

AN EVALUATION OF SAUL KRIPKE'S ARGUMENT  
FOR PROPERTY DUALISM

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FOR PROPERTY DUALISM

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN EVALUATION OF SAUL KRIPKE'S ARGUMENT FOR PROPERTY DUALISM**

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**SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: AUDREY MCKINNEY**

This paper concerns Saul Kripke's argument against type physicalism and for property dualism. My objection to the argument is that it relies upon a premise for which Kripke does not provide adequate support. The unsupported premise is Kripke's claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. This premise relies upon what Crispin Wright identifies as the Counter-Conceivability Principle – the notion that if we can clearly conceive a counterexample to a claim of necessity, that serves as evidence against the claim of necessity. This principle is, however, not useful because it does not provide any guidance for what counts as a clear conception. Additionally, providing precise theories of conceivability and imaginability does not lend the support that Kripke's argument needs. Thus, I conclude that this objection to Kripke's argument stands and type physicalism can be maintained.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In January of 1970 Saul Kripke delivered a series of lectures at Princeton University that were transcribed into a book, *Naming and Necessity*, published in 1972. In the lectures Kripke is responding to previous attempts to solve certain problems in the philosophy of language. In doing so, he develops a framework that he applies to the mind-body problem and makes a strong argument against type physicalism and for property dualism. There have been many responses to *Naming and Necessity* over the last 40 years which seek to evaluate the strength of Kripke's argument. My thesis is: while Kripke's argument for property dualism is clever and compelling, it relies upon a premise for which he does not provide adequate support. The unsupported premise is Kripke's claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. This premise relies upon what Crispin Wright identifies as the Counter-Conceivability Principle – the notion that if we can clearly conceive a counterexample to a claim of necessity, that serves as evidence against the claim of necessity. This principle is, however, not useful because it does not provide any guidance for what counts as a clear conception. I find this to be a strong objection against Kripke's argument. Additionally, providing precise theories of conceivability and imaginability does not lend the support that Kripke's argument needs. Thus, I conclude Kripke's claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation lacks adequate support.

The second chapter of this paper will consist of a presentation of Kripke's argument and the concepts relevant to understanding the argument. The third chapter will consist of two of the main categories of objections to Kripke's argument. The first category of objections involves two challenges to the notion that pain is a rigid designator. Neither of these objections is sufficient for refuting Kripke's argument. The second category of objections shows that the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not provide adequate support for Kripke's claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. This will also involve a look into some theories of conceivability and imaginability that might lend support to Kripke's claim.

## CHAPTER II

### KRIPKE'S ARGUMENT AND RELATED CONCEPTS

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will present Kripke's argument for property dualism. This will include presenting the argument expressed in a set of numbered premises as well as a full explanation of the argument. The rest of the chapter will explain the concepts Kripke develops and other concepts relevant to Kripke's argument. In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke introduces the notion of rigid designators as a response to the debate in the philosophy of language concerning the reference of names. I will explain Kripke's framework which includes possible worlds, rigid designators, and essential properties. I will also discuss other relevant topics including natural kinds, type physicalism, token physicalism, property dualism, and functionalism. The last section of this chapter involves a token physicalist response which illustrates the scope of Kripke's argument.

#### Kripke's Argument for Property Dualism

Kripke's addresses the mind-body problem and presents an argument against type physicalism. Type physicalism is the position that the world consists only of physical things and that there is only one type of property: physical properties. This means that the properties of all thoughts, feelings, and sensations are identical to physical properties. Just as "water = H<sub>2</sub>O" and "heat = molecular motion," a type physicalist would say that

“pain = C-fiber stimulation.” Kripke suggests that “pain = C-fiber stimulation” is a different case from the other two. He says that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. That is, the mental phenomenon might occur in the absence of the physical phenomenon that brings it about in our world. From this Kripke concludes that the identity claim between pain and C-fiber stimulation is not a necessary one and that type physicalism is not the case. All that is necessary to pain is the qualitative experience of *being painful*. Further, since there is a property not identical to any physical property, a second kind of property has been identified. Thus, there are two types of properties: physical properties and mental properties. This position is called property dualism.

Below is a presentation of Kripke’s argument expressed as a numbered set of premises and a conclusion. After laying out the argument I will explain it more detail. Kripke’s argument can be seen as only an argument against type physicalism and it may additionally be seen as an argument for property dualism.

1. If there is a possible world in which C-fiber stimulation is absent from the set of properties of pain, then the identity claim between C-fiber stimulation and pain fails.
2. There is a possible world in which C-fiber stimulation is absent from the set of properties of pain. (It cannot be explained away like the apparent non-necessities of “water  $\neq$  H<sub>2</sub>O” and “heat  $\neq$  molecular motion.”)
3. By modus ponens of lines 1 and 2, the identity claim between C-fiber stimulation and pain fails.

4. Therefore, type physicalism is not the case.

Lines 1 through 4 are all that is needed if Kripke's argument is seen purely as an argument against type physicalism. However, I and others interpret Kripke's argument as an argument for property dualism.<sup>1</sup> If Kripke's argument is seen as an argument for property dualism, it continues as follows.

