

The Identity Theory
Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?"

The Identity Theory: the theory that every conscious mental state or event is identical to (one and the same thing as) a state or an event in the brain.

1. Identity

We must distinguish:

- a) *identity and correlation:*
 - Footprints are correlated with the burglar but they aren't identical with the burglar. But, Bill Sykes *is* identical with the burglar.
- b) the 'is' of *predication* and the 'is' of *identity*:
 - *Superman is a talented guy.* (the 'is' of predication)
 - *Superman is Clark Kent.* (the 'is' of identity i.e., Superman is identical to Clark Kent; he *is* Clark Kent.)
- c) *analytic identities and synthetic identities* (or, as Place puts it, the 'is' of *definition* and the 'is' of *composition*):
 - *The richest bachelor in the world is the richest unmarried adult male in the world.*
This is a statement of analytic identity, true on the basis of the meanings of the terms involved. A statement of analytic identity employs the 'is' of definition.
 - *Heat is molecular kinetic energy; lightning is an electric discharge; pain is c-fibers firing.*
These are statements of synthetic identities. They all employ the 'is' of composition.

Place is not saying that mental states/events are correlated with brain states/events. See (a).

Place is saying that mental states/events are brain states/events in the way that Bill Sykes is the burglar and in the way that Superman is Clark Kent. See (a) and (b).

Place tells us that many philosophers have resisted the identity theory because they do not distinguish the identities in (c).

2. The Phenomenological Fallacy

"[W]e treat...two sets of observations as observations of the same event in those cases where the technical scientific observations...provide an immediate explanation of the observations made by the man on the street" (58)

Now think about the claim that mental events/states = brain events/states. What are the observations made by the person on the street?

They are, Price tells us, the *introspective reports* of the person on the street.

The question: How do we explain our introspective reports in terms of brain processes given that these reports typically refer to entities that form no part of the physicalist's framework?

"The supposition has to be, it would seem, two continuous series of events, one physico-chemical, the other psychical, and at times interaction between them" (passage cited in Place, 59)

Place draws attention to the *phenomenological fallacy*:

The phenomenological fallacy: the mistaken assumption that one's introspective observations report "literal properties of objects and events on a peculiar sort of internal cinema or television screen." (59)

How does pointing out the phenomenological fallacy help us to undo the apparent problem with *the question* (above)?