

Anomalous Monism as a Theory of Free Action: Against the Epiphenomenalist and Irrelevance Charges

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ABSTRACT

This paper defends the thesis that Donald Davidson's anomalous monism (AM) is a sufficient theory that satisfies the mind-theoretic presuppositions required for his compatibilist commitment on free action to work. I develop this argument by demonstrating that AM's constitutive tenets satisfy the conditions specified by a necessary desideratum for freedom: (i) an agent's *P* psychological states *S* must be causally efficacious; and (ii) such causally efficacious *S* must be construed as reasons attributable to *P*. Token-identity monism accommodates (i), grounding the causal powers of mental events as unrepeatable particulars. The mental anomalist tenet satisfies and is necessitated by (ii), constituting the normative framework that allows *S* to count as *P*'s reasons. My thesis is motivated by two recent attempts to blunt this claim: Mario de Caro doubts AM's capacity to satisfy (i) by redeploying the "standard objection of epiphenomenalism," which I argue misfires because it presupposes an ontology that Davidson rejects. I build the positive case for (i) by supplementing my rebuttal with a non-foretracking counterfactual analysis of mental causation using structural equations. Yalowitz, on the other hand, charges AM's anomalist component with irrelevance in explaining freedom and, in doing so, threatens (ii). I respond to him by showing that his contrastive demand for necessity is unfounded, and the explanatory power of mental anomalism lies in its constitutive role for rational intelligibility. Answering both rejoinders and clarifying AM form the unified goal of my paper to demonstrate how Davidson's theory adequately meets what free action demands of any theory of mind. This sufficiency claim is modest: I leave it open whether other theories of mind can also meet, or even better account for, NCF.

Keywords: Anomalous monism, compatibilism, Donald Davidson, epiphenomenalism, free action

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Conversations about the possibility of free will often rest on presuppositions about the nature of the mind. In determining what constitutes autonomous action, a necessary condition for freedom accepted by many competing compatibilists is that:

NCF: *A* is a free action of agent *P* only if there exists a psychological state *S* such that:

NCF-i: *S* is a state of *P*;

NCF-ii: *S* is the cause of *A*;

NCF-iii: *S* is attributable to *P* as a reason for *A*; and

NCF-iv: The same *S* satisfies both NCF-ii and (NCF-iii), such that the same causally efficacious *S* is attributable to *P* as a reason for *A*.

This captures the base presuppositions about the mind engendered by major contemporary proponents of compatibilism,¹ which is the framework this paper will assume.² Any theory of mind that claims to be sufficient in grounding a broad conception of free action should thus accommodate the mind-theoretic preconditions stipulated in NCF. I argue that Donald Davidson's anomalous monism (AM), in virtue of its constitutive tenets, is a sufficient account that meets this baseline assumption required for his compatibilist allegiance to work. Monism meets NCF-ii, grounding the causal powers of mental events as unrepeatable particulars. The mental anomalist tenet satisfies and is necessitated by NCF-iii, constituting the normative framework that allows *S* to count as reasons. Satisfaction of both automatically secures NCF-i. The two components of AM then jointly facilitate NCF-iv by guaranteeing the token-identity between causally efficacious *S* and the reasons attributable to *P*.

¹ John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971): 5–20; Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*, 6. print, Bradford Books (MIT Pr, 1996); Carolina Sartorio, *Causation and Free Will* (Oxford University Press UK, 2016); Alfred R. Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

² This is not to definitively favor compatibilism over incompatibilism, because the debate between these positions involve substantive disputes that I cannot adjudicate in this paper. I am bracketing this discourse and limiting the discussion on compatibilism because this is the position that Davidson takes and the one that is in contention by the interlocutors to be introduced here.

My thesis is motivated by two recent attempts to blunt this claim: Mario de Caro doubts AM's capacity to satisfy NCF-ii by redeploying the "standard objection"³ of epiphenomenalism,⁴ which I answer in §2; Yalowitz threatens AM's satisfaction of NCF-iii,⁵ which I respond to in §3. Answering both rejoinders and clarifying AM form the unified goal of my paper to demonstrate how Davidson's theory adequately grounds the mind-theoretic demands for free action. This sufficiency claim is modest: I leave it open whether other theories of mind can also meet, or even better account for, NCF.

