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On Boyd's Rebuttal of Kripke's Argument for Dualism

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Abstract
The essay presents Saul Kripke's argument for mind/body-dualism and makes the suppositions explicit on which it rests. My claim, inspired by Richard Boyd, is that even if one of Kripke's central suppositions - the principle of necessity of identities using rigid designators - is shared by the non-traditional identity theorist, it is still possible for her to rebut Kripke's dualism.

Introduction
The plan for the essay is first to present Kripke's argument for mind/body-dualism and to make the suppositions explicit on which it rests. Second, traditional identity theory is distinguished from non-traditional identity theory, if only to set aside further discussion of traditional identity theory. My claim is that even if one of Kripke's central suppositions - the principle of necessity of identities using rigid designators - is accepted by the non-traditional identity theorist, it is still possible for her to rebut Kripke's dualism. The third section expounds the non-traditional identity theorist's possible appeal to an analogy in order to explain the relation between mental phenomena (e.g. pain) and physical phenomena (e.g. C-fiber stimulation), while section four reconstructs Kripke's attack on this analogy. Refuting Kripke's attack in light of Boyd's proposals in section five, I conclude that non-traditional identity theory is viable.

1. Kripke's Argument for Mind/Body-Dualism
Kripke (1980) wants to defend some form of dualism (without defending Cartesian substance dualism though). In order to do so, he uses the Cartesian Intuition, i.e. the intuition that it is possible that the mind exist without the body and that it is possible that the body exist without the mind. In other words, Kripke deems it possible that there be disembodied minds (or "pure souls") and that there be "disembodied" bodies (or "zombies"); either way - it is possible that the mind is different from the body, schematically represented by:

\( \Diamond (A \neq B) \)

Due to his conception of names as rigid designators, Kripke is committed to what he calls the principle of necessity of identities using rigid designators (cf. Kripke 1980, e.g. p.146). Henceforth, I shall call this principle (PNIRD):

\( (A = B) \rightarrow \Box (A = B) \)

Notice that the logically equivalent contrapositive of this principle is:

\( \Diamond (A \neq B) \rightarrow (A \neq B) \)

2. Mind/Body-Identity Theory
In order to characterize identity theory, it is advisable to distinguish between traditional and non-traditional identity theory. A traditional identity theorist (whether type or token) rejects the (PNIRD) and thus accepts its negation:

\( \neg ((A = B) \rightarrow \Box (A = B)) \)

which is logically equivalent to:

\( (A = B) & \neg \Box (A = B) \)

The traditional identity theorist thus claims (in the first conjunct) that, as a matter of fact about the actual world, it is true that pain is identical with C-fiber stimulation, but - when sharing the Cartesian Intuition (in the second conjunct) - the theorist adds that this is not necessarily true; it is possibly false because we can imagine a world in which pain exists without there being any C-fiber stimulation (e.g. in "pure souls") and because we can imagine a world in which C-fiber stimulation exists without there being any pain (e.g. in "zombies").

Kripke thinks that traditional identity theory is simply false because it is committed to an incorrect conception of names as non-rigid designators. I shall share Kripke's supposition of names as rigid designators and of the (PNIRD) throughout this essay; so I shall set aside further discussion of traditional identity theory here. The goal of the essay rather is to show that even if an identity theorist shares Kripke's supposition, it is possible for her to rebut Kripke's dualism.

Non-traditional identity theory (whether type or token) accepts the conception of names as rigid designators and of the (PNIRD) and is thus committed to the argument:

\( (A = B) \)

\( (A = B) \rightarrow \Box (A = B) \)

\( \Diamond (A \neq B) \rightarrow (A \neq B) \)

3. Identity Theorist's Intuition

Kripke argues that the Cartesian Intuition taken together with the (PNIRD) entails the view that mental phenomena are actually different from physical phenomena; here's the reconstruction of his argument:

\( (1) \Diamond (A \neq B) \)

\( (2) (A = B) \rightarrow \Box (A = B) \) (PNIRD)

\( (3) \Diamond (A \neq B) \rightarrow (A \neq B) \)

\( (4) A \neq B \)

from 1, 2, by modus ponens

4. This claim is in turn logically equivalent to:

\( (A = B) & \Diamond (A \neq B) \)
Now, the non-traditional identity theorist cannot attack the validity of Kripke's argument from the Cartesian Intuition and the (PNIRD). So she must, in an effort to establish that his argument is unsound, rather attack the Cartesian Intuition itself (i.e. the negation of the conclusion of her own argument) - by showing, for instance, that it is impossible that pain be different from C-fiber stimulation.

3. The Non-Traditional Identity Theorist's Analogy

The non-traditional identity theorist (henceforth, the identity theorist) wants to hold:

\[ A = B \]

but cannot at the same time hold:

\[ \neg (A \neq B) \]

For the latter claim contradicts the conclusion of her own argument, and the conjunction of both claims entails that the identity statement is merely contingent (which would render her a traditional identity theorist). Instead, the identity theorist must hold:

\[ \neg \neg (A \neq B) \]

The challenge for her, then, is to say why the above identity statement is only seemingly contingent. The identity theorist must thus explain away its apparent contingency. In particular, she must explain why it is only apparently possible that pain not be identical with C-fiber stimulation, while it is in fact impossible.

