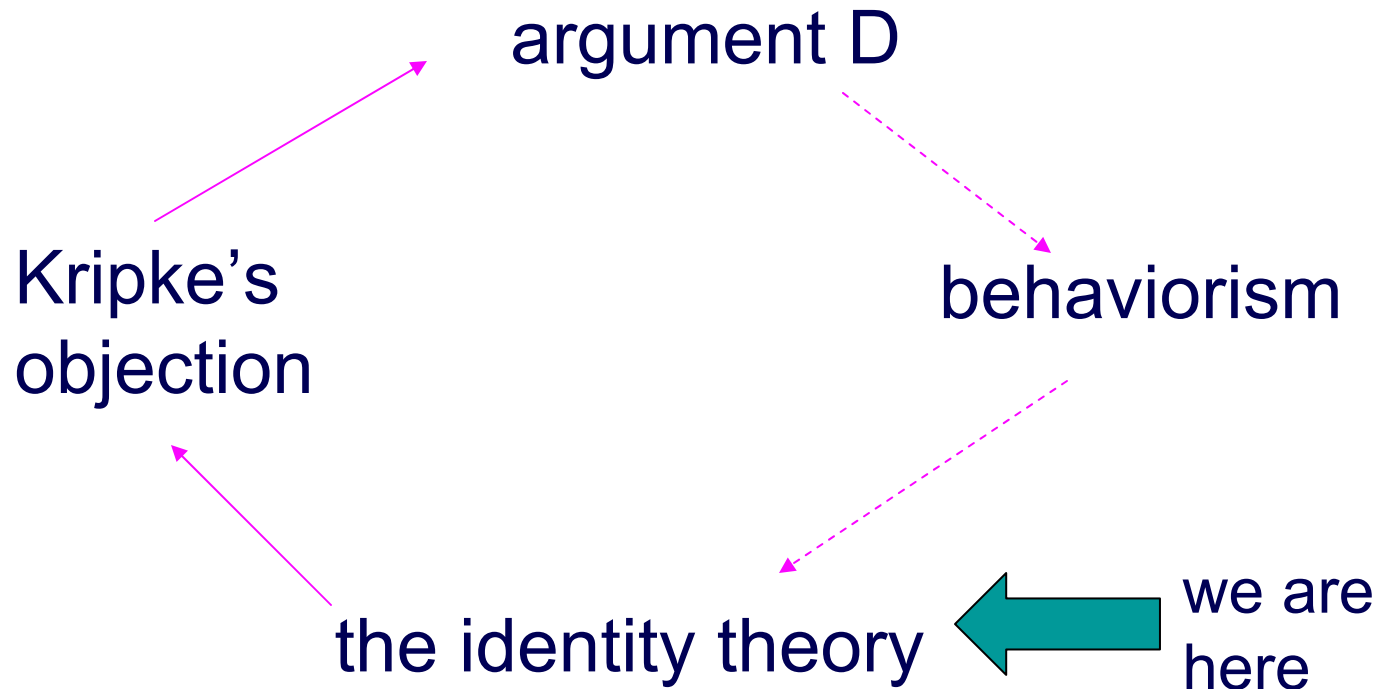


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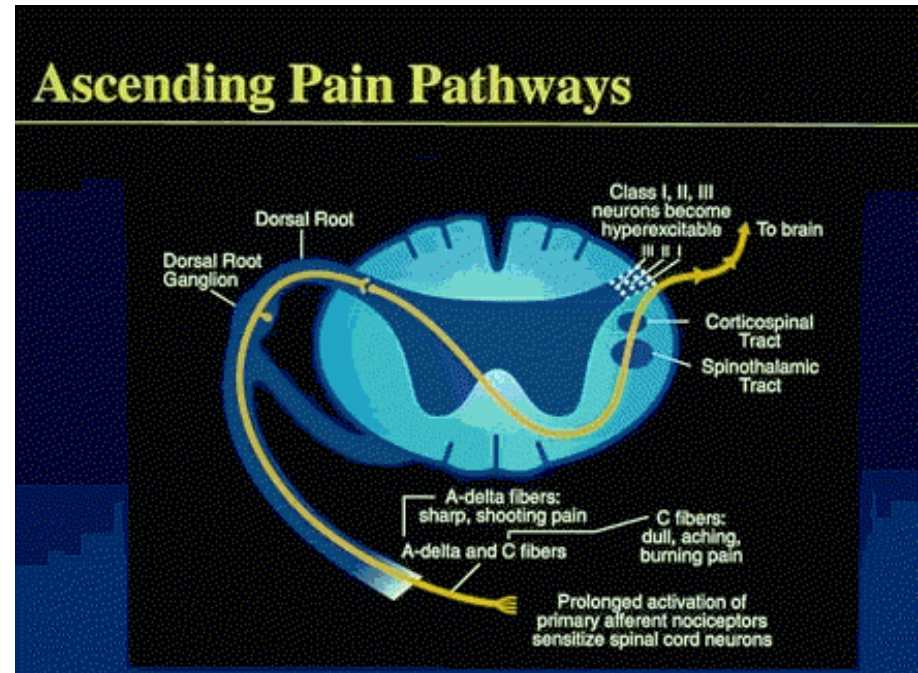
The identity theory

