The Nature of Consciousness
Handout [14]
Saul Kripke: *The Identity Thesis*
[From Naming and Necessity, Part III]

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§ The Goals:

1. To refute type-type identity theories.
2. To analyze the nature of identity statements [A = B].

§ The Difference between the Type-Identity Thesis and the Token-Identity Thesis

The Token-Identity Thesis:
___ Each token (instance) of mental states is one and the very same thing as some token of physical state within the brain or the central nervous system.
(thinking that P at time t_1 = being in a token of brain state at time t_1)

[Example]:
___ Jones's pain at 6 o'clock was his C-fiber stimulating at that time.

The Type-Identity Thesis:
___ Each type of mental states or processes is one and the very same thing as some type of physical state or process within the brain or the central nervous system.
(having a thought P = being in a brain state B_1)

[Example]:
___ Pain is the stimulation of C-fibers.

[Question]: **Is it possible to discover the neural correlate of a certain type of mental states (such as pain) in human beings ["species-specific type-identity"]?**

§ A Digression: Rigid Designator vs. Accidental Designator

[Rigid Designator]:
___ Let's call a term a 'rigid designator' if in every possible world it designates the same object; as used in our language, it stands for that thing, when we talk about counterfactual situations.

[Example of rigid designators]:

___ 'water', 'Richard Nixon', etc.

[Accidental Designator]:
___ We call a term or a phrase a 'non-rigid' or 'accidental designator' if that is not the case.

[Example of accidental designators]:
___ 'the first President of the United States'
___ 'the man who invented bifocals'
___ 'the first Postmaster General of the United States'
___ 'the man who won the Presidential election in 1970'

§ Kripke's Assumptions on Identity Statements

[I] Identities between two *accidental designators* are *contingent* identity

Consider these sets of identity statements:
1. The man who won the Presidential election in 1970 = the man who was involved in the Watergate scandal.
2. The first Postmaster General of the United States = the man who invented bifocals.
⇒ **Even if they are true, we could still imagine (conceive the possibility of) having one and not the other satisfied in some possible world.**

[II] If an identity statement between two *rigid designators* is true, then it must be *necessarily* true.

Consider these sets of identity statements:
3. Heat = molecular motion
4. Water = H_2O
5. Pain = the stimulation of C-fibers
⇒ **If these statements of the form [x = y] are true, then there might never have been a situation in which x existed without y ever existing and *vice versa*.**

*[Necessary truth]:
___ A truth that holds for all possible worlds.
___ A truth that is logically impossible to be denied.

§ [Formulation of Kripke's Argument]
___ 1. Let "A" name a particular pain sensation, and let "B" name the corresponding brain state.

___ **2. It is at least logically possible that B should have existed (Jones's brain could have been in exactly that state at the time in question) without Jones's feeling any pain at all, and thus without the presence of A.**

___ **3. But it is logically impossible that any** *pain* **could have existed without Jones's feeling any pain (i.e. without A).**

___ **4. If x = y, then there might never have been a situation in which x existed without y ever existing.**

___ **5. Therefore,** *pain* **is not identical to the type of brain states B.**

[Question]: Is the feeling of pain (pain-sensation) an *essential* **property of pain itself? Can one** *have* **pain without** *feeling* **pain?**

___ **['essence' = that which is inseparable from the thing; the feature without which the object would no longer be the designated object]**