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U. T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" In Chalmers, 2002, 55-60.

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(Unmarked section: Forecast of Paper)

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Forecast:

1. Place claims that the thesis that "consciousness is a process in the brain" is "a reasonable scientific hypothesis, not to be dismissed on logical grounds alone."
 - a. The thesis is what we now call (type) identity theory.
 - i. Note that in type identity theory the mental events gathered under a general mental term are held to be identical to brain processes able to be gathered under a general neurological term.
 - ii. By contrast, token identity theory would hold that, due to variation in events under a general term, that the mental events designated by said general term are not a good candidate for an identity relation with the range of brain events gathered under a general brain term, so that it is better to posit the identity of singular mental events and singular brain events.
 - iii. In other words, token identity theory implies that mental term M1 could in organism O1 be identical with brain state B1, but M1 could in O2 be identical with B2. Functionalists take this up this notion "multiple realizability" and run with it.
 - b. Place is not a scientist, but a philosopher clearing space for scientists upholding type identity by defending them against mistaken philosophical attacks.
2. Identity of cness w/ brain activity is justified if we can explain introspective observations (1st person reports) by reference to correlated brain processes (3rd person reports via experimental setup).
3. Phenomenological fallacy (= mistaken idea that descriptions of experience - "I see a computer in front of me" - are descriptions of properties of events on an internal screen) can explain why it might be difficult to give neuro-explanation of introspective reports.

INTRODUCTION

1. Modern physicalism is behavioristic.
 - a. Cness is a special kind of behavior or disposition to behave: having the feeling of an itch is a disposition to behave by scratching. This holds for
 - i. Cognitive concepts: e.g., "believing"
 - ii. Volitional concepts: e.g., "wanting"
 - b. But there seems to be an "intractable residue" of concepts clustering around "experience" that require an inner process story.
 - i. Maybe we'll someday find a behavior account of "experience"
 - ii. But Place will assume we need an inner process story

2. BUT, does this need for inner processes commit us to dualism? That is, must we say sensations and images (what we now call "qualia") are irreducible to correlated physical processes?
3. Place says NO, dualism is not necessary, even if you accept the existence of qualia, so that identity theory cannot be dismissed logically.

DEFINITION AND COMPOSITION

1. To avoid the logical dismissal, we mustn't confuse "is" of definition and "is" of composition.
 - a. Both D and C allow "and nothing else" so they both differ from "is" of predication: you can't say, "the table is black and nothing else."
 - b. But you can say, (definition) "red is a color and nothing else" or (composition) "a cloud is a mass of water droplets and nothing else."
2. However, definitions are necessary truths: "red is a color" is always and everywhere true. There is a co-extensive relation of applicability between meanings of grammatical subject terms and grammatical predicate terms in definitions.
3. But compositions are contingent truths: "his table is a packing crate" may or may not be true depending on the referent of "his" and the time of utterance / verification. BUT IT CAN BE TRUE! There are different meanings but they might be referring to the same object. You would have to verify it empirically.
4. So, "cness is a brain process" if seen as a compositional statement could be true even if the two meanings are different, as they could be both accurately referring to the same object.

LOGICAL INDEPENDENCE OF EXPRESSIONS; ONTOLOGICAL INDEPENDENCE OF ENTITIES

1. "Cness is a brain process" is a general proposition (hence this is type identity theory).
2. For the most part, if you have different meanings you have different referents.
 - a. BUT not in the case of cness and brain processes.
 - b. That's because the two statements have different (and impossible to simultaneously occur) verification procedures.
 - c. For example, you can't see a cloud and a mass of water droplets at the same time. The terms have different meanings, so you're tempted to assert different referents, but you can see them as compositionally identical if you perform the different verification procedures.

CRITERIA FOR ASSERTING TWO OBSERVATIONS OF SAME EVENT

1. Okay, so the cloud = water droplets example is easy because the verification procedures are similar (vision) and only differ by distance. So it's not a great analogy for cness = brain process.
2. Now, lighting = electricity is a better analogy, as there's a heterogeneity of procedures.
 - a. Lightning: vision to verify occurrence of lightning and scientific theory and apparatus to verify occurrence of electricity.
 - b. Consciousness needs introspective report ("I'm seeing green") and brain process needs scientific procedure (some sort of brain scan / EEG let's say).
3. Now we can't just have a causal connection of physical event: the moon causes tides.
4. What we need is a causal connection of a report and a physical event:
 - a. The electrical discharge in the sky caused the visual stimulus that causes the observer to say "hey, that's lightning."
 - b. Similarly, we need to be able to say the brain processes caused the introspective report ("I'm seeing green").

PHYSIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF INTROSPECTION AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL FALLACY

1. So for type identity theory to work you need identity of composition between consciousness and brain processes, that is, causal relation between introspective reports and brain processes.
 - a. But just as you find mistaken attempts at logical refutation of identity theory
 - b. You find dualism in reflections by psychologists; but this is also mistaken:
2. Phenomenological fallacy = mistaken idea that descriptions of experience ("this wind feels cold to me") are descriptions of "literal properties" of objects and events on an internal movie screen, which is called the "phenomenal field."
 - a. So if someone says "I see green" and it's an after-image, there's no green thing in the world, and as you can't apply "green" to brain processes, then you have a dualism: there's nothing physical here to which "green" applies, yet the subject is seeing "green." So the sensation of "green" here is non-physical.
 - b. But this assumes that because our ability to describe things in the environment depends on our consciousness of them (you have to see a table to be able to say "I'm seeing a table") that what we are primarily describing is our experience, and only secondarily – by inference – the thing in the world. That is, the PF is the mistaken idea that we infer real properties from phenomenal experience.
3. But what actually happens is that we learn how to describe things in the world (that is, we primarily cognize real properties – "that table is made of wood") and only then do we learn to describe our experience of those things ("I am seeing a table").
 - a. So when we describe our experience we are describing the real properties of things that normally cause that "sort" of conscious experience.
 - b. That is, in the case of the green after-image the introspective report "I see green" means "I am having the sort of experience I normally have when I see a green thing, and that I have learned to describe as 'I see green'."
4. So introspective reports ("I see a moving light") can be explained by brain processes that cause the subject to describe his experience in that way. Even when the light is really stationary, the psychologist can explain the experiential report by saying the brain process is that which normally occurs in observing a moving light and that therefore is now causing the report of a moving light.
5. So what you need to know is how a subject has learned to distinguish certainty and doubt in perceptual experience and learned to precede doubtful reports with "it seems to me that ..."