§1. Anomalous Monism and the Standard Objection

AM is an account of the mind that seeks to dissolve the *prima facie* incompatibility among these three individually intuitive claims⁶:

Principle of causal interaction (**PCI**): There are interactions between the mental and the physical.

Principle of the nomological character of causality (**PNCC**): Laws govern causality; events that cause another are subsumed under strict laws.

Mental anomalism (**MA**): There are no strict laws that can predict and explain mental events.

Jointly accepting PCI and PNCC appears to necessitate psychophysical laws, which are denied by MA. PNCC seems to be falsified upon the acceptance of both PCI and MA. On the other hand, MA and PNCC can be affirmed only at the cost of PCI. Davidson resolves this tension by positing AM's token-identity thesis, stipulating that each principle operates at a different level: PCI refers to extensional events regardless of how they are predicated, PNCC

³ Neil Campbell, "The Standard Objection to Anomalous Monism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 3 (1997): 373.

⁴ Mario De Caro, "Davidson and Putnam on the Antinomy of Free Will," in *Engaging Putnam*, by James Conant and Sanjit Chakraborty, Berlin Studies in Knowledge Research, volume 17 (De Gruyter, 2022).

⁵ Steven Yalowitz, "Anomalous Monism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2025, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2025).

⁶ Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Clarendon Press, 2001), 208.

tracks only the physical vocabulary where descriptive and homonomic generalizations are employed, and MA at the level of psychological descriptions constrained by heteronomic, holistic norms of rationality.⁷ It advocates for ontological reduction while eschewing attempts at definitional or conceptual reduction because of the essentially diverging commitments between the physical and mental schemes. Note that the monistic thesis is not necessarily committed to physicalism, contrary to de Caro's claim that one of AM's two main tenets includes "ontological physicalism."⁸ Kathrin Glüer, in concurrence with other commentators like Olgun⁹ and Gibb,¹⁰ aptly observed that Davidson does not subscribe to physicalism, given that he rejects ontologically privileging one form of description—like the physical vocabulary—over others—such as the mental vocabulary—in absolute terms.¹¹ AM is best read as a type of neutral monism.

AM's formulation has since been contested because it supposedly leaves no causal role to the mental. This is a line of reasoning that de Caro recently rehashed: "If so, from the tenets of anomalous monism it follows that events are causally related because of their physical properties (which are the ones in virtue of which the causal relations instantiate the physical laws that back them)."¹² De Caro thus concludes that AM must really be a form of epiphenomenalism because it leaves the mental causally inert. This is emblematic of the prevalent causal exclusion problem, which comprises five inconsistent claims¹³:

⁷ As scholars have noted, what Davidson refers to as "properties" are actually more accurate to be construed as talk about predicates or descriptions.

⁸ De Caro, 252.

⁹ Deren Olgun, "The Argument for Anomalous Monism, Again," *Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2011): 31–42.

¹⁰ Sophie Gibb, "Why Davidson Is Not a Property Epiphenomenalist," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006): 414.

¹¹ Kathrin Glüer, *Donald Davidson: A Short Introduction*, Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations (Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

¹² De Caro, 255.

¹³ Haicheng Zhao, "Overdetermination, Causal Exclusion, and the Insufficiency of Mental Causation," *Philosophia* 52, no. 4 (2024): 1166–67. An iteration of this was also first formulated by Karen Bennett, "Mental Causation," *Philosophy Compass* 2, no. 2 (2007): 316–37.

Distinctness: Physical and psychological events are distinct from one another.

Efficacy: Mental properties of events may cause physical events.

Completeness: All physical events have sufficient physical causes.

Exclusion: No other sufficient cause can produce the same event. Otherwise, it is overdetermined.

Non-overdetermination: Consequences of events are not overdetermined.

The paradigmatic case of getting an ice cream demonstrates the inconsistency. According to Distinctness, there are two different events or properties: (a) desire to get an ice cream and (b) neural activity realizing that want. Per Efficacy, (a) causes (c): the event of getting an ice cream. But this conflicts with Completeness, which states that (b) is sufficient to produce (c). The problem of Exclusion thus emerges, blocking Non-overdetermination. Jaegwon Kim, whose points de Caro endorse, deployed this line of argumentation against AM: Since event *c*'s causal relations are supposedly wholly fixed by its physical properties *Pc* already, there is no longer any space for causal contribution from its mental properties *Mc*.¹⁴

The common arguments of this kind may thus be schematized:

P1: If an event *c* can cause another event *e* in virtue of its mental property *Mc*, then *c* can't cause *e* in virtue of its physical property *Pc*.