roadmap



the identity theory

- proposed by JJC Smart and UT Place in the 1950s
- a “theoretical identity”
water=H₂O
heat=molecular kinetic energy
pain=c-fibers firing
(“c-fibers” is just a placeholder for a more realistic candidate)



“Sensations and brain processes”

“the suggestion I wish to resist is...that to say ‘I have a yellowish orange after-image’ is to report something irreducibly psychical.

Why do I wish to resist this suggestion? Mainly because of Occam’s razor...That everything should be explicable in terms of physics...except the occurrence of sensations seems to me to be frankly unbelievable. Such sensations would be ‘nomological danglers,’ to use Feigl’s expression.”

JJC Smart

William of Ockham (1287-1347)

- Nominalism: properties (or “universals”) don’t exist
- “Ockham’s razor”: entities are not to be multiplied without necessity

identity

- correlation vs. identity
footprints≈the burglar/Bill Sykes=the burglar
- the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication



from the philosophical toolkit:

types and tokens

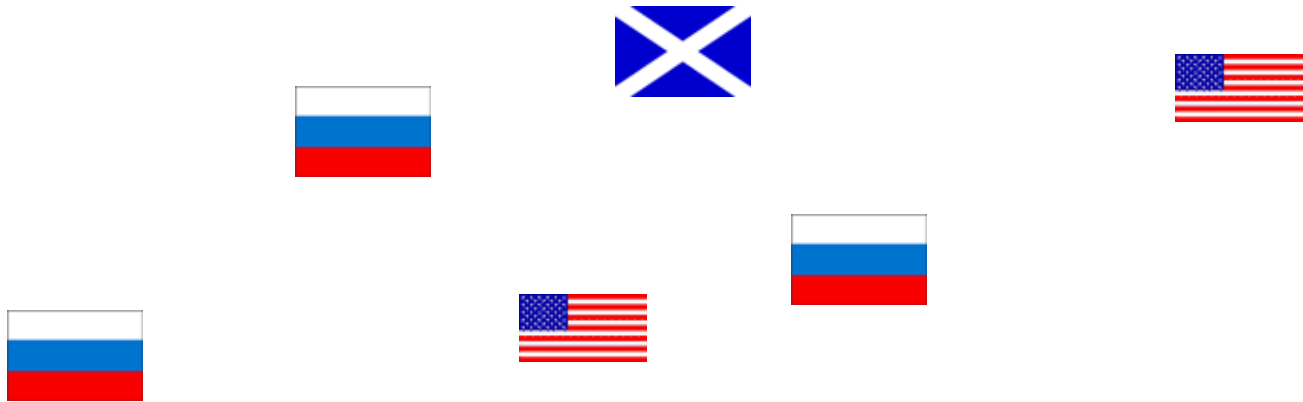
- this terminology is due to the “American Pragmatist” C. S. Peirce (1839-1914)

- example 1

how many words in this sentence? ‘The cat sat on the mat’

6 tokens, 5 types

- example 2
how many flags?



6 tokens, 3 types

“type-type” vs “token-token” identity theories

- pain = c-fibers firing
(“type-type”)
- Smith’s pain at 10am = c-fibers firing in Smith
at 10am
 Jones’ pain at 11am = d-fibers firing in Jones
at 11am
 ...
(“token-token”)

the Smart/Place theory is a “type-type” identity theory

- despite the terminology, “type-type” identity theories are not best understood in terms of the “type-token” distinction
- it is better to think of the “type-type” theory as identifying *properties* rather than types
(note that the American flag -- taken either as a type or a token -- is not a property)

the property of being in pain = the property of having firing c-fibers

the property of being in pain = the
property of having firing c-fibers

=>

every event of feeling pain is identical to
an event of c-fibers firing (and vice
versa)

- so the so-called “type-type” identity theory implies a strong sort of token-token identity theory

Twain and Clemens

(see Block and Stalnaker, 382)

≈

or

=?

