

THE RUSSELLIAN MONIST'S PROBLEMS WITH MENTAL CAUSATION

BY ROBERT HOWELL

Russellian Monism, the view that phenomenal or protophenomenal properties serve as the categorical grounds of physical dispositions, has increasingly been thought to enjoy an advantage over traditional property dualism in that it avoids epiphenomenalism. This paper argues otherwise. Russellian Monism faces problems with mental causation that parallel those of traditional dualism. The best it can hope for is that phenomenal properties are causally relevant, but not in virtue of their phenomenality.

An increasingly compelling picture of the debates about physicalism and consciousness has it that traditional physicalism fails to account for phenomenal consciousness and dualism runs into trouble with mental causation. Frustrated with this dilemma, many contemporary philosophers are searching for new options. Panpsychism, once met with stares, is now invited into respectable homes.¹ If panpsychism is too extreme, there is protopanpsychism; phenomenality itself isn't everywhere, but the seeds of it are.² These views are developed in various ways, but perhaps the most popular often gets called 'Russellian Monism'.³ Philosophers have different interpretations of what this involves, but roughly the view is that 'basic physical properties involve intrinsic phenomenal quiddities which ground the structural dispositions described by physics'.⁴ While property dualism is naturally seen as a sort of emergentism, with phenomenal properties making their first appearance only when purely physical systems reach a certain arrangement and complexity, Russellian Monism holds

¹ Philosophers such as Chalmers (1996) and Chalmers (forthcoming), Pereboom (2011), Strawson (2003) and others flirt with some version of it.

² See Chalmers (1996) and Alter & Howell (2009).

³ It is unclear whether Bertrand Russell ever held the view, but it is suggested most prominently in Russell (1927). See Stubenberg (2005) and Stubenberg (forthcoming) for compelling evidence that contemporary Russellian Monism was not Russell's view, but see Wishon (forthcoming) for a compelling argument that there is something close to endorsement of the view in Russell (1959).

⁴ Alter & Howell (forthcoming). For a more detailed explication of the structure of Russellian Monism, see Alter & Nagasawa (forthcoming).

that the phenomenal exists at the very basic level. Perhaps those phenomenal properties compose minds only at a certain level of complexity, but the phenomenal is in a sense more basic than the physical; it is the phenomenal properties that ground the physical properties.⁵

Why are people attracted to such a view? To be sure, there is some attraction to the simplicity of monism but this by itself seems a rather slender reed.⁶ Parsimony and elegance are a preference, but if the world doesn't turn out to be simple, physicists and philosophers alike seem happy enough to complicate the story. Russellian Monism is really only attractive if it gets us out of the dilemma that defines the current debate, so it needs to provide a story about how conscious states are causally relevant. Few philosophers are clear about how this can be done, but the hope is that by fitting phenomenal properties into the grounds of physical reality they can't help but play a causal role.

I argue that this hope is misplaced. In fact, the move to Russellian Monism just shifts the old problems and confronts us with the same dilemmas. Given Russellian Monism, phenomenal properties may be causes but they aren't in virtue of their phenomenality. Any way out of this conclusion ultimately undermines the motivation for Russellian Monism by providing equally plausible options to the dualist (to avoid the problem of mental causation) and the physicalist (to block the metaphysical conclusions of anti-materialist arguments). Russellian Monism, therefore, doesn't really offer much promise for getting us out of the current state of play.⁷

I. THE DUALIST'S PROBLEMS WITH MENTAL CAUSATION

The simplest statement of the dualist's problem with mental causation is that the full causal story of the physical world needn't to appeal to phenomenal natures. Phenomenal natures can, conceivably, be added to the story but doing so adds nothing that was needed. The problem stems from what has been called the exclusion argument.⁸

1. The mental is not identical with the physical (mental distinctness).
2. Physical events have sufficient physical causes if they are caused at all (physical adequacy).

⁵ Some philosophers consider that Russellian Monism is a form of physicalism and so 'physical' properties would include the phenomenal categorical bases. I am using it in a narrower sense to involve only non-phenomenal (or protophenomenal) properties. This follows in the usage of philosophers such as Papineau & Spurrett (1999), Crook & Gillett (2001) and Wilson (2006).

⁶ See Kim (2005). Not all versions of Russellian Monism are best construed as monistic, as Alter & Nagasawa (forthcoming) note.