P2: *C* causes *e* in virtue of its *Pc*.

C1: *C* can't cause *e* in virtue of its *Mc*.

P3: If mental properties are causally efficacious, then *c* must be able to cause another event *e* in virtue of its *Mc*.

C2: Mental properties aren't causally efficacious.

However, this argument only works if we hold a certain presupposition that already assumes Davidson is committed to. The next section demonstrates why, because of this assumption, the epiphenomenalist charge misfires.

§2. Causal Efficacy and Relevance of the Mental

¹⁴ Jaegwon Kim, "The Many Problems of Mental Causation," in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 172.

Should the standard objection in §1 succeed, AM already fails NCF-ii and my thesis collapses. To press this further, de Caro endorses an explanatory demand made by Kim: what is it about the mental properties of *c* and *e* that makes *c* cause *e*? Such a demand, however, already presupposes the truth of property-realism, positing that robust properties form part of the causal relata explaining the relations between events. Such is the assumption that unifies de Caro's objections:

A1: If an event *c* causes another event *e* in virtue of its mental property or description *Mc*, or physical property or description *Pc*, then in the first place, it must be in virtue of real properties that events cause other events.

Yet A1 is exactly what Davidson's event-ontology, in virtue of its causal extensionalism, rejects. Davidson holds that token causal statements are captured by the form "*c* caused *e*," where only unrepeatable particulars as such stand in causal relations, so the "in virtue of *x*" belongs to the realm of interest-relative causal explanation, not to the determination of the metaphysical grounding of causal relata. Absent independent justification as to why Davidson must adopt this property-realist ontology, critics like Gibb rightly noted that those who charge AM with epiphenomenalism beg the question.¹⁵ The same points have been raised by Yalowitz, Campbell,¹⁶ and Olgun, all of whom de Caro has not engaged with.

This also blunts de Caro's point that the physical is doing all the work after reasoning that, per Completeness and PNCC, it is supposedly in virtue of the physical that causal relations obtain. This, however, is a misunderstanding: it is the causal relation between events that is

¹⁵ Gibb, 415.

¹⁶ Campbell, 376: "Talk of 'properties' is really just talk about predicates and what predicates are true of an event is a matter of how the event is described. There is therefore no question about the causal significance of such items. Whether we use one description or set of predicates as opposed to another when we identify an event has no bearing on that event's causal powers. The epiphenomenalist objection, then, is misguided in its attempt to explain causation in terms of the efficacy of properties because events, not descriptions, cause."

extensional, not the deterministic relations that are only applicable to the complete vocabulary of physics. A more precise formulation, consistent with neutral monism, is:

PNCC*: If event c and event e stand in a causal relation with each other, there must be a strict causal law under which event c 's and event e 's physical descriptions are subsumed.

This precludes the inference that only physical predicates are privileged. Mental terms, employing causal concepts that refer to powers or dispositions,¹⁷ are causally relevant in that they describe events standing in causal relations with other concrete particulars. The ice cream case in §1 presents no inconsistency: there are no two different events, only one spatiotemporal particular that has two descriptions—the desire and neural activity—token-identical to each other, whose causal relation to the action holds between the neutral events themselves.

In this way, for LePore and Loewer, properties are more accurately appraised to be relevant “when c 's being F brings it about that e is G ”¹⁸ as opposed to “ c 's having F and e 's having G “make it the case” that c causes e .”¹⁹ According to them:

“ c 's being F is causally relevant to e 's being G iff:

- i. c causes e .
- ii. Fc and Ge .
- iii. $\neg Fc > \neg Ge$.
- iv. Fc and Ge are logically and metaphysically independent.”²⁰

Let Mc be the psychological description of the event of the desire to get ice cream c , Pc the token-identical neural correlate, and Ge the description of the event of getting an ice cream e :