5. Since the identity claim between pain and C-fibers stimulation fails, C-fiber stimulation is a contingent property of pain (not true of pain at all possible worlds).
6. The property *being painful* is true of pain in all possible worlds, and is thus necessary, or essential.
7. Having the property *being painful* is sufficient for a phenomenon to be pain.
8. *Being painful* is a qualitative property that is not identical to any non-qualitative properties.
9. Therefore, there are non-qualitative properties and qualitative properties, i.e., property dualism.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen L. White (in "Property Dualism, Phenomenal Concepts, and the Semantic Premise," in *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*. eds. Torin Alter and Sven Walter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210-211) discusses how the argument for property dualism comes from a rejection of type identity which is inspired by the notion that "pain ... is not mediated by a mode of presentation of pain" and that the property picked out by "an expression such as 'my pain' must be mental." Dale Jaquette (in "Kripke's argument for Mind-Body Property Dualism," in *Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy*. eds. Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 303) specifically calls Kripke's argument an argument for property dualism and explains how the rejection of type identity leads to property dualism. These views are also echoed by Scott Calef (in "Dualism and Mind," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/dualism/#H6>).

This is the form of Kripke's argument I will use to conduct my analysis. In the third chapter, I will go over objections to this argument, and especially focus on challenges to premises 1 and 2.

In order to fully understand Kripke's argument, I will explain the argument at greater length and then explain the concepts it involves. Kripke, wanting to argue against type physicalism, uses the example "pain = C-fiber stimulation." Type physicalists would be committed to such a claim because they believe that types of thoughts and sensations are types of brain states, particular arrangements of atoms in the brain. For a type physicalist, the claim "pain = C-fiber stimulation" is an identity statement of the same strength as the identity statement "heat is molecular motion." Kripke's argument is intended to show a difference between these two statements and why the identity claim "pain = C-fiber stimulation" fails.

First, Kripke analyzes the identity claim "heat = molecular motion." Heat was initially identified by its qualitative properties – the way it makes us feel, the sensation of warmth it produces in us. Through scientific discovery we found that heat is the movement of molecules. "Being molecular motion" is a non-qualitative property; it does not require a perceiving being to exist. Qualitative properties require perceiving beings to experience them while non-qualitative properties do not. Heat could exist in a world absent humans or any perceiving beings to perceive its qualitative properties. The fact that it causes sensations in humans in our world is merely an accidental, or contingent, property of heat. It is possible that we could experience heat differently. Perhaps rather than causing us to feel warm, we instead perceive heat visually with colors through infra-red vision. Even though the people of this possible world experience heat quite

differently from us, the same phenomenon is being rigidly designated by the name “heat.”<sup>2</sup> “Being molecular motion” is true of the phenomenon rigidly designated by the name “heat” at all possible worlds in which it exists; “being molecular motion” is an essential property of heat. Furthermore, an error is made if a philosopher asserts that “Heat could have been something other than molecular motion.” Rather than imagining the phenomenon of heat, this is actually asking us to imagine a world in which there is a non-qualitative phenomenon that causes a sensation that is qualitatively identical to the one we experience with heat, but that non-qualitative phenomenon is something other than molecular motion. The philosopher who asserts “Heat could have been something other than molecular motion” is not thinking of the phenomenon rigidly designated by the name “heat,” but some other phenomenon. The error occurred because the philosopher imagined a world in which heat was lacking its essential property of being molecular motion.

Heat was initially identified by its contingent properties and we later discovered its essential properties, but this is not the case with pain. “Pain, on the other hand, is not picked out by one of its accidental properties; rather it is picked out by the property of being a pain itself, by its immediate phenomenological quality.”<sup>3</sup> This view on how pain is picked out is a crucial aspect of Kripke’s argument. Through neuroscientific research we have empirical evidence that shows that in our world pain is caused by the stimulation of C-fibers, but type identity theorists want to say more than that. They seek to establish that the property C-fiber stimulation and the property pain are identical. Given the concept

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of a rigid designator will be fully explained in the next section. In short, Kripke suggests that names are rigid designators in that they select the same object at all possible worlds in which the object exists.

<sup>3</sup> Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 152.

of rigid designators, identity statements, if true, are necessarily true. So an identity statement must be true in all possible worlds. If there is at least one possible world in which the identity claim does not hold, then the identity claim is not true and the possible world in which it does not hold serves as a counterexample to the identity claim. Suppose a possible world in which the inhabitants of that world have a different neural structure than ours. Rather than having C-fibers that cause the sensation of pain, they have something else; let's call them D-fibers. Despite this difference in the physical properties of the brain, the qualitative properties of the sensation produced are identical. This shows that there is a possible world in which some other non-qualitative phenomenon other than C-fiber stimulation causes the same qualitative phenomenon we experience when C-fibers are stimulated in our world. This is a counterexample to the identity claim "pain = C-fiber stimulation" making C-fiber stimulation merely a contingent property of pain rather than a necessary one and showing type physicalism to be false. So Kripke is arguing that pain is multiply realizable – that different non-qualitative phenomena may bring it about. The property *being painful* is true of pain at all possible worlds and is sufficient for a phenomenon to be pain. No additional properties need to be attributed to a phenomenon in order for it to be pain. *Being painful* is a qualitative property that is not identical to any non-qualitative properties. There are two kinds of properties, non-qualitative and qualitative. Therefore, property dualism is the case. This is a compelling argument but there are many concepts involved that require explanation before objections to this argument can be understood.

### Kripke's Framework

Through the course of *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke develops a framework for analysis that attacks previous theories of names including those of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, John Searle, and P. F. Strawson.<sup>4</sup> Kripke's framework includes possible worlds, rigid designators, and essential properties. His argument for property dualism relies upon this framework so it will be important to explicate these concepts.

