

BORING AND THE MIND-BRAIN IDENTITY THEORY

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Abstract

Although the history of materialist theories of the mind/body or soul/body relation can be traced back to ancient times, it is only in this century that such views have been formulated in terms of the notion of an identity relation holding between some aspect, or even the totality, of the mental on the one hand, and some, usually unspecified, aspect of the living brain on the other. So far as I have been able to ascertain the first person to propose this way of formulating the materialist position was the historian of experimental psychology, Edwin G. Boring, in his 1933 book The Physical Dimensions of Consciousness. Although he does not explicitly say so, Boring evidently agrees with the present author (Place 1956) in regarding the identity theory as an empirical scientific hypothesis. This is apparent from his contention that a consistently perfect correlation between two measures provides convincing evidence of the identity of what is being measured in the two cases. The relations between Boring's formulation and later versions of the mind-brain identity theory which emerged in the 1950's are examined.

References

Boring, E.G. (1933) The Physical Dimensions of Consciousness. New York: Century.
Place, U.T. (1956) Is consciousness a brain process? British Journal of Psychology, XLVII, 44-50.