- (1) $c \rightarrow e$
- (2) $\sim Mc \rightarrow \sim Ge$

¹⁷ Ralf Stoecker, “Action Explanation,” in *A Companion to Donald Davidson*, ed. Ernest Lepore and Kirk Ludwig (Wiley, 2013), 24-25

¹⁸ Ernest LePore and Barry Loewer, “Mind Matters,” *Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 11 (1987): 635.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

While a step in the right direction, this analysis is still incomplete. (2) can be questioned because, if we assume MA, then it is conceivable that though Mc does not obtain, Ge could still occur through a different psychological description that is token-identical to the same physical predicate of an event that causes Ge , seen in (3), or through a different psychological description token-identical to another physical predicate, as in (4):

- (3) $(Mc' \ \& \ Pc) \rightarrow Ge$
 (4) $(Mc' \ \& \ Pc') \rightarrow Ge$

This objection is similar to the common preemption counterexamples against counterfactual dependence analyses of token causation. Suppose a trainee shooter is tasked to kill a victim:

- (5) If the trainee fails to shoot, the supervisor would intervene to kill the victim.
 (6) The trainee managed to fire the gun and kill the victim.

In this case, counterfactual dependence is absent because, per (5), had the trainee not shot, the victim would still have died because the supervisor would have intervened. The counterintuitive result would state that the trainee, in (6), still did not cause the death of the victim. To resolve this, I propose using Hitchcock's formulation of active causal route using structural equations to model LePore and Loewer's condition (i) and explicitly non-foretracking (ENF) counterfactual to specify condition (iii).

In assessing whether e would have occurred had c failed to transpire, ENF stipulates that the analysis must not foretrack: it must hold fixed not only all other variables in the past and laws of nature, but also the other succeeding event serving as an alternative route to e . This follows Davidson's endorsement of Quine's criterion of spatiotemporal location in individuating events.²¹ Since we are scrutinizing specific, unrepeatable concrete instances that are identified by their

²¹ Davidson, 310.

spatiotemporal locus, the occurrence of intervention upon the failure of the original plan would necessarily situate this event and its effect at a different time than what actually happened, thereby constituting different events altogether. Foretracking would change the particular tokens in question. In the instance that (6) fails, then, a death would have occurred, but not *the* same particular spatiotemporal death specified in (6), so $\sim c \rightarrow \sim e$ is still true if e rigidly designates *the* specific death individuated differently from *another*, later death that would have occurred had it been caused by the supervisor.

With this established, the active causal route can then be characterized as such: “the route is active if there is a true counterfactual of the form: if the value of X had been x’, and the value of variables that lie along other routes from X to Z were held fixed, then the value of Z would have been different.”²² This is where the structural equations can help. Let 1 signify occurrence and 0 signify non-occurrence. Using Hitchcock’s own example for the case cited above, suppose that T = 1 represents the event of the trainee shooting, supervisor intervening will be T = 1, and the victim dying is V = 1. Given (5) and (6), the equation is:

$$(7) T= 1; S=\sim T; V= T \vee S^{23}$$

If we follow (6) and assume that the trainee actually succeeded in firing the shot, then the result is:

$$(8) T= 1; S = 0; V= 1$$

²² Christopher Hitchcock, “The Intransitivity of Causation Revealed in Equations and Graphs,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 98, no. 6 (2001): 286.

²³ *Ibid.*, 282.

To test for the active route, the counterfactual must now be assessed: would the victim still have died if the trainee had not shot, and we disallow foretracking?

$$(9) T = 0; S = 0; V = 0$$

The victim, then, would not have died if the trainee had not fired the gun and we hold fixed the fact that the supervisor did not shoot. This vindicates the active causal route from T to V. Thus, we can definitively defend the intuitive idea that in the actual world, the trainee caused the death of the victim, even if there was another world where the victim would still die if the trainee did not shoot there. Applying this to an analysis of mental causation would yield the same result. Return to my earlier example of getting an ice cream. Let C represent both M_c and P_c in (1), E represent G_e , and A the alternative routes specified in (3) and (4):

$$(10) \quad C = 1; A = \sim C; E = C \vee A$$

From here, the solution becomes:

$$(11) \quad C = 1; A = 0; E = 1$$

$$(12) \quad C = 0; A = 0; E = 0$$

In (11), getting an ice cream occurred if the cause of having the desire to get one also did. To test for the ENF counterfactual in (12), if we assume that C did not happen, then E would also not happen if we hold fixed the fact that A did not happen in the actual world. In virtue of this active causal route, it can be said that the mental state M_c , which is identical to neural state P_c at

