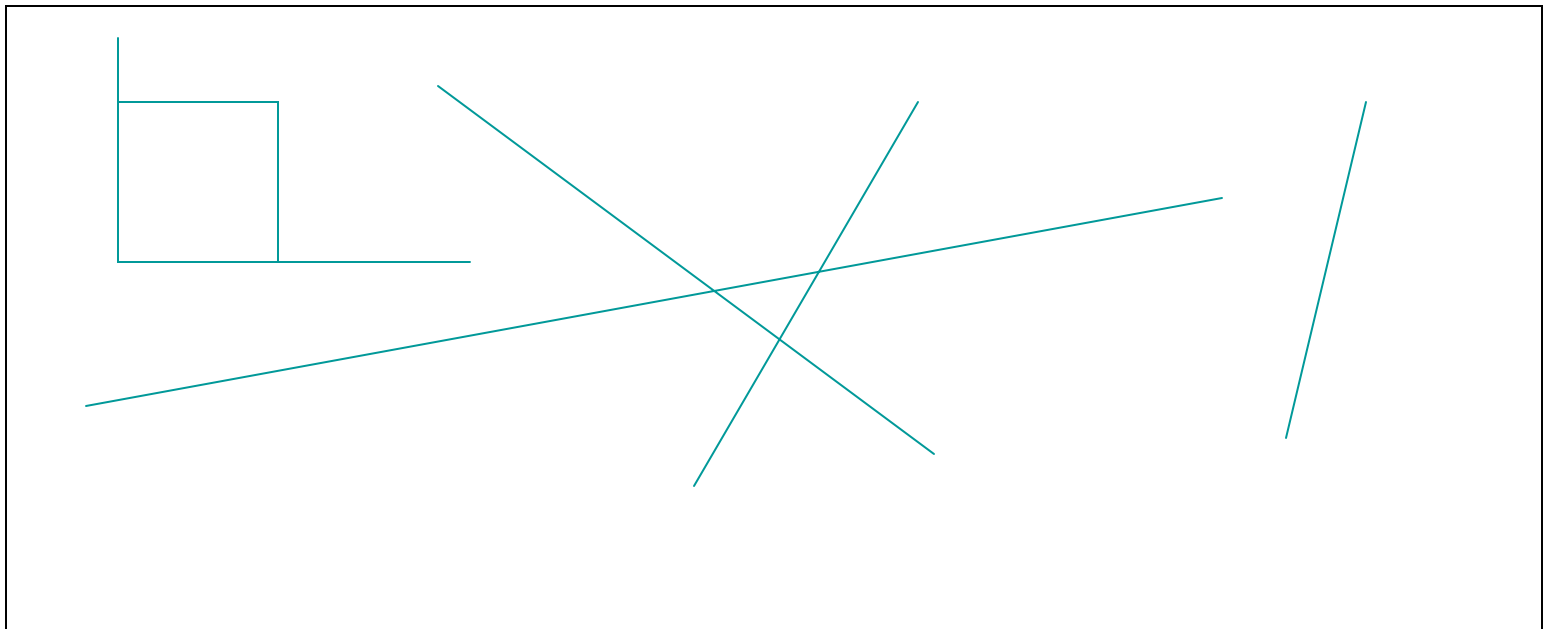
# supervenience

- the basic idea:  
the A-properties *supervene on* the B-properties iff any two possible worlds alike with respect to the distribution of B-properties are alike with respect to the distribution of A-properties
- examples:  
A-properties: being bald, being hirsute; B-properties: having 0 hairs on one's head, having 1 hair on one's head, ...  
A-properties: being a square, being a triangle; B-properties: being a line of length  $l$  at position  $\pi$

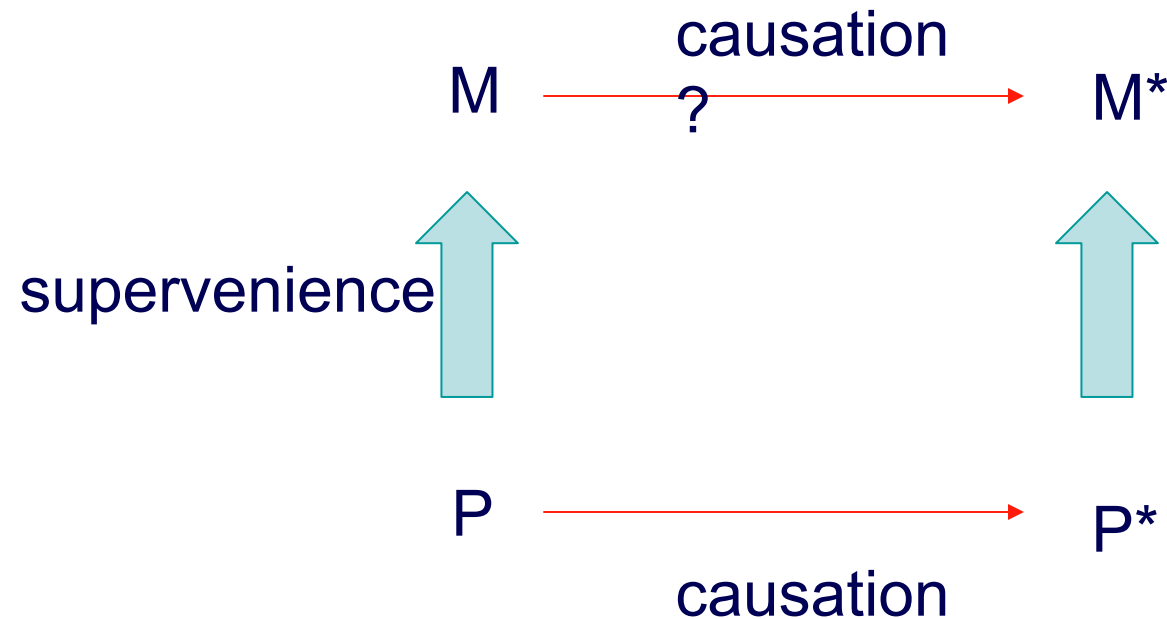


# supervenience

A-properties: being a square, being a triangle; B-properties:  
being a line of length  $l$  at position  $\pi$



# Kim's supervenience argument



“the claim of M to be a cause of M\* [is] in jeopardy: P\* alone seems fully responsible for...the occurrence of M\*” (p. 176)

# the end of the world as we know it?

“In the case of supposed M-M\* causation, the situation is rather like a series of shadows cast by a moving car; there is no causal connection between the shadow of the car at one instant and its shadow an instant later...” (p. 177)

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- read Peacocke, Horgan and Tienson
- read Crane, ch. 3