⁷ Kind (forthcoming) is similarly pessimistic based on a different set of arguments.

⁸ This argument is developed most completely by Kim (1989a, 2000).

Therefore, no physical events are uniquely caused by mental events.⁹

If this argument is valid, and it appears to be, the dualist must reject one of the premises. The dualist is committed to accepting the first. Rejecting the second contradicts the (wildly successful) physical story of the world. It would have to be the case that events that appeared to be explained wholly in physical terms cannot be. There would be some intermediary, hidden to the physical sciences, that is crucial to the process. Causal claims in neuroscience would be wrong and since neurons are governed by biochemical laws, the claims made by biologists and chemists would also be false. Since the biochemical is physical, many claims made by physicists are false, etc. This is an unwelcome result, akin to finding a place for God in the world by embracing occasionalism.¹⁰

In the face of this puzzle, we are left to bite the least explosive bullet. Phenomenal consciousness is undeniable and epiphenomenalism is unbelievable. So, either we must think that there is some flaw in the anti-materialist arguments or we must accept forms of epiphenomenalism or interactionism. Such is the current unhappy state of affairs.

II. THE GREAT RUSSELLIAN HOPE

In the face of this puzzle, any new view might inspire hope, and hence, the recent popularity of Russellian Monism. If the phenomenal and the physical are related in a more intimate manner than that suggested by the dualist, perhaps the causal relevance of the phenomenal can be vindicated without contradicting the physical sciences.

There are potentially different versions of Russellian Monism, but the most standard involves viewing phenomenal properties as the categorical bases of physical dispositions.¹¹ To explain: a distinction can be drawn between categorical properties and the dispositions they ground. Fragility, for example, is a paradigmatic dispositional property in that it simply characterizes the disposition of its possessor to break under the right circumstances. Plausibly, though, nothing can have this disposition without there being some property in virtue of which it is fragile. If a glass is fragile, there must be something intrinsic to the glass itself that *grounds* the disposition. An ungrounded disposition is metaphysically incoherent.¹² This applies to any sort of property you choose, from the

⁹ I simplify the argument here by eliminating premises concerning overdetermination since I take it that no one is happy with that option. To be sure, there is some talk of better and worse kinds of overdetermination as in Bennett (2003), but really these cases don't seem like overdetermination at all. I will consider a similar objection to this argument as a challenge to its validity.

¹⁰ See Malebranche (1997). Kim makes this comparison in (1984).

¹¹ Alter & Nagasawa (forthcoming).

¹² But see Holton (1999) and McKittrick (2003).

microphysical level to the macro-level. When one describes negative charge as the disposition to repel objects that also have negative charge, one is obviously only talking about charge in dispositional terms. But again, something must ground this disposition. There must be some intrinsic property of a thing in virtue of which it has this dispositional property.¹³

According to Russellian Monism, the physical sciences are only in a position to give us the dispositional properties of things. They are limited to describing how things are apt to cause other things to behave in space and across time.¹⁴ They cannot, however, characterize things in terms of how they are in themselves—except by appealing to other dispositional properties. They cannot describe the categorical grounds of those dispositional properties except indirectly as those grounds which ground certain dispositions. According to Russellian Monism, this is where phenomenal properties are to be found in nature. If physical properties are paradigm examples of dispositional properties, phenomenal properties are paradigm examples of intrinsic categorical properties. The Russellian Monist's hypothesis is that phenomenal properties provide the categorical grounds for the dispositions physics discovers. Phenomenal properties thus elude physicalistic explanation for the same reason as categorical properties do, but since they are the categorical grounds of the physical dispositions they are not merely addenda to the physicalistic story. They are present at the most basic level.

This story would seem to give Russellian Monism a decided advantage over emergentist dualism. Since phenomenal properties are the categorical grounds of even basic physical properties, they are deeply implicated in the story of why things cause the things they do. Indeed, it is only by having categorical phenomenal properties (or RM properties) that anything has the dispositional properties described by physics. If something causes something else in virtue of a dispositional property, and that dispositional property is grounded in an RM property, that RM property is causally relevant. The beauty is that this causal relevance doesn't involve contradicting the claims of the physical sciences by positing mysterious causal powers injected into the physical system. The causal powers *are* the ones possessed by the physical system.