The most significant difference in Kripke's approach to the problem of names and how they get their reference is Kripke's use of the concept of possible worlds. Possible worlds are what are invoked when we imagine what *could have been* the case if circumstances were different. If we examine the facts of our world and say that they could have been otherwise, we are speaking of a possible world in which these facts are otherwise. A possible world may be highly similar to ours or drastically different. The point is that the set of propositions true in that world is different from the set of propositions true in our own. If there is a proposition true at our world but false at another world, then we may say that it is contingently true, or contingent. If there is a proposition that is true not only at our world, but in all possible worlds as well, for it could not have been otherwise, then we may say that this is necessarily true, or necessary. We may also speak of properties of an object as being contingent properties or necessary properties depending upon whether the properties are true of the object in some possible world or in

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<sup>4</sup> For Gottlob Frege, the meaning of a name is its sense, the manner in which a person understands the nominatum. For Bertrand Russell, a name is equivalent to its denoting phrase, or definite description. For John Searle and P. F. Strawson, a name gets its reference from a cluster of descriptions of the named object. One of the main problems about these theories of names that Kripke points out is that is that they cannot handle modal claims. The sense of a name, its denoting phrase, and cluster of descriptions may all be contingent properties of the named object. These theories do not correctly explain how a name gets its reference and misconstrue its meaning.

all possible worlds. Considering the property of roundness, this is a necessary property of a circle while it is a contingent property of a penny. A circle, the set of points from equal distance from another point, has the necessary property of roundness. A penny has the contingent property of roundness for another shape may have been chosen or it may lose its roundness over time.

Another important distinction is the one between *de dicto* and *de re* claims. If we say that a proposition is necessarily true, that is a *de dicto* claim, a claim “of the proposition.” If we say that a property is necessarily true of some object, that is a *de re* claim, a claim “of the thing.” An example of a *de dicto* claim is “Necessarily, there is something that is furry.” In symbolic logic, this would be written:  $\Box\exists x(Fx)$ . This is saying that the proposition “There is something that is furry” is necessary. An example of a *de re* claim is “There is something that is necessarily furry.” In symbolic logic, this would be written:  $\exists x(\Box Fx)$ . This is saying that there is a thing that necessarily has the property of furriness. The distinction concerns whether the claim of necessity is about the proposition itself or about the thing in the proposition. For example “Necessarily, one plus two is three” is a *de dicto* claim because the necessity claim is about the proposition “One plus two is three.” “Three is necessarily prime” is a *de re* claim because the necessity claim is about a property of the number three. In symbolic logic, the distinction is about whether the necessity symbol occurs before or after the existential quantifier symbol.

An example will further illustrate the difference between a necessary truth and a contingent truth. We can evaluate the propositions “Five plus three is eight,” and “The number of planets is eight.” The first proposition is necessarily true for it could not be

otherwise. “Five plus three is eight,” is true at all possible worlds because the laws of mathematics hold at all possible worlds. There are no possible worlds in which five plus three is not eight. On the other hand, the second proposition is only contingently true since it could have been otherwise. The number of planets in our solar system is merely a contingent property of it. This is not because our designation of what does and does not count as a planet is a matter of convention, but because our solar system could have developed differently such that the number of planets was a number other than eight. These distinctions – contingent and necessary, *de dicto* and *de re* – are important to keep in mind when dealing with Kripke’s arguments or any issue concerning modality.

Another example will further illustrate the concept of possible worlds and lead into the next component of Kripke’s framework. We may use possible worlds to speak of an individual and whether the properties of the individual are contingent properties or necessary properties. It is true in our world that Barack Obama won the 2012 U.S. presidential election. One may say that it is possible for Obama to have lost the election instead. That is to say that there is a possible world where there is an individual who has all the properties of the Obama of our world with the exception of having won the 2012 election. One may respond: What does this individual in this other world tell us of Obama in our world? How do we know that that individual is the same individual? If this other individual lacks any of the properties of our Obama, how can we say he is the same individual? These questions are among the metaphysical problems of transworld identity, but the next component of Kripke’s framework explains away these questions.

If we have a proper understanding of how names get their reference, then the metaphysical problems of transworld identity are not problems at all. Rejecting both the

description theory of names as well as the cluster theory, Kripke argues that names are rigid designators.<sup>5</sup> He says that the referent of a name is determined not from uniquely identifying properties known by the speaker to be true of the object, but instead “by the fact that the speaker is a member of a community of speakers who use the name. The name has been passed to him by tradition from link to link.”<sup>6</sup> This concept is known as the causal chain. Thus, the name “Barack Obama” gets its reference from the fact that we all refer to him with that name because we heard it used by another person, who heard it used by another person, going all the way back to his parents who called him by his name for the first time. Furthermore, rigid designators pick out the same object in all possible worlds in which the objects exists. The name “Barack Obama” selects that individual at all possible worlds in which he exists. So there are no transworld counterparts; the Obamas at other possible worlds *are* Obama. Whether or not Obama won the election is merely a contingent property of him. Necessary properties of Obama include “being a human,” “being of the sperm and egg of his parents,” etc. Rigid designators select the same individual in all possible worlds in which it exists by virtue of its necessary properties, or what Kripke calls essential properties.

