



65,536 Definitions of Physicalism

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An Intuitive Definition

- Physicalism:
 - All being is ontologically determined by physical being.

Definition Template

- Physicalism:
 - All As of type B bear relation C to the set of Ds of type E.

What Sort of Entities?

- All As of type B bear relation C to the set of Ds of type E.
 - property
 - instantiated property
 - property instance
 - fact
 - truth
 - event
 - particular (token, entity)
 - law
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What Domain of (High-Level) Properties?

- All properties of type B bear relation C to the set of properties of type E.
 - ---
 - qualitative
 - positive
 - contingent
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What are (Core) Physical Properties?

- All properties of type B bear relation C to the set of properties of type E.
 - physics-al (current or ideal)
 - scientific
 - non-mental
 - lowest-level
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What Sort of Relation?

- All As of type B bear relation C to the set of Ds of type E.
 - globally metaphysically supervene on
 - identical to
 - identical to or functionalizable via
 - causal powers subsumed by
 - identical to or constituted by
 - a priori entailed by (*de dicto* or *de re*)
 - explainable via
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Counting Definitions

- $8(A) * 8(B) * 8(C) * 8(D) * 16(E)$
 $= 65,536$

Andrew's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Andrew}
 - Every token is either identical to or functionalizable via physical tokens/laws.

Janice' s Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Janice}
 - Every entity is or is constituted by ideal scientific physics-al entities.

Frank' s Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Frank}
 - Every qualitative property globally supervenes on physical properties (plus that' s all).
 - Every qualitative property is a priori entailed (*de re*) by physical properties (plus that' s-all)
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Jessica's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Jessica}
 - Every --- is --- by current or ideal physical non-mental entities.

Gene's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Gene}
 - Every truth is necessarily entailed by physical truths (plus that's all).

John's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{John}
 - Every property stands in relation --- (ontologically in virtue of?) to physical properties.

Sara's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Sara}
 - Every property stands in relation --- to non-mental push-pull properties.

Noa's Physicalism

- Physicalism_{Noa}
 - Every property metaphysically supervenes on core physical properties.

The Two Main Issues

- The property issue:

What are core physical properties (E)?

- The relation issue

What relation (C) must properties bear to the core physical properties for physicalism to be true?

Metaphilosophical Question

- Q: Is the issue between these definitions of physicalism just terminological?

Terminology Test

- Test for when an issue involving C is just terminological:

(1) Give away the term 'C', in favor of ' C_1 ', ' C_2 ', etc.

(2) Is the issue still statable, without using 'C'? Is there a substantive disagreement about the truth of some sentence in the new vocabulary?

Applying the Terminology Test

- Bar the use of ‘physical’ and ‘physicalism’ (etc.), in favor of physicalism_{Janice}, physicalism_{Jessica}, etc.
 - Is the issue still statable? Is there a substantive disagreement about the truth of some sentence in the new vocabulary?
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The Property Question

- What's the residual issue involving physicalism_{Janice} and physicalism_{Jessica}?
 - “I care more about whether physicalism_X is true”
 - “People should care more about whether physicalism_X is true”
 - “People (in community X) do care more about physicalism_X is true.”
 - “Physicalism_X captures the way the word ‘physicalism’ is most often used (in community X).”
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Mattering for Purpose X

- Maybe:
 - “Physicalism_{Jessica} matters most to the mind-body problem”
 - “Physicalism_{Janice} matters most to general naturalism”
 - But
 - Not clear these are disagreements
 - Not clear that they are true (the vocabulary is still available to make distinctions, either way).
 - So
 - No substantive non-sociological, non-attitudinal disagreement?
 - Not quite right to say, these are right notions for purpose X?
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Holding Fixed

- Maybe: these are articulations of multiple different *conceptions* of physicalism, where one holds different claims fixed.
 - Or: Where one holds fixed different *inferential roles* for “physicalism”.
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Inferential Roles

- E.g. hold fixed
 - If physicalism is true, the world is fundamentally natural.
 - If physicalism is true, physics is the ultimate comprehensive science.
 - If physicalism is true, the mind is non-spooky.
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Multiple Conceptions

- These seem to be different conceptions. Maybe best to use different terms for each.
 - Naturalism
 - Physics-alism
 - Anti-mentalism
 - Different challenges for each
 - Miracles
 - Configurational/high-level laws
 - Fundamental mentality
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Multiple Debates

- We can argue about the best analysis of physicalism according to each conception, e.g.
 - physicalism_{Janice} is a candidate analysis of naturalism [although...]
 - physicalism_{Jessica} is a candidate analysis of anti-mentalism [although...]
 - But not much point arguing across the debates
 - E.g. about whether one should care more about naturalism or anti-mentalism.
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The Relation Question

- Is the relation question terminological?
- Is there a substantive question between supervenience/identity/etc accounts, without using 'physicalism'?

X-ism

- Arguably the issue is substantive.
 - Note that the issue here is much more general than physicalism. It really applies to any domain X.
 - We can raise the question of Xism:
 - Is the world fundamentally X in nature?
 - Is everything ontologically determined by the X domain?
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Intuitions

- We have shared intuitions about ontological determination in (at least some) specific cases, and can raise the substantive question of whether ontological determination is best captured by supervenience, identity, or what.
 - E.g. Shoemaker dualist world (John, Jessica): ontological determination intuitively fails, although supervenience holds.
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Supervenience

- My view: ontological determination best captures (to first approximation) by (global metaphysical) supervenience.
 - X-ism is true if all properties supervene on X-properties.
 - Challenge 1: ectoplasmic angels
 - Challenge 2: haecceities
 - Refine: X-ism is true if all positive qualitative properties supervene on X-properties (in our world).
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Necessitarian Challenge

- Challenge: What if laws of nature are necessary?
 - (1) Reject the thesis
 - Frank: how can non-necessitarian physicalists distinguish themselves from necessitarian dualists?
 - A: Deny necessitarianism! Assert Hume's dictum.
(or: rule out via conceivability-possibility thesis?)
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Hume's Dictum

■ Hume's Dictum:

- There are no necessary connections between wholly distinct existences.
 - If Hume's dictum is true, necessitarianism is ruled out, and the supervenience definition is OK.
 - If Hume's dictum is false, then the supervenience definition needs to be modified or rejected.
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Necessary Condition

- Reaction (2): note that supervenience is still *necessary* for the truth of physicalism.
 - So, one can argue *against* physicalism by arguing against supervenience (phew!).
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If Necessitarianism is True

- If necessitarianism is true? Depends how strong.
 - Are there schmass worlds without consciousness?
 - If yes, then maybe:
 - Define the base properties as structural properties
 - Physicalism is true iff the structural properties necessitate all properties.
 - If no, then maybe
 - Move to a new modality: ontological necessity?
 - X-ism is true if the X properties ontologically necessitate all properties.
 - Q: What is ontological necessity? We have intuitions about it (or something nearby, i.e. ontological determination) – can we make sense of it as a modality in its own right?
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Does Physicalism Require A Priori Entailment?

- Does physicalism require a priori entailment?
 - Frank, Gene: yes, in modified form
(de re a priori entailment, liberal a priori entailment)
 - Underlying question:
 - What's the link between conceptual and ontological determination?
 - Is there a priori insight into ontological determination, and if so, how much?
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Is Physicalism True?

Is Physicalism True?

- No

Residual Questions

- How many core conceptions?
 - Which matter for what role and why?
 - How to make sense of each?
 - Big question: what is ontological determination (if not supervenience)?
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