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SENSATIONS AND THE IDENTITY THEORY

by

JOHN KEKES

A thesis submitted for the  
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

The Australian National University  
June, 1967

To J.Y.J.

This thesis is my own work written partly while I was a research scholar in the Department of Philosophy of the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Kekes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent vertical stroke at the beginning.

John Kekes

There is supposed to be a gulf between mind and matter, and a mystery which it is held in some degree impious to dissipate. I believe, for my part, that there is no greater mystery than there is in the transformation by the radio of electromagnetic waves into sounds. I think the mystery is produced by a wrong conception of the physical world and by a Manichean fear of degrading the mental world to the level of the supposedly inferior world of matter

B. Russell

My Philosophical Development, p. 22.

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## SYNOPSIS

Chapter One presents one formulation of the problem which different versions of the identity theory attempt to solve. The attempted solutions offered by other versions of the identity theory are evaluated.

Chapter Two is a statement of the identity theory. It restricts the discussion to the identity of sensations and brain processes. It tries to clarify what is to count as a sensation and what as a brain process. Some introductory remarks are made in it about the nature of the concept of identity.

Chapter Three is concerned with distinguishing the factual and logical (in the widest sense of these terms) components of the identity theory. It is argued that they cannot be treated in isolation of each other. The independent identification of sensations through nonverbal behaviour, and of brain processes through brain-readings is discussed.

Chapters Four and Five are devoted to a discussion of avowals. It is argued that sensations can be identified through avowals as well. The nature of avowals is discussed; it is argued that the typical avowal is corrigible, and that

avowals have grounds. Alternative analyses of avowals are discussed.

Chapter Six takes up the question whether or not sensations can be said to have spatial location. It is argued that an affirmative answer can be given if we recognize that sensations, like all processes, can be said to have spatial location only in a derivative sense.

Chapter Seven examines the nature of the identity between sensations and brain processes. Identity is argued to be an empirical, extensional, heterogeneous, reductive identity of properties.

The task of Chapter Eight is twofold: first, to meet the objection that the identity proposed is too weak--and thus compatible with the distinctness of sensations and brain processes; and second, to compare the identity theory with dualism and with the criteriological view.