III. CATEGORICAL CAUSATION AND THE EXCLUSION ARGUMENT

So far Russellian Monism seems to be a pretty elegant story. Granted, it is slightly unbelievable that phenomenal properties are the categorical grounds

¹³ The talk in terms of dispositional and categorical *properties* is not uncontroversial. Others, including myself in fact, follow Heil (2003), Martin & Heil (1999) and Martin (1997) in being quite dubious of this talk.

¹⁴ Russell (1959: 17, 18) and Blackburn (1990).

of physical dispositions, but a view that finds a happy home for consciousness must be taken seriously. To see whether Russellian Monism does in fact avoid the problem of mental causation, it would help to look a little closer at how it deals with the exclusion argument. On a superficial glance, it would seem that Russellian Monism is not particularly well equipped to deal with it at all. The argument doesn't mention anything about where in nature's order phenomenal states are. One wonders how specifying that they serve as categorical grounds will help.

On a closer look, however, there are three ways Russellian Monism could respond to the exclusion argument. It can deny two of the key premises and it can deny the validity of the argument.

III.1 Denying Premise 1: the identity strategy

Can the Russellian Monist claim that in fact the categorical properties are the same as the dispositional properties? As things have been set up, it appears that the answer must be no. The very viability of Russellian Monism would seem to depend on a distinction between the categorical and the dispositional properties. This might not be the best way of putting things, however. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that there are not two different properties here. There is one property—the phenomenal property—that endows its bearer with certain dispositions because of the physical laws that govern it. Suppose R is the categorical property of phenomenal redness and this is the ground of negative charge. On the 'identity' construal, it is not that there is a property R and a dispositional property D and R grounds D. It is rather that there is a property R and a law that states that things with R repel one another, etc. There is one RM property, and talk of a dispositional property is just a way of characterizing the way the law governs that RM property in relation to other properties.

If there is just one RM property that can be construed in two different ways, it seems that there are not two properties to compete for causal relevance. The one property, which is phenomenal, wins by default.

III.2 Denying Premise 2: physical inadequacy

Since the exclusion argument is typically aimed at the emergentist, it is usually assumed that denying physical adequacy is tantamount to denying causal closure and embracing interactionism. Things are not so simple once Russellian Monism is in the picture. The Russellian Monist is committed to the inadequacy of the physical. Since the properties described by the physical sciences are dispositional properties, and dispositional properties cannot exist without categorical grounds, there is a sense in which the physical properties

are inadequate. If Russellian Monism is right, they are inadequate because they do not include the phenomenal categorical grounds of the physical dispositions. So, physical properties cannot cause anything without involving phenomenal properties since they cannot even exist without them.

Interestingly, even though Russellian Monism denies the adequacy of the physical, it can embrace at least a form of the causal closure of the physical. Every physical property still has a sufficient physical cause. The dispositional properties are causally sufficient for the appearance of other physical properties, and Russellian Monism is not committed to there being dispositional properties that involve anything other than physical dispositions. (They can embrace non-physical dispositions and embrace this sort of closure, as long as the non-physical dispositions aren't implicated in the physical causal story.) Because they can deny physical adequacy without denying causal closure, Russellian Monism can deny premise 2 of the exclusion argument without embracing interactionism.

III.3. Denying validity: the grounding exemption

Many philosophers respond to the exclusion argument by maintaining that some relations between mental and physical states are so tight that mental and physical causes do not compete. They can each count as causes without threatening overdetermination and thus without robbing the mental of a unique causal contribution. The relation is akin to relations between determinables and determinates—something scarlet can cause something, and thereby the more determinable property instance of red can cause the same thing, without that effect being overdetermined.¹⁵ Russellian Monism offers a novel version of this strategy. The relationship between categorical bases and the dispositional properties they ground is especially tight. There is no competition between a categorical property and the dispositions they ground. This is not simply an *ad hoc* move by the Russellian Monist. Even if categorical bases are not phenomenal, it is plausible that there must be categorical grounds for dispositions. It looks like we have a threat of mass overdetermination unless the categorical bases and the dispositions don't compete.¹⁶ If this is true in the non-phenomenal case, it is true in the phenomenal case as well. But if there

¹⁵ See Yablo (1992), Bennett (2003), Shoemaker (2007), Ehring (2011) and Wilson (2011).