Kripke says that an identity statement between two rigid designators, if true, is necessarily true. An example that illustrates this is the case of Hesperus and Phosphorus. Through scientific discovery, we learned that “Hesperus = Phosphorus.” Some are inclined to think that it is possible for that identity statement to not be true, that Hesperus could have been not Phosphorus. The claim is not that they could have been named differently, but that it could have turned out that they were two distinct objects. The rigid

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<sup>5</sup> Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

designators “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” select the same object, the planet Venus, at all possible worlds. Saying that Hesperus could have been not Phosphorus amounts to saying that Venus could have been not Venus. Thus, the identity statement “Hesperus = Phosphorus” is true at all possible worlds because those rigid designators select the same object at all possible worlds. Since “Hesperus = Phosphorus” is true at all possible worlds, it is necessarily true. This is an example of Kripke’s point about identity statements. This example demonstrates a second point as well. Prior to *Naming & Necessity*, it was generally thought that any claims of necessity would have to be *a priori*. It was thought that discovery through empirical investigation, or *a posteriori*, would only reveal contingent truths. However, “Hesperus = Phosphorus” is something we discovered *a posteriori*, and as shown above it is necessarily true. The identity statement “Hesperus = Phosphorus” is an *a posteriori* necessity. Any other case in which we discover that two names name the same object would serve as examples as well. Thus, there are *a posteriori* necessities.

Essential properties are properties that are true of a rigidly designated object in all possible worlds in which the object exists. In Lecture III, Kripke uses the example of gold to illustrate the concept of essential properties. Gold is something that we initially identified by its qualitative features: shininess, being the color gold, being aesthetically pleasing, etc. However, it is possible that humans, or any kind of perceiving being, never existed. In such a world, gold could still exist in the absence of any perceivers to observe its qualitative properties. It turns out that these qualitative properties are merely contingent properties of gold. Later, through advances in science, we discovered gold’s non-qualitative essential property of having 79 protons in the nuclei of its atoms. It is not

possible for gold to lack this property because if it did, it would be a different element, not the one rigidly designated by the name “gold” in our world. This example shows the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties, and how qualitative properties can be misidentified as essential properties. Qualitative properties are properties of *qualia*, or in other words, the properties of one’s percepts. In a world with no humans or perceiving beings of any kind, there are no qualitative properties. Non-qualitative properties are properties of physical objects. In a world with no humans or perceiving beings of any kind, there are only non-qualitative properties. These three concepts – possible worlds, rigid designators, and essential properties – are the components of Kripke’s framework and serve as the basis of his argument for property dualism.

Another important idea that Kripke develops in *Naming and Necessity* is the distinction between metaphysical possibility and epistemic possibility. Consider the example “Water = H<sub>2</sub>O.” One may suggest that water could have been something other than H<sub>2</sub>O. She says that there is a possible world in which water has all of its qualitative features – the way it looks, the way it feels – and it has some molecular structure other than H<sub>2</sub>O. This possible world is intended to serve as a counterexample to the identity claim “Water = H<sub>2</sub>O.” However, Kripke would say that she has made an error: she has confused epistemic possibility for metaphysical possibility. Not being aware that “having a molecular structure of H<sub>2</sub>O” is an essential property of water, she conceived of a substance similar to water that was in fact not water, not the substance rigidly designated by the term water. So she mistook an epistemic possibility – being in an epistemic situation that for all she knew involved water – for a metaphysical possibility. So this

error, mistaking a possible epistemic situation for a metaphysical possibility, occurs when one conceives of a rigidly designated object missing at least one of its essential properties and being unaware that the missing property(ies) are essential.

### Natural Kinds, Physicalism, Property Dualism, and Functionalism

The arguments in *Naming and Necessity* contain metaphysical claims that involve concepts including natural kinds, physicalism, property dualism, and functionalism. Understanding these concepts is important in understanding Kripke's argument for property dualism. First I will discuss natural kinds. Natural kinds are the kinds there are even if humans had never decided to categorize them. Natural kinds would include things like water and red. Water is a kind of chemical compound distinct from other chemical compounds and is a kind even if humans had never existed to observe its molecular structure. Red is a kind of color distinct from other colors and is a kind even if humans had never chose to make such distinctions about their perceptions. The key idea is that natural kinds are not artificial or arbitrary groupings. Humans have chosen to develop many categorizations – some with good reason, some not – but natural kinds are categorizations that we discovered; they were, in a sense, already there.

A general concept relevant to Kripke's argument is physicalism. Physicalism is the thesis that the world consists only of physical things; all things that exist are physical things. This would not allow for any sort of non-physical things. Favoring empirical evidence, many physicalists can say that their theories are in accordance with science. This is one of the appeals of physicalism: the ability to explain philosophical topics in accordance with scientific evidence. Some physicalists go so far as to say that all things

are explainable in physical terms while others reject that all things are reducible in this manner. There is an important distinction to be made between type physicalism and token physicalism. Type physicalism states “For every actually instantiated mental property  $F$ , there is some physical property  $G$  such that  $F=G$ .”<sup>7</sup> For each and every property (a mental property for example) there is a physical property with which it is identical. Type physicalists are proponents of type identity, the notion that there are identities between types. We can observe instances of the type pain in humans, dogs, and dolphins and observe instances of the type C-fiber stimulation in those same beings. Type physicalists will say that mental states like pain can be “multiply instanced.”<sup>8</sup> That is, those beings experience instances of the type pain. Type identity theorists make the general claim that there is identity between the types pain and C-fiber stimulation. While we may speak of mental properties, in actuality, there are only physical properties since all mental properties are identical with physical properties. For type physicalists, while there is identity between types, this does not mean that there is identity between instances of the types, i.e., tokens. There is a kind of physicalism that states that there is identity between tokens: token physicalism. Token physicalism states “For every actual particular (object, event or process)  $x$ , there is some physical particular  $y$  such that  $x = y$ .”<sup>9</sup> Token physicalists maintain that all things are physical things, but reject the notion of identity between types. For token physicalists, each token (each mental event) is unique and not multiply realizable. Tokens “make their appearance in this world at most exactly once.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Stoljar, “Physicalism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/physicalism/>.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Jackson, Robert Pargetter, and Elizabeth W. Prior, “Functionalism and Type-Type Identity Theories,” *Philosophical Studies* 42, no. 2 (1982): 209.

