DISCUSSION
RICHARD RORTY ON IDENTITY

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In his article, "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories," Richard Rorty argues for the Identity Theory by suggesting that we can eliminate sensation language. Just as we have come to say that there are no demons, or rather that we view demons as merely the contents of hallucinations, so we may say that there are no sensations. Sensations may be viewed merely as brain-processes if the uses of sensation language are taken over by brain-process language. I intend to show that there are serious disanalogies between the elimination of demon language and the proposed elimination of sensation language. I will further argue that the elimination of sensation language involves a misuse of Occam's Razor. To this kind of attack, Rorty can rejoin that I have assumed a pre-linguistic given and thus have fallen victim to the "Myth of the Given." In reply, I try to sort out what views Rorty's claim commits one to and show these to be unhappy results.

Rorty's analogy concerns a "primitive tribe who holds the view that illnesses are caused by demons — a different demon for each sort of illness." These demons are seen only by witch doctors and only after the doctors have had a meal of sacred mushrooms. These same doctors know that certain demons dislike specifiable kinds of mold, and when the doctors give the patient this mold, the demons flee. We know now that such an analysis of disease is incorrect and that illnesses are caused by germs and viruses. If we dispense with demons we have both a simpler account of the cause and cure of illnesses (by using the idea of germs) and a simpler account of why people make certain perceptual reports (by saying that they hallucinate after eating mushrooms).

The analogy with demons provides justification for the identity view in that

The identity theorists's claim is that sensations may be to the future progress of psycho-physiology as demons are to modern science. Just as we now want to deny that there are demons, future science may want to deny that there are sensations.\footnote{Richard Rorty, "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories," in Philosophy of Mind, ed. by Stuart Hampshire (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 35.}

This denial and the subsequent possibility of the elimination of the referring use of sensation expression can be accomplished in the same manner and

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 37.}
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for the same reasons as the denial that there are demons and the subsequent elimination of the referring use of demon discourse. The only problem with such an elimination of sensation discourse is that it seems to have a reporting as well as an explanatory function.

But the demon case makes clear that the discovery of a new way of explaining the phenomena previously explained by reference to a certain sort of entity, combined with a new account of what is being reported by observation-statements about that sort of entity, may give good reason for saying that there are no entities of that sort.

To say that it may turn out that there are no such things as sensations sounds odd, but Rorty urges that the science of the future could convince us of this point if they gave us an adequate account of what one was reporting when he said things like "I am in pain." Such an account may consist of saying that he was reporting the occurrence of certain brain-processes. In order to be more precise, we ought to use that terminology.

Let us examine this view and see if demons provide an analogy to show us how we may come to say that there are no sensations. Generally, according to Rorty, in order for one to say that he was really non-inferentially reporting a Y when he non-inferentially reported an X, Y's must be the kinds of things habitually reported non-inferentially. For instance, we can accept the statement that I was non-inferentially reporting an hallucination instead of a demon because hallucinations, as mental, are the sorts of things we normally non-inferentially report.

Brain-processes present us with a problem though, because in order for us to say that we are reporting them instead of sensations, they must be viewed as the kind of thing reported non-inferentially. It seems that they are not, however. Brain-processes are certainly not the sort of things which we habitually report non-inferentially – at least not according to current practice; and they do not seem to be the kinds of things which could be reported non-inferentially without stretching the point. (This is the case even with the man who is able to view his brain via a mirror during brain surgery.)

Here, Rorty simply affirms that brain-processes could be the appropriate objects of a non-inferential report. He asserts that the burden of proof is on the shoulders of the opponents of the identity theory to show that it is a priori impossible for this to be the case, in spite of the fact that such an assertion seems untenable. In fact, he says, if people were trained to say "My C-fibers are firing" instead of "I am in pain," why would we not think that we were reporting brain-processes? It might so happen that the circumstances in which brain-processes are reported non-inferentially are exactly the same as those in which we thought we were reporting sensations. In saying that there is no reason to think that brain-processes are not the

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3 Ibid., p. 37.