¹⁶ I'm actually quite sympathetic with the arguments of Heil (2003) that these facts suggest that categorical bases and the dispositions they ground are not really two properties but one property described in two different ways. One can imagine the Russellian Monist (incorrectly as I will argue) trying to co-opt this strategy, but at that point strategy c really becomes strategy a which denies the non-identity premise. The problem will reappear on that level about the relationships between different parts of the categorical base, and there is no indication of an intimate tie between those parts.

is no competition between RM properties and the causal dispositions they ground, the exclusion argument doesn't threaten Russellian Monism.

IV. CATEGORICAL BASES AND CAUSAL GROUNDS

Russellian Monism seems much better poised than property dualism to provide a causal role for phenomenal consciousness. A closer look at the Russellian Monist's responses will reveal that things are not quite so rosy, however. Some new distinctions have to be made, and the exclusion argument has to be revised, but the basic problem remains. My general argument will be that even if phenomenal properties cause things on the Russellian Monism picture, they do not cause things in virtue of their phenomenal nature. The situation, in fact, is familiar from the debate between Jaegwon Kim and Donald Davidson over the causal relevance of mental events.¹⁷ On a Davidsonian picture of events, mental events are causally relevant because they are identical to physical events. Davidsonian events, however, are fairly coarse grained, involving the instantiation of a diverse set of properties. This allows us to ask in virtue of what does a particular event cause what it does. The problem of mental causation then becomes the problem of showing that things are caused in virtue of the mental properties, and it is compelling that they are not. The same problem arises, in a slightly different way, for the Russellian Monist's attempt to save phenomenal causation. Russellian Monism's ontology makes the problem harder to see, but the problem does not go away.

We can start by considering the identity response. According to this response, recall, there really aren't two properties, one categorical and one dispositional. Instead, there is a single RM property which confers certain dispositions depending on the causal laws. This is certainly one way to describe things, but it is a bit coarse grained in that it hides the potential structure within the RM property and therefore hides—but does not resolve—the issue of what is doing the causal work. Consider a world w_1 in which R, phenomenal redness, grounds the property of negative charge given the causal laws governing R in w_1 . Now consider world w_2 where G, phenomenal greenness, is covered by those same laws so that G grounds the causal powers associated with negative charge and R instead grounds the powers associated with negative spin. Finally, consider a third world, w_3 , in which the laws are such that either R or G can ground the powers of negative charge—R and G are governed by exactly the same laws in exactly the same ways. Compare R in w_1 and R in w_2 . One is tempted to ask whether they are the same property, but regardless of how we want to answer that question we can ask whether

¹⁷ See Davidson (1980) and Kim (1989) for the origins of the debate, but Davidson (1993), Kim (1993), Sosa (1993) and other contributions to Heil & Mele (1993) for the debate's development.

they are exactly similar. Clearly they aren't. They are similar in one respect, their phenomenal character, but different in another, their causal profile. The same holds for R in w_1 and G in w_2 . It would be absurd to deny that these properties are similar—from the point of view of our best sciences they are indistinguishable—but it would be just as absurd to deny that there is a respect in which they are different. Whether we want to call those respects properties or not will be a matter of philosophical preference that need not be resolved here. (Someone who wants properties to be as fine grained as possible, such that any respect of similarity or difference must be explained by the presence of some property, will say these 'respects' are properties. As far as I can tell, though, a more coarse grained notion of properties is not incoherent.) Either way, there is a question about what grounds the resemblances and differences. The same question can, of course, be asked from within a world—we can ask about the resemblances and differences between R and G in w_3 . In all cases, we see a clear answer—some similarities are grounded in the phenomenal character and others are grounded in the causal profile. Even given the ontology of Russellian Monism, therefore, there must be different relationships of grounding in virtue of which the different resemblance relations hold.

Once we recognize that there must be complexity in the categorical grounds whenever RM properties bestow causal powers, worries about competition arise. In the case of phenomenal causation, we want phenomenal properties to have causal power in virtue of their phenomenality. That means that we want the properties to cause things in virtue of that which grounds the similarity between R in w_1 and R in w_2 . But that doesn't appear to be the case since R in w_1 and R in w_2 are causally quite dissimilar. The point can be made within a world as well. We want the properties in w_3 to cause things in virtue of that which grounds the similarity between R and G (in that world). It cannot be the phenomenal character because they are quite dissimilar phenomenally. It thus appears that these properties do not, after all, cause things in virtue of their phenomenal character.