<sup>9</sup> Stoljar, “Physicalism.”

<sup>10</sup> Jackson *et al.* “Functionalism and Type-Type Identity Theories,” 209.

While all things are physical, there may be properties (mental properties for example) that do not map directly onto physical properties. This is a reason why a token physicalist may reject the notion of type identity.

If there are properties not identical with physical properties, then there are at least two distinct kinds of properties. This view, property dualism, maintains that there are two kinds of properties in our world. Type physicalism excludes the possibility of property dualism while token physicalism allows for property dualism. As a philosophy of mind, property dualism claims that there are mental properties that are not identical with physical properties.

Physicalists have developed many philosophies of mind including the theory of functionalism. Functionalism is the theory that “what is definitive of say, pain, is its functional role in the organism; its functional role consists of its relations, principally causal, to stimuli, behavioural responses *and* other mental states.”<sup>11</sup> What it is to be a mental state is to have certain causes and effects. For example, consider the mental state of pain. Suppose a person walking through his home stubs his toe on the coffee table and says “Ow!” The causes in this case are the toe suddenly hitting a hard surface and the stimulation of C-fibers in the brain which lead to a mental state which results in the effect of an exclamation of discomfort. According to functionalism, whatever mental state occupies this functional role is pain. For functionalists, like David Lewis for example, it is contingent that the particular mental state that fulfills this functional role is the mental state that it is in this world. Kripke’s conception of pain goes against functionalism so it is important to understand this concept. Many functionalists reject type physicalism and

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson *et al.* “Functionalism and Type-Type Identity Theories,” 209.

instead favor token physicalism because they hold that mental events are multiply realizable. However, there are some functionalists who argue for type physicalism.<sup>12</sup>

### Token Physicalism and the Scope of Kripke's Argument

Kripke's argument is against type physicalism but token physicalists can respond to Kripke's argument by saying that token physicalism is compatible with Kripke's argument. "Pains may be *token*-identical with physical states, even if not *type*-identical."<sup>13</sup> This suggests that while the type pain is not identifiable with a physical type, each and every individual pain is identical with a physical event. Rejecting type physicalism and endorsing token physicalism does not entail an endorsement of property dualism, but the views are compatible.

The token physicalist response may be described as follows. Even if one grants that pain may be dissociated from any physical types, one may still maintain identifications between particular mental events and particular physical events. The consideration that pain is not identifiable with a physical type "seems powerless to engage the thought that *the particular pain* I am feeling now is token-identical with some aspect of *the particular physical state* I am in."<sup>14</sup> We may think of the phrases "the pain I am feeling now" and "the physical state in which I currently am" as rigid designators. If the identity claim between the two is true, then it is necessarily true. The identity claim fails if we can conceive of one being present while the other is absent. Along these

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<sup>12</sup> Terence Horgan (in "Functionalism and Token Physicalism" *Synthese* 59 (1984): 321-338) is a functionalist and token physicalist. Horgan mentions David Lewis as an example of a functionalist who is a type physicalist. Another example is Frank Jackson and his colleagues (in "Functionalism and Type-Type Identity Theories," *Philosophical Studies* 42, no. 2 (1982): 209-225).

<sup>13</sup> Crispin Wright, "The Conceivability of Naturalism," in *Conceivability and Possibility* eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 418.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Kripkean lines, we may attempt to conceive of a world in which I experience “the pain I am feeling now” while not being in “the physical state in which I currently am.” Crispin Wright states, “...if token-token physicalism is true, such conceiving may be regarded as portraying the pain I actually feel only if it involves nothing inconsistent with the actual physical identity of that pain.”<sup>15</sup> Given token physicalism, Wright says that if one attempts to conceive of “the pain I am feeling now” without “the physical state in which I currently am,” one is thinking of a different pain, not the one rigidly designated by “the pain I am feeling now.” If token physicalism is the case and each token is unique, then any change to a token would result in a different token. Thus, token physicalism is consistent with Kripke’s argument and the identity between mental states and physical states is between tokens rather than types.

This response to Kripke’s argument illustrates that the argument attacks a specific version of physicalism, type physicalism. If one rejects type physicalism and supports token physicalism, Kripke’s argument has no impact on her position. A token physicalist could accept property dualism or she may still reject property dualism, but not because it creates a problem for token physicalism. Thus, the scope of Kripke’s argument is limited to type physicalism. Kripke presents a compelling argument against type physicalism and for property dualism. In the next chapter I will examine some of the main objections to Kripke’s argument.

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, “The Conceivability of Naturalism,” 418.

