

Reading Guide #5: Identity Theory

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not required to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to Peter A. Morton, *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, Broadview Press, 1997.

David Armstrong, "The Nature of Mind," pp 225-33.

1. What is the physico-chemical hypothesis?
2. How does Armstrong defend scientism?
3. How does behaviorism fit with a materialist view of the mind?
4. What fault does the crude form of behaviorism have? How were dispositions supposed to solve the problem?
5. Why did Ryle's appeals to dispositions fail to solve the problems with behaviorism?
6. What, for Armstrong, is a mental state? How does his characterization retain the dispositional view of minds?
7. Does Armstrong's characterization of mental states favor dualism or physicalism?
8. How can both behaviorism and materialism be criticized for lacking a first-person account of mental states?
9. What, specifically, does Armstrong think the materialist view is accused of lacking? (Consider the automatic driving case.)
10. What, according to Armstrong, is consciousness? How does his understanding of consciousness allow him to reply to the objection that the materialist lacks a first-person account?

J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes," pp 233-242.

1. What is the Wittgensteinian interpretation of pain, or color perceptions?
 2. What is the interpretation of pain, or color perceptions, that Smart wishes to resist? What is the role of parsimony in his defense?
 3. Describe the physicalistic picture of the world. How is consciousness often seen as an exception?
 4. What is a nomological dangler? How would sensations be nomological danglers?
 5. Why does Smart call the Wittgensteinian account "expressive"? What problem does he find with the expressive account?
 6. How does Smart think we should understand sensations?
 7. Is Smart's claim linguistic? Is it logical? Explain.
 8. How does Smart's claim invoke strict identity?
 9. Describe the illiterate-peasant objection. How does Smart reply? Consider the lightning example.
 10. Why can't a report of a sensation mean that the brain is in a particular state? Why does the difference in meaning not entail that the sensation is not a brain state?
 11. What is the difference between mental processes and mental properties? How might the distinction support an objection to the identity theory?
 12. How does the topic neutrality of mental state reports allow the identity theorist to accommodate mental state properties?
 13. How does the distinction between an after-image and an experience of an after-image help avoid two objections?
 14. "The ordinary man when he reports an experience is reporting that something is going on, but he leaves it open as to what sort of thing is going on... (p 239)" Explain.
 15. Would the infallibility of introspective reports of one's mental states support an objection to the identity theory?
 16. Can I imagine having mental states without a brain? Explain the objection implicit in this question.
 17. How does Smart argue, against the Wittgensteinian, that descriptions of mental experiences are real reports?
 18. In what sense is the identity thesis a scientific hypothesis? Why can we not decide between materialism and epiphenomenalism on an experimental basis?
 19. What is the Gosse hypothesis? Why should scientists reject it?
 20. Why should scientists favor the identity theory even if dualism accounts for our mental lives just as well as materialism?
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Saul Kripke, from "Identity and Necessity", pp 243-250.

1. What kinds of statements are supposed to be contingent identities? Why are they supposed to be contingent?
2. Why is the possibility of being in pain, but not having a body, an objection to identity theory? How do identity theorists usually respond?
3. Distinguish rigid from non-rigid designators. Use examples.
4. Under what circumstances, might it be supposed, that heat is not the motion of particles? Why does Kripke deny this possibility? What does Kripke's position mean for 'heat'?
5. Why must the identity of heat and molecular motion be necessary?
6. Why might the identity of heat and molecular motion appear contingent?
7. Why, according to Kripke, is pain a rigid designator?
8. Why must the identity of mental states and brain states be necessary?
9. According to Kripke, what challenge does the identity theorist face?