It is liable to be objected at this point that this argument is based on a mistaken conception of the relationship between the RM property and the dispositions it grounds. In particular, it will be objected that the argument introduces complexity where there is none. All it takes for the RM property to ground the dispositional property is that it plays a certain 'role', presumably in the world's system of causal laws. Any categorical property, RM or otherwise, can play any role. If this is the case, it might seem that the RM property needn't include any particular categorical ground in addition to the phenomenal property. If so, then there is nothing to compete with the phenomenal aspect of the RM property for causal relevance.

Let's grant, for the sake of argument, that any categorical property can ground a set of causal powers just so long as it plays the appropriate role in a

world's causal laws.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in order for a categorical property to play that role in a world, there must be something about it (in that world) in virtue of which it does so. There must be a ground, as it were, for the causal powers the property bestows. Perhaps the very same categorical property C can play different roles r1 and r2 in different worlds w1 and w2, but this just means that C must have different features in w1 and w2 in virtue of which it can play those roles.¹⁹

One could take the more extreme step of denying that there needs to be something about the categorical property in virtue of which it plays the role it does. But doing so undermines the metaphysics behind Russellian Monism. The idea behind the need for categorical bases is that there should be something in virtue of which an object has the dispositions it does. An object cannot just be fragile, the intuition goes, there must be something intrinsic to the object in virtue of which it is fragile. It's hard to see why this argument would be persuasive to someone who believed that there didn't have to be anything about a categorical ground in virtue of which it grounds the dispositions it does. If one is willing to accept the brute possession of dispositions, why not have the object ground the dispositions it has without positing categorical properties at all? One can't respond that there has to be something about the object in virtue of which it grounds the dispositions it does unless one is willing to follow that logic when it comes to those grounds. If one does, the fact that the RM properties support diverse grounding relations will lead one to recognize complexity at the level of categorical grounds. At that point, the problem of causal competition rears its head and it seems undeniable that the physical aspect of the RM property is what is causally relevant.

The hidden complexity of RM properties undermines the Russellian Monist's attempt to deny premise 2 of the exclusion argument as well. That response, recall, argues that the physical is indeed inadequate because the 'physical' properties, or the properties that are described by the physical sciences, are only dispositional properties and thus cannot exist without a categorical ground. The categorical ground, according to Russellian Monism, is the phenomenal property, so phenomenal properties are indeed required. It has already been noted that there is a sense in which the Russellian Monist can say this without denying closure. Every physical property still has a sufficient physical cause. The dispositional properties are causally sufficient for the appearance of other physical properties, and Russellian Monism is not

¹⁸ Many necessitarians about laws would deny this, I take it, as would those who individuate properties causally. See, for example, Ellis (2001) and Heil (2003).

¹⁹ One could have different views here. One could hold that C has all its features in both worlds but it grounds powers in one world that it doesn't in others. All that matters for the argument is ^{that} it has to have some features that ground its role in a world.

committed to there being dispositional properties that involve anything other than physical dispositions. This very point works against the Russellian Monist.

The Russellian Monist doesn't disagree with the point that the properties (or the aspects of the properties) described by physics—the dispositional properties—are sufficient to explain all the causal happenings in the world. Those things are inadequate but not causally inadequate. If Russellian Monism is correct, they are metaphysically inadequate in that they presuppose the existence of something else—a categorical ground. But this doesn't by itself imply that the categorical ground is *causally* necessary—and it therefore doesn't imply that it is causally relevant.

But how could it not be causally relevant? The categorical ground is what has the causal power. One can characterize the causal power in dispositional terms, and characterize it in terms of physical laws, but if in fact a categorical ground is necessary it is because there needs to be something that confers the causal powers and dispositions. The categorical ground is causally relevant by virtue of that fact alone.

We can grant this point. But we have already seen that RM properties are complex. There is at least enough complexity to ground both causal and phenomenal resemblance relations. The fact that the categorical ground has causal powers doesn't imply that it has them in virtue of the phenomenality of the ground. The fact that both R and G can ground certain causal dispositions within a world despite their phenomenal dissimilarity suggests again that it is not the phenomenality of the ground that is really doing the work. It is whatever it is in virtue of which they fall under the relevant laws.