## CHAPTER III

### OBJECTIONS TO KRIPKE'S ARGUMENT

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the two main categories of objections against Kripke's argument for property dualism. The first category of objections questions the notion that pain is a rigid designator, a challenge to premise 1 of the argument. Premise 1 says that if there is a world in which pain occurs in the absence of C-fiber stimulation, the identity claim between the two fails. This relies upon the notion that pain is a rigid designator. First I will examine an argument from David Lewis that denies pain is a rigid designator from a functionalist perspective. Next I will examine Crispin Wright's argument that denies pain is rigid designator by arguing that pain is not a natural kind. I believe that these arguments are inconclusive because they rely on other issues being settled. The second category of objections challenges the notion that if we can conceive a world in which *P* is not the case, then we have evidence against the necessity of *P*. This challenges premise 2 of the argument, the claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. This relies upon the notion that we can conceive of such a world. So I will also investigate theories of conceivability and imaginability that might lend support to premise 2 of the argument. Ultimately, I will conclude that this second category of objections stands and that premise 2 of Kripke's argument lacks adequate support.

### Challenges to the Rigidity of Pain

Questioning the rigidity of pain challenges premise 1 of Kripke's argument because that premise relies upon the idea that the identity claim is between two rigid designators. Identity claims between rigid designators must be true at all possible worlds in which the rigidly designated object exists. If there is a possible world in which the identity claim fails, it serves as a counterexample to the identity claim between the two rigid designators. Suppose that "pain" is not a rigid designator and is merely a non-rigid designator. If that were the case, then the truth of the identity "pain = C-fiber stimulation" would be contingent upon what the non-rigid designator "pain" selects at each possible world. So if at least one of the terms of an identity claim is non-rigid, then the identity claim does not need to be true at all possible worlds for it to be true at any particular world. If pain is not a rigid designator, then Kripke will not be able to draw the conclusion that pain is not identical to C-fiber stimulation. Thus, if pain can be shown to be a non-rigid designator, then Kripke's argument for property dualism fails.

### Lewis' Argument from Functionalism

David Lewis presents an argument for the non-rigidity of pain. It is an argument based upon a functionalist theory of mind. Recall that for functionalists what it is to be pain, for example, is to fulfill the functional role of pain by having certain inputs and outputs. "The concept of pain, unlike the concept of that neural state which is in fact pain, [could] have applied to some different state if the relevant causal relations had been different."<sup>16</sup> The functional role of pain could have been fulfilled by a different neural

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<sup>16</sup> David Lewis, "Mad Pain and Martian Pain," *Oxford Scholarship Online* (2003), 4.

state. For Lewis, what is encompassed by the concept of pain is its inputs and outputs, not the felt experience or *qualia*. A different felt experience, perhaps a state of high alertness, would fulfill the functional role of the pain so long as it has the inputs and outputs associated with pain. It should be noted that this argument only challenges the notion of pain as a rigid designator and does not defend type physicalism. It would be difficult to defend type physicalism while having this view on mental states. Type physicalists attempt to identify mental phenomenon with physical phenomenon but Lewis sees the physical phenomenon as a contingent aspect of our concepts of mental phenomenon.

The notion that the mental state associated with the functional role of pain is a contingent feature of pain is a notion Kripke finds “self-evidently absurd. It amounts to the view that the *very pain I now have* could have existed without being a mental state at all.”<sup>17</sup> I think it is overstating the functionalist position to suggest that they believe that pain could be had in the absence of a mental state. Other mental states could fulfill the functional role of pain, but a lack of any mental state could not fulfill the functional role. For Kripke, it is the felt experience, or *qualia*, that is essential to pain. To suppose that different *qualia* could be pain is what Kripke finds absurd. We can imagine possible worlds in which people have the same inputs and outputs associated with pain but experience *qualia* different from the *qualia* we experience with pain in our world. For Kripke, this would be some phenomenon other than pain as it lacks the *qualia* of pain which he sees as essential to pain. For Lewis, this would count as pain because what is essential to pain is its inputs and outputs; the *qualia* is merely contingent. Thus, the point of contention between Kripke and Lewis is whether or not *qualia* is essential to pain. The

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<sup>17</sup> Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 147.

appeal of Kripke's position is that it is a commonsense view of pain while Lewis' position appeals to functionalism and its perceived usefulness. If we were to ask a layperson "What is pain?" he would likely give an answer that resembles Kripke's. It is highly unlikely any layperson would give a response resembling the functionalist position.

If one already accepts functionalism, Lewis' argument is a compelling argument. If one is not convinced by the functionalist view, then the argument seems less persuasive. To accept the argument, a case would need to be made for functionalism, as Lewis and others have done. However, a discussion of the merits of functionalism is beyond the scope of this paper. If functionalism is the case, then whatever mental state fulfills the functional role of pain is pain. It could be the case that other mental states fulfill this functional role. This would mean that "pain" does not select the same mental state at every possible world. In other words, pain is not a rigid designator. If pain is not a rigid designator, Kripke cannot make his argument since premise 1 relies upon this notion. While Lewis' argument is interesting, it relies upon a functionalist theory of mind being the case. Since the question of whether or not functionalism is the case remains open, Kripke's argument survives Lewis' objection.