Kripke thinks that the identity theorist cannot meet this challenge. In his view, she fails to explain away the apparent contingency of the identity statement - even if the identity theorist employs the following analogy and claims:

(1A) The situation regarding the statement "pain = C-fiber stimulation" is just like the situation regarding the statement "water = H\textsubscript{2}O".

(2A) Also the statement:

Water = H\textsubscript{2}O

has frequently been deemed merely a contingent truth, but - due to Kripke's work - it has turned out to be a necessary truth.

(3A) The explanation why this statement has frequently been seen merely as a contingent truth is that there has been a tendency to mistake it for the statement:

The phenomenon felt as pain = C-fiber stimulation

But it is precisely at this point where the analogy breaks down for Kripke. For the identity theorist cannot continue to argue:

(4B) Now, this statement is admittedly merely contingently true, i.e. it is true in the actual world, but:

(a) it is possible that the phenomenon felt as pain exist without the presence of C-fiber stimulation, i.e. pain (e.g. in "pure souls"); and

(b) it is possible that C-fiber stimulation, i.e. pain, exist without the presence of the phenomenon felt as pain (e.g. in "zombies").

The identity theorist's appeal to this analogy is not viable for Kripke, because he thinks that there is no possible world in which the phenomenon felt as pain is different from pain - thus rendering the statement:

The phenomenon felt as pain = pain

a necessary truth, while he also thinks that there is a possible world in which the phenomenon felt as water is different from water - thus rendering the statement:

The phenomenon felt as water = water

merely a contingent truth (even though "water = H\textsubscript{2}O" is a necessary truth).

Kripke therefore believes that the identity theorist cannot explain away the apparent contingency of the statement "pain = C-fiber stimulation" by appeal to the analogy. The identity theorist consequently has to bite the bullet and to accept the Cartesian Intuition:

\[ \neg (A \neq B) \]

But from this premise, together with (PNIRD), it immediately follows that:

A \neq B

And so Kripke concludes that some form of dualism is true, while identity theory is false.

5 Notice that this claim is logically equivalent to: \( \neg \neg (A \neq B) \) and thus to the negation of the Cartesian Intuition.

6 Alternatively: The phenomenon that produces the sensation we call "the sensation of water" = H\textsubscript{2}O.

7 Alternatively: The phenomenon that produces the sensation we call "the sensation of pain" = C-fiber stimulation.

8 Notice that for Kripke, then, there is a definite description that is a rigid designator.
5. The Identity Theorist's Rebuttal

Boyd (1980, cf. p.83ff.) attempts to refute Kripke's attack on the analogy by arguing from the identity theorist's point of view as follows:

(1C) The situation regarding the statement "pain = C-fiber stimulation" is exactly like the situation regarding the statement "water = H2O".

(2C) The statement:
Water = H2O
is - due to Kripke's work - indeed a necessary truth.

(3C) But the explanation why this statement has frequently been seen merely as a contingent truth is rather that there has been a tendency to mistake it for the statement:
Water = the phenomenon identified as H2O by standard tests available in the actual world
which the phenomenon identified as H2O by standard tests available in the actual world is different from water. Boyd thus thinks that both the statement:
Pain = the phenomenon identified as C-fiber-stimulation by standard tests available in the actual world
and the statement:
Water = the phenomenon identified as H2O by standard tests available in the actual world
are merely contingent and not necessary truths (even though "water = H2O" and "pain = C-fiber stimulation" are both necessary truths).

Conclusion

I agree with Boyd that the identity theorist can explain away the merely apparent contingency of the statement "pain = C-fiber stimulation". While Kripke focuses on the right-hand sides of the identity statements "water = H2O" and "pain = C-fiber-stimulation" and replaces them with mentalistic definite descriptions of the form "the phenomenon felt as _" in order to establish the alleged disanalogy, Boyd focuses on the left-hand sides of the identity statements and replaces them with physicalistic definite descriptions of the form "the phenomenon identified as _ by standard tests available in the actual world" in order to establish the analogy.

And Boyd is right. Water is not identical with the phenomenon felt as water; rather it is identical with the phenomenon identified as H2O by standard tests available in the actual world. Likewise, pain is not identical with the phenomenon felt as pain; rather it is identical with the phenomenon identified as C-fiber stimulation by standard tests available in the actual world.

Hence, the identity theorist can hold that the case of pain being identical with C-fiber stimulation is just like other cases of identity, e.g. that of water being identical with H2O, or that of heat being identical with mean molecular energy, etc. The theorist can thus reject the Cartesian Injunction and accept its negation:

\[ \neg \Box (A \neq B) \]
in which case she does not have to accept Kripke's conclusion that some form of dualism is true. Instead, the identity theorist can maintain that materialism (preferably some form of non-reductive token materialism) is true, and she can at the same time commit herself to the (PNIRG).

Literature