The complexity that exists in the categorical grounds also shows why the third response to the exclusion argument doesn't succeed. According to that response, the dispositional properties and the categorical grounds don't causally compete because they enjoy such a tight metaphysical relationship. We now see that this is not really where the competition is. The competition is in the RM property itself. It is between the phenomenal part of the categorical base and the causal part of the base—or rather that which grounds the phenomenal similarities and that which grounds the causal similarities. These can come apart, as we see in w_1 , w_2 and w_3 . Their connection doesn't appear particularly tight. While we might have difficulty getting a handle on whether the categorical property or the dispositional properties they ground are really causally relevant, we have no such difficulty when asking about the physical versus the phenomenal aspects of the ground. The modal separability helps us see quite clearly which it is. We can see it just as easily as we can tell that it is not the redness of a brick that explains why it breaks a window.²⁰

²⁰ Sosa (1993).

V. THE EXCLUSION ARGUMENT AGAINST RUSSELLIAN MONISM

The exclusion argument against Russellian Monism is the same in structure as the more familiar exclusion argument. The complexity the Russellian Monist exploits within the nature of properties, though, makes traditional formulations—in terms of competition between properties—seem off the mark. We now have the tools to spell out the argument in terms of categorical grounds and other parts of the Russellian Monist picture.

Where an RM property is a property that has a phenomenal categorical ground and some causal dispositions:

1. there are two distinct and separable aspects of RM properties, those that ground phenomenal resemblance relations and those that ground resemblances between causal profiles;
2. all physical events have sufficient causes in virtue of those aspects that ground resemblances between the causal profiles of RM properties.

Therefore, the aspects of RM properties that ground phenomenal resemblances make no unique causal contribution to the physical world.

Since RM properties ground phenomenal resemblances in virtue of their phenomenal natures, phenomenal natures once again wind up making no unique contribution to the physical world.

VI. FROM MICRO TO MACRO

So far we have been simplifying the story by focusing on the relationship between the RM properties and the powers they ground. This story is most usually told on the microphysical level. If so even if the argument in the last section is right, this isn't yet a problem of *mental* causation, since arguably there aren't minds at the micro-level even if there is phenomenality at that level.²¹ This is a problem of phenomenal causation. But we are concerned about how the phenomenal states of human minds like ours, at the macro-level, have causal relevance. What we need now, then, is a story about how the causal problems at the micro-level result in the problem of mental causation we know and hate.²²

A full explanation of how the micro-problem becomes a macro-problem will depend on Russellian Monist's account of how the RM properties combine to generate minds and macroscopic phenomenal properties. That story is

²¹ This would be Rosenberg's (2004) view, for example, though see Strawson (2003).

²² Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing this point.

neither obvious nor forthcoming, but we can still see in outline why the problem must percolate upwards. If the phenomenal aspects of the RM properties are epiphenomenal at the microphysical level, then those aspects can only gain causal relevance at the macro-level given an emergence of new causal powers. But this form of emergentism runs into the classic problem of mental causation and its corollary the problem of downward causation.²³ These new causal powers would of necessity either overdetermine their effects or some macrophysical effects cannot be explained in terms of microphysical dispositions. This violates the causal adequacy of the microphysical. Put simply, embracing emergent causal powers at this stage of the game gives up any advance Russellian Monism was supposed to have made on the traditional debate.

The argument from the micro-problem to the macro-problem goes, then, as follows:

1. If the phenomenal aspects of RM properties are causally irrelevant on the micro-level, the phenomenal properties composed of those phenomenal aspects can only be causally relevant if there are emergent causal powers.
2. Emergent causal powers violate the causal closure of the physical and involve downward causation.
3. The physical is causally closed and there is no downward causation.

Therefore, if the phenomenal aspects of RM properties are causally irrelevant on the micro-level, the phenomenal properties composed of them are causally irrelevant.

Premise 1 of this argument seems true by definition. Premises 2 and 3 are supported by a substantial amount of literature which can't be recounted in detail here.²⁴ But even if we suppose that those premises are incorrect, that will only be because emergentism—Russellian Monism's internecine rival—is not really problematic after all. If Russellian Monism only avoids the problem of mental causation because traditional emergentist dualism can avoid it, then the main point of the paper stands: Russellian Monism does not help us deal with the problem of mental causation and we shouldn't be motivated to adopt it over its rivals.

VII. PHENOMENAL VS PROTOPHENOMENAL RUSSELLIAN MONISM

I have been proceeding as though the RM properties were phenomenal properties, such that there is something it is like to have them, but many authors

²³ See Kim (1999) and (2000).