time t , caused Ge . Although anomalism of the mental states that the desire could have been identical to a different physical state or an event-type of getting an ice cream may be caused by another psychological state that would supplant Mc if it did not happen, what matters are: (a) at time t , the token-identity has already been fixed; (b) so the other conditions that could have caused a similar event would, in fact, be a different token event already because such states would have to occur at a later time t' , thereby changing its spatiotemporal location and its individuation; and (c) testing for actual causation through ENF counterfactual bars the kind of foretracking specified in (b).

To take stock: This section, if it succeeds, blunts the epiphenomenalist charge against AM and shows that an adequate ENF counterfactual test could preserve AM's commitment to NCF-ii. Whether MA does additional work is the topic in the next section.

§3. Relevance of Mental Anomalism

This section will demonstrate how the anomalist component of AM both satisfies and is necessary for NCF-iii because this is what secures the rational intelligibility that grounds reasons-attribution. Before I develop my positive case, I will first address Yalowitz's challenge.

Davidson's position that the "nomological slack" between the physical and mental is necessary to preserve the notion that we are rational animals forms the basis of his position that MA bears on freedom. The most that Davidson had to say about acting freely has to do with his characterization of what freedom to act constitutes: "To say when an agent is free to perform an action intentionally (i.e. with a certain intention) is to state conditions under which he would perform the action."²⁴ But this freedom to act and doing so intentionally is distinct from acting freely, as Yalowitz noted, for it could be the case that one could have the freedom to do X and yet

²⁴ Davidson, 76.

still do X unfreely, such as in cases of manipulation and coercion.²⁵ Yalowitz exploits this gap to develop his challenge. For him, the justification of MA's necessity for freedom lies in the intuition that predictability, which MA blocks, is incompatible with a necessary condition for freedom: the principle of alternate possibilities (PAP), stating that one could have done otherwise.²⁶ This motivated two premises:

- Y1:** MA can only be deemed necessary if it demarcates free action from intentional action by specifying what free action has that intentional action lacks.
Y2: MA cannot make this demarcation following Davidson's rejection of PAP as a necessary condition for freedom.²⁷

From these, he concluded that "Davidson's failure to fill in the gap between intentional and free action" is damning because "while intentional action is necessary for free action, it is not sufficient. And Davidson is claiming that mental anomalism is a key necessary and explanatory condition for freedom in particular."²⁸ My reply to this challenge relies on accepting Y2 but rejecting Y1 because of the contentious account of necessity it inscribes. Y1 commits to the demand that for something to be a necessary condition for something, such as a free action, it must distinguish it from a closely related concept, which is the intentional action. The minimum requirement for necessity is simply what the logical form advances: X is necessary for Y if and only if ($Y \rightarrow X$). There is no burden for X to differentiate Y from other related phenomena. Take a non-controversial case: it is acceptable to posit that having a leg *L* is necessary for the act of dancing, even though *L* is also necessary for walking and it does not fill the gap between dancing and walking. Yalowitz's contrastive demand for necessity, absent sufficient justification, fails, and with it the force of the dilemma that Y1-Y2 attempts to build.

²⁵ Yalowitz, sec. "B.3.2 Anomalous Monism and Contemporary Compatibilism."

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ What Harry Frankfurt called the principle of alternate possibilities (PAP) finds its clearest expression in Peter van Inwagen's incompatibilist thesis. Van Inwagen (400) succinctly summarizes it as such: "the past and the laws of nature together determine a unique future, that only one future is consistent with the past and the laws of nature."

²⁸ Yalowitz, sec. "B.3.2 Anomalous Monism and Contemporary Compatibilism."

Having blunted this contrastive demand, I now build the positive case that the justification for mental anomalism being a non-trivial explanatory and necessary condition for free action lies in its satisfaction and constitution of NCF-iii, rather than in blocking the predictability that would preclude alternative possibilities. According to this tenet of NCF, free action requires that causal psychological states be attributable to agents as their reason. Such attribution is achieved through rational intelligibility (RI). Reasons can only be explicated from psychological states if their conditions are determined by their position in a normative rational space. Such a vocabulary is incompatible with the descriptive, exceptionless deterministic laws of the physical vocabulary. Thus, MA is constitutive of RI. Without MA, the conceptual space that makes RI possible would dissolve.

