Lecture Four: Identity Theory

Philosophy 462
September 11, 2014

I. Administrative
   A. Roll
   B. Books?
   C. Questions?

II. Identity Theory
   A. This comes in different varieties: strong type/type, weak type/type, strong token/token, weak token/token
   B. Strong Type/Type Materialism (also “Central State Materialism” or “Identity Theory”)
      1. Mental states are identified with states of the central nervous system. Typically, this is done by identifying types of mental states with types of physical states
      2. This satisfies OP in straightforward fashion. It satisfies EP without rendering the mental superfluous so long as you buy into the “Unity of Science Picture”, i.e., that there is explanatory work to be done by psychology even if it is all at bottom about particles
      3. Certain difficulties posed for this approach can be answered:
         a. Leibniz problem. Distinguish the qualities of experience from the qualities of the objects experienced – focus of argument analysis today
         b. Access problem. What if each state is potentially self-conscious – that is one mode of all thoughts. Deny, that is, the “Cartesian Theater” model
      4. However, there are problems, such as the inability of this view to capture the subjective aspects of the mental, and the “multiple
realizability” argument.

a. The former forces some to say that if a psychological property cannot be reduced, then it isn't real: *eliminative materialism*

b. The latter forces some to token-token identify theories – see below

C. **Weak Type/Type Materialism (Also, “Modified Physicalism”)** – *we will talk about this at greater length later ...*

   1. Mental states supervene on states of the central nervous system. That is,
      
      a. No difference in mental state without a difference in physical state. (*Indiscernibility*)
      
      b. Mental states are fixed by physical state types in accordance with law-like regularities. (*Ontological Priority of the Physical*)

   2. This is consistent with OP, since there can be no mental property instantiated without instantiation of a physical property that fixes it. It is consistent with EP if you modify your view of causal explanation, allowing either for supervenient causation or Humean regularism about causation, and then accept that the psychological need not map cleanly onto the physical

   3. There are problems with this view. Mental properties are not reducible to any of the physical properties that support them. This supports a sort of property dualism.

D. **Token/Token**

   1. As above, the “multiple realizability” argument inclines some materialists to endorse the token/token view
      
      a. That is, mental states are reducible to physical states but as tokens and not as types
      
      b. Any mental state you have is reducible to a physical state
      
      c. This can be cast either in the strong form that involves identity, or the weaker form involving supervenience
2. The multiple realizability argument:

P1. Type/type identity theory: a certain type of pain $P$ is identical with a certain type of central nervous system state $S$

P2. Distribution of mental states: Different organisms $O_1$ and $O_2$ can both experience $P$

P3. CNS variation: central nervous systems vary across organisms capable of experiencing $P$; that is, $O_1$ experiences $P$ and $O_2$ experiences $P$, but the CNS of $O_1 \neq$ the CNS of $O_2$

P4. At least in some cases, the differences in CNS will bear on the individuation of the states identical with $P$ – think here about hunger pains across species; let this be the case described in P3

5. From P3 and P4, it follows that not both $O_1$ and $O_2$ have $S$

6. From P1 and 5, $O_1$ and $O_2$ cannot both experience $P$

7. From P2 and 6,⊥

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C. Therefore, reject P1, which is the least likely of the premises.

3. While token/token theory allows us to identify the pain state of $O_1$ with their CNS state, and likewise for $O_2$, this leaves the point made in P2 a mystery – why are we inclined to say that both of them can have the same pain? In other words, this leaves the issues of mental state type a mystery