

Identity Theory/Reductionism

What is Identity Theory?

- historical physical examples (MC 26-7)
 - contrast heat with lightning
- brain states are mental states (MC 26)
 - does **not** need to hold that physical vocabulary can be substituted for mental vocabulary *salva veritate* (CBP 44-5, MC 30)
 - does need to hold that everything can be given a physical description (CBP 50, MC 27-9)
- not provable as of now, but optimistic about the future (CBP 44, MC 27)

How does Place seek to establish Identity Theory?

- thesis:
 - ‘Consciousness is a process in the brain’, on my view is neither self-contradictory nor self-evident; it is a reasonable scientific hypothesis, in the way that ‘lightning is a motion of electric charges’ is a reasonable scientific hypothesis. (CBP 45)
- ‘is’ of definition vs ‘is’ of composition (CBP 44-6)
- ‘mental is physical’ vs. ‘table is packing case’ as different forms of contingent truths (46-8)
- observation is inadequate for identity (CBP 47-8, MC 29 and 31-3)
- “phenomenological fallacy” or Churchland’s “Intensional fallacy” (CBP 48-50, MC 33-4)
 - first formulation: misuse of Leibniz’ Law
 - second formulation: unsound premise

Why would Identity Theory be seen as an improvement on dualism?

- no spooky stuff
- greater explanatory power
- fits in better with our world view
- posits no private substance (MC 27)

Why would Identity Theory be seen as an improvement on behaviorism?

- accounts for inner causation (MC 24)
 - there is no ‘black box’ between inputs and outputs
- better able to deal with complexity of human behavior (no need to qualify outputs)(MC 24)
- makes sense of dispositional states

How is Identity Theory different from reductionism?

- Identity Theory is not necessarily reductionism (see Donald Davidson’s ‘Mental Events’)
- Token Identity Theory vs Type Identity Theory
 - Token Identity Theory supports a Token-Token identity
 - each mental token is identical with one physical token (MC 26)
 - mental vocabulary is reducible only to a specific physical process(MC 26)
 - strictly reductionist
 - Type Identity Theory supports a Type-Token identity
 - a mental type is realized by different physical tokens (MC 21)
 - approaches functionalism (MC 26-38)
 - approaches reductive materialism

Bibliography

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