An earlier exegesis by Yalowitz himself lends greater credence to this claim. He argued that MA is grounded in the causal-dispositional character of mental concepts.²⁹ According to him, the causal character of reasons as dispositions makes them resistant to exceptionless laws, so they can only be subsumed under generalizations with *ceteris paribus* clauses because completing their conditions always introduces further dispositional predicates that generate a holistic regress. The challenge thus returns to him: if he recognizes that causally defined predicates are anomic, and psychological terms of reasons are causally defined, then the very act of reasons-attribution built into free action necessitates MA.

When free action (FA) is rightly recognized as a species or mode of agency, and the practices of reasons-attribution in ascribing agency require MA, then MA would have to be part of the necessary conditions that constitute freedom:

²⁹ Steven Yalowitz, "Rationality and the Argument for Anomalous Monism," *Philosophical Studies* 87, no. 3 (1997): 235–58.

(13) $FA \rightarrow RI$

(14) $RI \rightarrow MA$

(15) $FA \rightarrow MA$

(13) is explained by how FA requires attribution of causally efficacious states to an agent's reason, demanded by NCF-iii. (14) holds per my previous discussion on MA's constituting RI. Thus, (15) follows: FA cannot obtain without MA, satisfying the minimum demand for necessity, such that X is necessary for Y if and only if $(Y \rightarrow X)$. The token-identity in AM secures NCF-iv: the causally efficacious state that meets NCF-ii is the same state where the reasons attributed to an agent are explicated and satisfy NCF-iii.

§4. Conclusion

Throughout the paper, I have argued for an integrated thesis: anomalous monism is a sufficient theory of the mind for compatibilist free action in virtue of its constitutive elements that deploy the conditions stipulated in NCF, which specify the desiderata that any theory of mind must meet to allow free action. The other agential structure-related conditions needed to complete the characterization of free action are ones that I am deliberately silent on here because I am only concerned here with the minimum mind-theoretic assumptions.

The sufficiency claim is also modest: it means that AM adequately satisfies all preconditions for the mind that NCF specifies. AM's token-identity monism is sufficient for NCF-ii, NCF-iv, and consequently NCF-i, but not uniquely so, for another account of mental causation might also accommodate NCF-ii. In doing so, NCF-iv and NCF-i can be appraised differently. What I only claim to be necessary is MA for NCF-iii because no theory of the mind

that rejects MA can satisfy the reasons-attribution condition, at least if Davidson's understanding of RI holds. The precise structure is: AM as an integrated whole is sufficient to accommodate the set of mind-theoretic preconditions of free action—its tenet MA is necessary for one of those conditions, and its token-identity monism is a sufficient condition for the remaining ones. I am agnostic here on: (a) whether other theories of the mind can also satisfy NCF; and (b) if they can, whether they are better than AM in certain respects. Such discussions merit their own extensive exploration.

There are two possible ways to best disarm my arguments. The first one has to do with maintaining the truth of the epiphenomenal charge against Davidson. The way to do this is to argue against his event ontology and property antirealism underlying his defense of events as causal relata. This way, rejection of the possibility of mental causation through AM would no longer beg the question and would proceed by showing its metaphysical untenability. Although there have been some attempts to do this, I share Olgun's skepticism about their success³⁰ and deem the discussion worthy of a separate paper altogether. But the point stands: If we commit to the Davidsonian ontology, any accusation of treating the mental causally inert misfires. The second way is to stand one's ground on the irrelevance of MA as a condition for compatibilist freedom by rejecting (14), which is the most vulnerable premise there. One can show, for example, that RI can be furnished without MA and it is therefore doing no work at all. But to do so, one has to level an adequate reformulation of the character of reasons-attribution. In particular, the causal-dispositional grounding of MA defended by Yalowitz provides significant independent support for (14), so refuting that is another way to go.

³⁰ Olgun, 38-39.

By responding to recent objections to motivate my discussion and clarify the core commitments of AM, I demonstrated that AM is still a sufficient account of the mind that accommodates a compatibilist theory of freedom.

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