#### Wright's Objection Concerning Natural Kinds

Crispin Wright presents an argument to question whether pain is a rigid designator by suggesting that pain is not a natural kind. Natural kind concepts are non-artificial categorizations found in the world. There are other kinds of things in our world that are not natural kinds. There are kinds of government—democratic, autocratic,

theocratic. There are kinds of philosophy—analytic, continental, ancient. These kinds all owe their existence to humans. They do not occur in the world naturally but are instead human creations and their essential properties are defined by us. Natural kind concepts are categorizations that we discover and, as such, we seek to discover their essential properties. One need not assume a realist metaphysics to speak of natural kind concepts. Natural kind concepts, like numbers, can be seen by an anti-realist as a useful tool, but this does not grant ontological status to natural kind concepts. Wright states “If water is a natural kind concept, the indicators serve merely as *reference-fixers*... A natural kind concept thus incorporates an assumption: that there is an underlying natural essence.”<sup>18</sup> This means the qualitative features of water are not its essential properties; these features merely serve to let us know when to apply the name. In the case of water, its essential properties are beyond its surface indicators. A natural kind concept has a set of essential properties not chosen by humans, while a non-natural kind concept has a set of essential properties humans have assigned to it.

Wright considers the natural kind concept water and compares it against a concept he develops called *schwwater*. Unlike water which is a natural kind concept, *schwwater* is what Wright calls a criterially-governed concept. “Even if our actual concept of water is indeed a natural kind concept, we might have employed instead a concept – *schwwater* – for which the water indicators did play a criterial rather than merely a reference-fixing role.”<sup>19</sup> For this criterially-governed concept *schwwater*, a substance is *schwwater* if a sufficient number of the indicator properties, the qualitative properties that fix the reference, are satisfied. Consider again the case of water and H<sub>2</sub>O. One might suggest

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<sup>18</sup> Wright, “The Conceivability of Naturalism,” 403.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

that “water could have been not H<sub>2</sub>O” but she would be wrong because she is conceiving of some other substance, not water. On the other hand, if one suggests that “schwater could have been not H<sub>2</sub>O” this seems plausible. Since schwater is a criterially-governed concept, it could be the case that other substances satisfy the criteria of schwater. This raises the question: is pain like water or is it like schwater? Is pain a natural kind concept with an essence whose indicator features are merely reference fixers, or is pain a criterially-governed concept that is satisfied by a sufficient number of its indicator features?

According to Kripke’s argument, pain could be realized by something other than C-fiber stimulation. Since pain is multiply realizable, it cannot be identified with any *physical* natural kind concept. So it may be the case that pain is a criterially-governed concept in that anything that satisfies its indicator, a distinct form of discomfort, counts as pain. In this case the identifications between pain and physical natural kind concepts would be contingent, yet true. Wright states “...it is open for the physicalist to fall back on the view that pain is, rather, a (very simply) criterially governed concept, that ‘pain’ is consequently flexible with respect to its reference among physical kinds, and that the identity of pain with any particular neural state is consequently a possibility.”<sup>20</sup> It may be the case that pain gets its reference by satisfaction of its indicator features rather than having the essential properties of a natural kind. If pain is indeed a criterially-governed concept, then it lacks a true essence and therefore it cannot be a rigid designator. Rigid designators select the same object at all worlds in which they exist because they share a

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<sup>20</sup> Wright, “The Conceivability of Naturalism,” 412.

set of essential properties. Once again, if pain is not a rigid designator, Kripke cannot make the claim that pain is not identical to C-fiber stimulation.

Kripke could respond to this line of argument by defending the notion that pain is a natural kind concept. He could argue that natural kind concepts need not be physical. Natural kinds are merely the kinds of things that are discovered rather than invented by humans, so the possibility of non-physical things being natural kinds is not excluded. All that is needed for something to be a candidate for a natural kind is that it something in our world – something in our reality. (We then consider whether this kind is artificial or not.) Thus, whether or not a concept refers to physical things is irrelevant to the issue of whether or not the concept is a natural kind concept. Kripke could agree with Wright and say that pain cannot be identified with any physical natural kind concept, but also say that pain is a qualitative natural kind concept rather than a criterially-governed concept. Perhaps some work would need to be done explain what a qualitative natural kind concept is. Roughly, qualitative natural kind concepts are kinds of qualitative phenomenon such as pain, pleasure, and other sensations and mental processes. If the notion of qualitative natural kind concepts is indeed a sound concept and pain is among them, then pain is a rigid designator and Kripke's argument stands. I am not thoroughly convinced by either side of this argument. If pain is a criterially-governed concept, more should be said about how it gets its reference. How did humans start using this term in the first place? On the other hand, the notion of qualitative natural kind concepts strikes me as a bit odd. If natural kinds are not limited to the physical, then where would the limit be? Could numbers be natural kinds? On what grounds would one draw this limit? I do not intend to solve this particular debate. Wright presents an interesting objection, but it

relies upon the notion that pain is not a natural kind. Since the question of whether or not pain is a natural kind remains open, Kripke's argument survives Wright's objection. The objections from both Lewis and Wright fail to undermine Kripke's argument because they do not establish decisively that pain is not a rigid designator, but in the next section I will present what I believe to be a stronger objection against Kripke's argument.

