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- [Browse by Conferences/Volumes](#)
- [Latest Additions](#)

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- [Home](#)
- [About the Archive](#)
- [Archive Policy](#)
- [History](#)
- [Help](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Journal Eprint Policies](#)
- [Register](#)
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How Philosophy of Mind Needs Philosophy of Chemistry

Earley, Joseph (2008) *How Philosophy of Mind Needs Philosophy of Chemistry*. [Preprint]



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Abstract

By the 1960s many (perhaps most) philosophers had adopted ' physicalism' — the view that physical causes fully account for mental activities. However, controversy persists about what count as ' physical causes' . ' Reductive' physicalists recognize only microphysical (elementary-particle-level) causality. Many (perhaps most) physicalists are ' non-reductive' — they hold that entities considered by other (' special') sciences have causal powers. Philosophy of chemistry can help resolve main issues in philosophy of mind in three ways: developing an extended mereology applicable to chemical combination, testing whether ' singularities' prevent reduction of chemistry to microphysics, and demonstrating ' downward causation' in complex networks of chemical reactions.

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