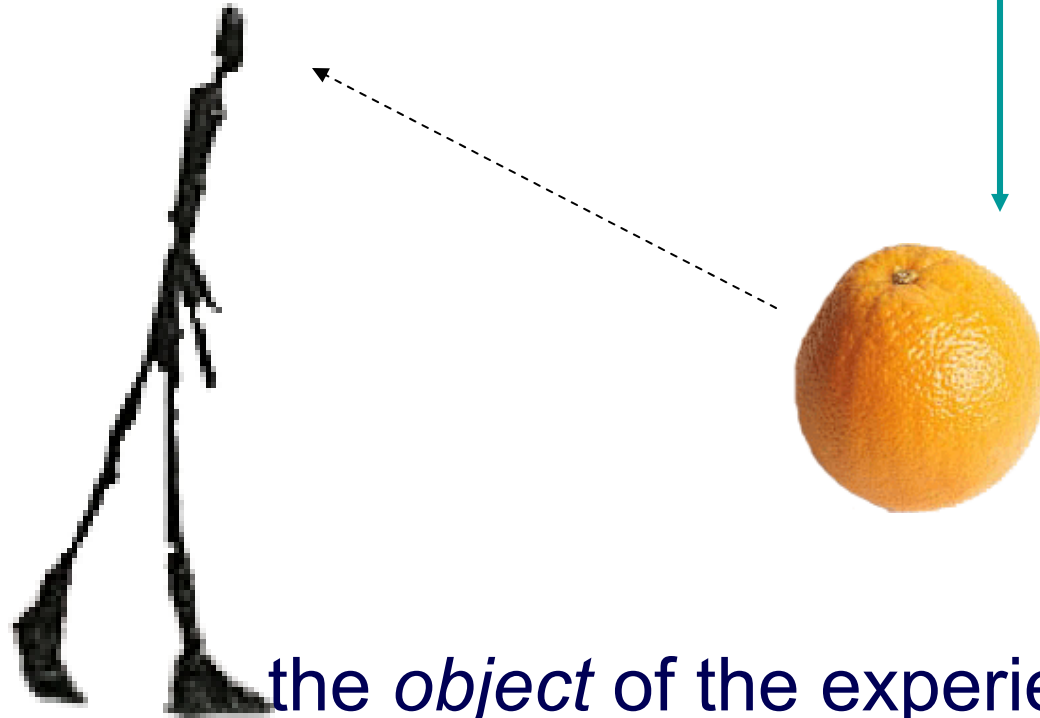
Mark Twain

born in Florida, Missouri, on
November 30, 1835...died in
Connecticut on April 21, 1910

Samuel Clemens

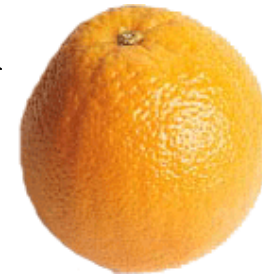
born in Florida, Missouri, on
November 30, 1835...died in
Connecticut on April 21, 1910

