

Preface

Ever since I can remember I had questions about God. I wondered: if God exists, how does God causally interact with the world? This was, and continues to be, a deeply mysterious issue and I was never able to provide myself with a satisfying account. Years later, as a computer science undergraduate student in the 1990s at the University of California, Berkeley, I stumbled upon a philosophy course taught by John Searle. This opened my eyes to the world of analytic philosophy—in particular the philosophy of mind. It wasn't long before I was confronted by the so-called problem of mental causation. If the mind is, in some way, distinct from the body, how does the mind causally interact with the world? This fascinating question has kept me interested in philosophy for the better part of the last decade.

It was only toward the tail end of my doctoral dissertation writing that I began to see the connections between my questions about the God–world relation and the mind–world relation. They shared a number of similarities and I found it quite natural to pose the theological problem in terms of Jaegwon Kim's so-called Supervenience Argument. Given this isomorphism I found that the mysteries surrounding the God–world relation were no more mysterious than the mysteries surrounding the mind–world relation. And a small research project was born.

Since arriving at Renmin University of China in Beijing I have been focusing my research on these topics and have made efforts to bridge the work that has been done in the philosophy of religion regarding the God–world relation and the philosophy of mind regarding the mind–world relation. At the urging of my dean, Yao Xinzong, and my colleagues, Wen Haiming and Liu Yongmou, I decided to put a few of my published papers into a single coherent narrative. This has been a rewarding exercise because it has forced me to explicitly connect the dots and, in the process, see a bit more clearly how an account of the interconnections between God, mind, and world might be fleshed out.

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