

**Phil 317: [Handout #5]**  
**J.J.C. Smart: *Sensations and Brain Processes***

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**§ Smart's Basic Assumptions:**

- \_\_\_ Every organism is a form of physiochemical mechanism.
- \_\_\_ Everything should be explicable in terms of physics.
- \_\_\_ There should be nothing that is "over and above" physical phenomena.  
[Nothing can be "nomological danglers." ]
- \_\_\_ Therefore, a man is a vast arrangement of physical particles, but there are not,  
over and above this, sensations or states of consciousness.

**§ Smart's Main Thesis:**

- \_\_\_ Sensations are brain-processes.

**Read p. 170**

Q: What does Smart mean by "in so far as 'after image' or 'ache' is a report of a process, it is a report of a process that *happens to be* a brain process"?

Q: How does it follow that the thesis does not claim that sensation statements can be *translated* into statements about brain processes?

**§ Identity**

[strict identity]:     **x and y are identical *in the strict sense***  
                              **iff x and y are spatially and temporally coexistent.**

**[Note]:**

Pain and pain-behavior do not have strict identity. They may be spatially and temporally continuous. According to Smart, pain and brain-processes is a different story.

**§ Objections and Replies**

**[Objection 1]**

\_\_\_ The things we are talking about when we describe our sensations are not processes in our brain since we may describe the former without any knowledge of the latter.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ example of the Morning Star and the Evening Star.

\_\_\_ example of lightning and electrical discharge.

Q: What is his point?

**[Objection 2]**

\_\_\_ Our present scientific discovery about the brain could be falsified in the future. So, pain may not be C-fiber firing after all.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ But this does not show that what we report (having a pain-sensation) is not in fact a brain process.

Q: What is his point?

**[Objection 3]**

\_\_\_ the existence of irreducibly psychic properties: the qualities of sensations are something over and above the qualities of brain-processes.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ the concept of a normal percipient.

\_\_\_ the example of color: colors are powers to cause sensations in human beings, which are identifiable with brain processes.

\_\_\_ When a person says, "I see a orange after-image," he is saying something like this: *"There is something going on which is like what is going on when I really see an orange."*

Q: What is his point?

**Read p. 173, and evaluate the strength of this reply.**

**[Objection 4]**

- \_\_\_ 1. The after-image is not in physical space.
- \_\_\_ 2. The brain-process is in physical space.
- \_\_\_ 3. Therefore, the after-image is not a brain-process.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ There is no such a thing as an after-image or a sense-datum, though there is such a thing as the experience of having an image, and this experience is located in the brain.

**[Objection 5]**

- \_\_\_ 1. A brain-process can be said to be slow or swift.
- \_\_\_ 2. But the experience of seeing something orange cannot be so described.
- \_\_\_ 3. Therefore, the experience is not a brain-process.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ 'Experience' and 'brain-process' may in fact refer to the same thing, though they don't mean the same or have the same logic.

**[Objection 6]**

- \_\_\_ 1. Sensations are private (not-sharable) and infallible.
- \_\_\_ 2. But brain-processes are not.
- \_\_\_ 3. Therefore, sensations cannot be identified with brain-processes.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ The language of introspective reports has a different logic from the language of material processes.

**[Objection 7]**

\_\_\_ It is conceivable (I can imagine) that I be turned to stone and still have sensations.

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ All the objection shows is that 'experience' and 'brain-process' do not have the same meaning. It does not show that an experience is not in fact a brain process.

\_\_\_ The identity *is* a contingent one; it is logically possible that there should be no brain-process while there are sensations. But this does not show that they are in fact not identical.

**[Objection 8]**

\_\_\_ The "beetle in the box" objection.

Q: What is the point here?

**[Reply]**

\_\_\_ We can say that the brain processes which are experiences are causal conditions of our reports of immediate experience.

**§ Conclusion**

**1. The brain-process thesis is not an empirical claim.**

Q: Why not?

**2. The principles of parsimony and simplicity decide overwhelmingly in favor of the brain-process theory (over dualism).**