²⁴ For thorough development see Kim (2000).

seem more attracted to the idea that RM properties are protophenomenal.²⁵ That is, RM properties are not phenomenal but they compose phenomenal properties given an appropriately complex system. It is natural to ask whether the protophenomenalist will have an easier time with mental causation than the phenomenalist.

Though protophenomenalism complicates the picture, it doesn't change the basic argument. On the most natural reading, the only difference between protophenomenal Russellian Monism and phenomenal Russellian Monism is that instead of, for example, phenomenal red being the categorical ground of dispositional properties, protophenomenal red is the ground. If this is right, the argument applies to protophenomenal Russellian Monism just as it does to phenomenal Russellian Monism. There will be similarities among the bases—some bases will be proto-red, some proto-pain, etc.,—and there will be similarities among the dispositions they ground. These features of the property can come apart. In one world, proto-red will ground a certain set of dispositions and in another those dispositions will be grounded by proto-pain, and in a third they will be grounded by both proto-pain and proto-red. There is one feature of the property relevant to its (proto) phenomenality and there is another relevant to its causal profile. Only the latter seems to be relevant to the causal work bestowed by the property. The argument here is exactly parallel to the argument against phenomenal RM, and phenomenality is again just along for the causal ride.

There are, perhaps, other ways protophenomenalism can be construed. On one view, the categorical base has a certain complexity baked into it, part of which provides grounds for eventual phenomenal states and part of which grounds the causal powers and dispositions that are possessed by objects having that property. Here again, though, the mental causation argument proceeds smoothly: these features of the base compete for relevance, and there is little question about which one wins. Again, the property is not causally relevant in virtue of the phenomenal or protophenomenal features.

There is a protophenomenalist view that, if plausible, could offer hope to the Russellian Monist. In this view, the protophenomenal grounds necessitate the grounds of the causal powers such that any object that has the protophenomenal aspect of the RM property necessarily has a certain causal aspect. This view is more promising, but the key move isn't really particular to protophenomenal versions of RM. Phenomenal versions can claim a necessary connection between the phenomenal and the causal with no less plausibility. For these reasons, I'm going to put consideration of this view on hold until we consider objection three below.

²⁵ See, for example, Chalmers (forthcoming) and Pereboom (2011).

VIII. OBJECTIONS

Objection 1: The RM-exclusion argument posits complexity where none exists. It is stipulated by Russellian Monism that the categorical ground of causal powers is the phenomenal property, not the phenomenal property and something else. The argument contradicts this stipulation.

Answer: One cannot simply stipulate that a property is simple. Once a property is made to do work that requires internal complexity (such as grounding multiple respects of similarity), one must give up the claim of simplicity on pain of incoherence. To say that the categorical base does not have a part that grounds the causal dispositional properties is to say that it doesn't ground them at all. To say that this part is indistinguishable from the part that grounds the phenomenal similarities is contradicted by the fact that two properties perfectly phenomenally similar can ground radically different causal properties.

Objection 2: Obama is the president of the USA with all the causal powers that come with that job. In another possible world, Romney is the president of the USA with all the same causal powers. This surely doesn't imply that Obama doesn't have the causal powers in this world. But the exclusion argument—or at least the argument for premise 1—seems to make a similar move: because R has the causal profile in w_1 and G has it in w_2 , it isn't really R that grounds the causal powers in w_1 . The Obama argument is bad so there must be something wrong with the phenomenal powers argument as well.

Answer: The arguments are dissimilar in that one is about things and the other is about properties. Once the Obama argument is made about properties, the argument is plausible. Obama does have the causal powers that come with the presidency, but not simply because of the property of being Obama. The property of being Obama cannot be the ground of the causal powers because in w_2 Obama has that property but not the causal powers. That is the same argument being made in the phenomenal powers case, and it seems plausible in both cases.

Objection 3: According to this version of the exclusion argument, there is competition between the parts of the base that ground phenomenal resemblances and the parts that ground causal resemblances. This is made plausible by the possibility of worlds, w_1 , w_2 and w_3 , across which there are properties with the same phenomenal aspect but different causal profiles (and vice versa). But if in fact these two grounds cannot come apart—that is, if the phenomenal part necessitates the causal profile—the two aspects of the property really don't compete.

Answer: Such a 'necessitarian' Russellian Monism might in fact dodge the exclusion argument. Whether or not the base is phenomenal or protophenomenal,

if the relationship between the causal and phenomenal features of the base is intimate enough—and metaphysical necessitation from the phenomenal to the causal probably qualifies—the exclusion argument doesn't succeed.