the experience vs. the object of
the
experience



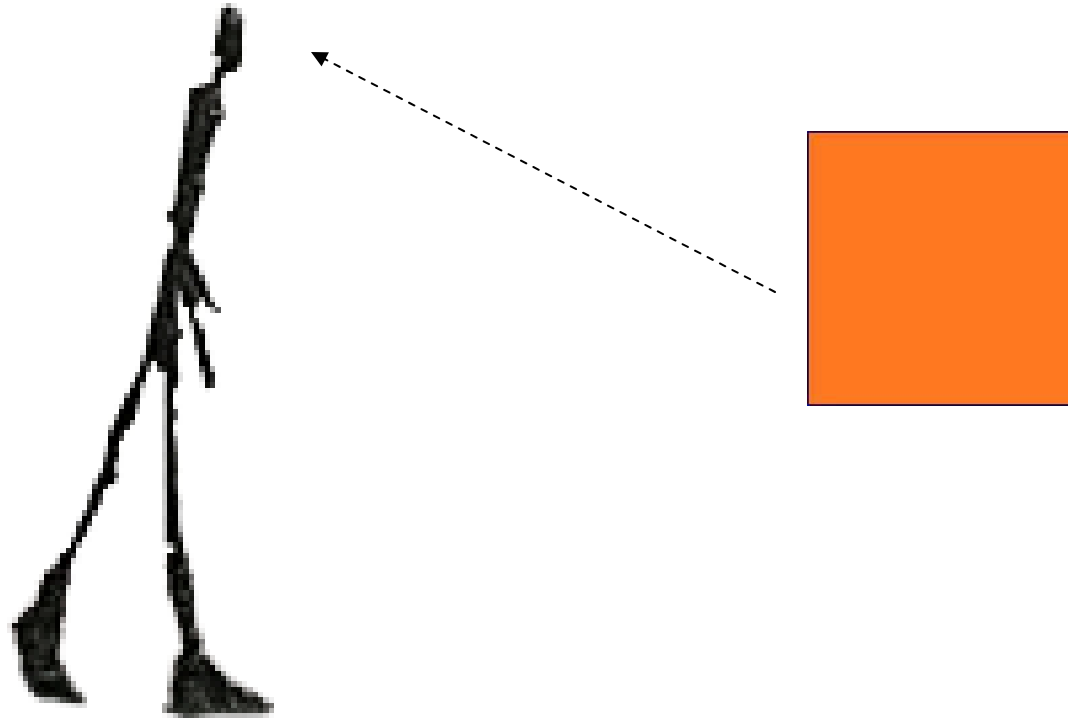
the *object* of the experience is colored orange, not the experience itself

the *experience* = such-and-such
brain process

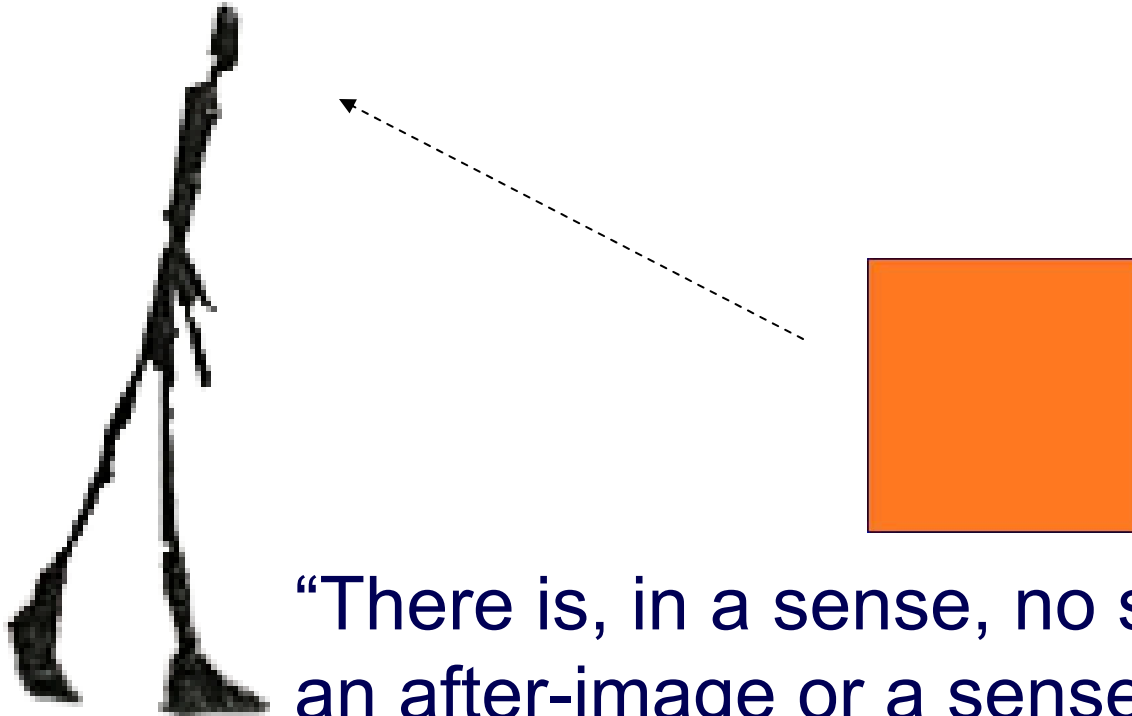


the identity theory does not identify
the *object* of the experience with a
brain process

Objection: the after-image is orange, but the brain process is not orange. So the after-image is not a brain process. (cf. “Objection 4”)



“I am not arguing that the after-image is a brain process, but that the experience of having an after-image is a brain process...”



“There is, in a sense, no such thing as an after-image or a sense-datum, though there is such a thing as the experience of having such an image”

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- read Kripke
- read the suggested sections from Crane
- problem set 3