

UTCP Lecture

Infinity and the Mind-Body Problem

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Consider the following four solutions to the mind-body problem: (i) physicalism, according to which everything in this world is ultimately physical; (ii) idealism, according to which everything in this world is ultimately mental; (iii) neutral monism, according to which everything in this world is ultimately neither physical nor mental, but neutral; (iv) dualism, according to which certain things in this world are ultimately physical and every other thing is ultimately mental. Interestingly enough, all of these positions seem to assume ontological fundamentalism, which entails the following three theses:

- (i) The hierarchy thesis: Nature is stratified into levels.
- (ii) The fundamentality thesis: There is a bottom level, which is fundamental.
- (iii) The primacy thesis: Entities at the fundamental level are primarily real and the rest are at best derivative, if they are real at all. (Schaffer 2003)

What if, however, there is no fundamental level of reality? Indeed some scientists claim that everything in this world is infinitely decomposable and that, hence, there is no such thing as the fundamental level of reality. In this paper I explore the possibility of infinite decomposition and consider its implications for the mind-body problem. I argue that such a possibility creates serious doubt about each of the four abovementioned solutions.