Ultimately, though, I think adopting necessitarianism of the relevant sort undermines much of the motivation behind turning to Russellian Monism in the first place. Before I make that argument, though, it's worth getting clear on which necessary relations we're talking about. All versions of Russellian Monism should accept the existence of certain necessary relations between the micro and the macro. The Russellian Monist should think, for example, that the phenomenal or protophenomenal properties at the micro-level (those that ground the micro-physical dispositions) necessitate the phenomenal properties that exist at the macro-level.²⁶ Similarly, the micro-physical causal dispositions must necessitate the macro-physical causal dispositions. All this is just to say that the Russellian Monist should accept the supervenience of the macro on the micro. These are not the necessary connections that will help the Russellian Monist out of the exclusion argument. For that they will need the micro-phenomenal aspects of the basic properties to metaphysically necessitate the micro-physical dispositions of the basic properties. This is what would prevent the phenomenal and the causal from 'coming apart' as it does in w_1 , w_2 and w_3 .

Endorsing necessary connections between the phenomenal and the causal is very tricky dialectically for the Russellian Monist since it would involve commitments that would remove any attraction to Russellian Monism in comparison to more traditional views. Russellian Monism should really only be attractive to someone who finds traditional physicalist responses to the conceivability arguments unsatisfying. That is, they find it conceivable that the physical can exist without the phenomenal and they think that conceivability implies possibility. They reject the type A physicalist's claim that it isn't really conceivable but only appears so, and they reject the type B physicalist's claim that the physical necessitates the phenomenal despite the fact that it is conceivable they come apart. These commitments don't square well with the claim that the phenomenal necessitates the physical. Though in recent years the conceivability argument has been most associated with zombies—with the conceivability of the physical without the phenomenal—there is a longer tradition that argues that the phenomenal is conceivable without the physical and that this implies that it can exist without the physical.²⁷ The necessitarian Russellian Monist obviously has to reject this argument, but any way she does so will be in tension with her acceptance of the more recent

²⁶ They might hold the micro-phenomenal only necessitates the macro-phenomenal given other causal features, but in general there will be a micro-macro necessitation.

²⁷ The obvious origin is Descartes (1642), but the argument has recent defenders, including Kripke (1980) and Gertler (2007).

zombie-style conceivability arguments that pushed her to Russellian Monism in the first place. If she claims that it is only *prima facie* conceivable that the phenomenal can exist without the physical/dispositional, then she appears to be making the same sort of move as the type A physicalist with no more plausibility. If she posits necessities that hold despite conceivability, she has to allow the same answer for the type B physicalist and the property dualist.²⁸ Given this, necessitarian Russellian Monism might be conceptually coherent, but it is unmotivated. In this position, one would do better embracing a more traditional form of physicalism or dualism without flirting with panpsychism.

IX. CONCLUSION

Russellian Monism appears to be an interesting view because it finds a place for consciousness at the most basic level of nature. It also seems to avoid the problems of dualism by tying phenomenality and physicality so tightly together that certain questions are difficult even to raise. Questions of causal relevance are among them. Are mental properties or physical properties responsible for my raising my arm? Such a question presupposes that there are two competing answers to that question. Russellian Monism denies this. There is really only one thing that can be viewed either intrinsically—in terms of its phenomenal character—or dispositionally—in terms of the causal profile described by physics. At first glance, it seems the problem of causal exclusion cannot even arise.

I have argued that even if one accepts that view one must still acknowledge enough complexity to give the question of mental causation a foothold. It doesn't matter whether one says that there is one categorical property and one dispositional property or one phenomenal categorical property that confers dispositions. There still has to be enough complexity to account for the fact that these properties can resemble others in more than one respect. There has to be something that grounds the phenomenal resemblances and the causal resemblances. This opens the door to other grounding and in-virtue-of questions and allows us to see the challenge of the exclusion argument: is it in virtue of the phenomenal aspect or the physical/causal aspect that this property makes things happen? The disappointing verdict, once again, seems to be that it is only in virtue of the physical aspects that there is causation. This leaves us once again with epiphenomenal qualia, only in a very surprising place.

²⁸ Necessary connections between the phenomenal and the physical could help the property dualist avoid epiphenomenalism since it is difficult to make a case for competition between properties that necessitate one another.

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Department of Philosophy, Southern Methodist University, USA