Sungho Choi and the 'actual events' clause

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In order to keep matters brief, I shall assume knowledge of my *Mind* paper and Sungho Choi's paper printed before this brief response (Noordhof 1999; Choi 2002). Sungho Choi claims that the example I gave to motivate my formulation of the 'actual events' clause fails to motivate it and that the formulation, in fact, contains a redundant element, namely my appeal to supersets. I think he is right that my example doesn't work. However, I think he is wrong that the actual events clause contains a redundant element. The second case he discusses provides the motivation we need.

  In his discussion of the second case, Sungho Choi makes two key claims. First that e^* probabilistically Σ-depends on p^* (the mereological sum of g^* and h^*) where $\Sigma = \{d^*, f^*, k^*\}$. Second, that there are no other Σ-sets for which a^* comes out a cause of e^*. I concede the second point. However, I think that he is wrong about the first. If we consider what would happen if the mereological sum of g^* and h^* did not occur, it does not follow that neither g^* nor h^* occurred, only that one didn't. In which case e^* does not probabilistically Σ-depend on p^*. If p^* did not occur, it is still possible that one of g^* or h^* did occur and hence that e^* might have occurred. Although, for the reasons given by David Lewis and implied by the similarity metric I put forward in my response to Ramachandran, I don't accept that 'x might occur' entails 'it is not the case that x would not occur', I think that, in the actual set-up he describes, it would be plausible that, if e^* might occur, it is not the case that e^* would not occur (Lewis 1986: 64–65; Noordhof 2000: 319–21). Certainly I would not want to rest a theory on insisting that the move from 'e^* might occur' to 'it is not the case that e^* would not occur' is implausible in this case. It would have better served Sungho Choi's purposes to have appealed not to the mereological sum but to the disjunction of g^* and h^*. e^* does probabilistically Σ-depend on the disjunctive event. But I still have a worry. Some might deny that there is a

disjunctive event in this case. I would not want my theory to rely upon the claim that there are disjunctive events when necessary. Hence, I think that one should stick with my formulation of the 'actual events' clause at the risk of flirting with redundancy. It is certainly better than facing a counter-example.[1]

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References

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