The Counter-Conceivability Principle, Metaphysical Possibility,  
and Epistemic Possibility

This section concerns a second category of objections against Kripke's argument that challenge the notion that if we can conceive a world in which *P* is not the case, that serves as evidence against the necessity of *P*. This is a challenge to premise 2 of Kripke's argument which states that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. Conceiving of a case of *not-P* as evidence against a necessity claim is an important aspect of Kripke's argument because he uses his conception of a world in which pain occurs in the absence of C-fiber stimulation to provide evidence against the necessity of the identity claim "pain = C-fiber stimulation." Kripke's possibility claim relies upon the notion that we can conceive of such a world and that we have some idea of what conceivability is. What is conceivability? How do we know whether a claim is conceivable or inconceivable? What counts as a clear, lucid conception? Kripke's conceiving of counterexamples to necessity claims is what Crispin Wright calls the Counter-Conceivability Principle. Wright objects that the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not provide any guidance for what counts as a clear conception and it presupposes such guidance. Thus, premise 2 of the argument lacks adequate support. I find this to be a strong objection against Kripke's argument. Following an overview of

this objection, I will consider what conceivability may mean to Kripke. Specifically, Kripke's argument requires a theory of conceivability that can assess the contingency or necessity of the properties of qualitative phenomena. I will examine some theories of conceivability and imaginability that might be used to lend support to the Counter-Conceivability Principle. Ultimately, I will conclude that these theories do not lend adequate support to the Counter-Conceivability Principle. Thus, premise 2 remains unsupported and type physicalism can be maintained.

The Counter-Conceivability Principle is an important aspect of Kripke's argument because it involves the notion that we can conceive of counterexamples to claims of necessity. Wright describes the principle as follows:

*All purportedly metaphysically necessary statements, even those – of constitution, identity, or origin, for instance – whose justification is a posteriori, are hostage to what we can... clearly and distinctly conceive... for a clear and distinct conception of a situation is the best possible evidence of its possibility.<sup>21</sup>*

So if one has what seems to be a lucid conception of a situation in which *not-P* is the case, then this serves as evidence, although defeasible, that it is not necessary that *P*. With the case of "pain = C-fiber stimulation," Kripke conceives of a situation in which there is pain in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. This conception serves as the *not-P* against the necessity of *P*, "pain = C-fiber stimulation." From that, he of course concludes that pain is not identical to C-fiber stimulation.

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<sup>21</sup> Wright, "The Conceivability of Naturalism," 408.

Kripke also provides examples which he thinks are not lucid conceptions. In the case of “water = H<sub>2</sub>O,” one conceives of a substance which presents itself as water, but it has a different molecular structure from water. This is not a lucid conception because one has merely conceived of a situation with the same indicator features – the same qualitative properties such as feeling refreshing and having the tactile properties of a liquid – but is not actually water. What has happened here is that one has conceived of being in an identical epistemic situation, that is, for all he knows he is conceiving of that which is rigidly designated by the term “water.” This conception is used to incorrectly argue for the non-necessity of the identity claim between water and H<sub>2</sub>O. This is an incorrect line of argument because he conceived of epistemic possibility rather than metaphysical possibility. Thus, one must be careful not to confuse epistemic possibility for metaphysical possibility. Metaphysical possibility concerns quite simply *how things could be* while epistemic possibility concerns epistemic states in which one could be.

The same error occurs when one argues against the identification of heat and molecular motion. One conceives of an identical epistemic situation rather than a genuine metaphysical possibility. He conceives of a situation that presents itself as heat – having the indicator features – but is actually some other phenomenon. As with the case of water and H<sub>2</sub>O, this is a non-lucid conception because it mistook epistemic possibility for metaphysical possibility. Since these are non-lucid conceptions, these are not valid uses of the Counter-Conceivability Principle. This position has been echoed by others including Scott Soames who states “[Conceivability] is fallible because before we know much about what is actual, there are many epistemically possible world-states that appear

to be genuinely possible.”<sup>22</sup> It is difficult to know when we have a lucid conception and are not merely in an epistemic state that misinforms us that we have a lucid conception. So, the challenge for Kripke concerns whether his conception of a world in which C-fiber stimulation is absent while pain is present is indeed a lucid conception.

Kripke would say that his conception of a world in which C-fiber stimulation is absent in the presence of pain is a lucid conception. Kripke says that “Pain... is not picked out by one of its accidental properties; rather it is picked out by the property of being pain itself, by its immediate phenomenological quality.”<sup>23</sup> Here Kripke is saying that pain is a different case from the cases of heat and water. With heat and water, their indicator features are contingent properties while their necessary properties were discovered *a posteriori* through scientific investigation. Kripke argues, though not in these terms, that in the case of pain, the indicator feature, this distinct feeling of discomfort, is its essence. So if one conceives of an epistemic situation that has the indicator feature of pain, then one is conceiving of pain. For Kripke, it is not possible to be in an epistemic situation that presents itself as pain while not actually being pain since “The notion of an epistemic situation qualitatively identical to one in which the observer had a sensation *S* simply *is* one in which the observer had the sensation.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, in the case of pain, the indicator feature *is* the essence. Christopher Hughes sums up Kripke’s view as follows:

In the case of heat, there is a gap between identifying features and essence  
– a gap that allows something to have the identifying features of heat

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<sup>22</sup> Scott Soames, “Kripke on Epistemic and Metaphysical Possibility,” in *Saul Kripke* ed. Alan Berger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83.

<sup>23</sup> Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 152.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

without being heat, and allows something to be heat without having the identifying features of heat. In the case of pain, the intuition is, there is no such gap between identifying features and essence.<sup>25</sup>

Both Wright and Hughes speak of the epistemic gap between the indicator features and the essences of heat and water. With pain, and presumably all sensations, there is no gap. For Kripke, this is another idea for which it is self-evidently absurd to suppose otherwise. However, there have been some who do not think this is self-evident and have provided arguments for the opposing view.

Wright presents an argument that challenges the usefulness of the Counter-Conceivability Principle. With the Counter-Conceivability Principle, if we can genuinely conceive of a world in which an identity claim fails, then that serves as evidence against its necessity. However, one must be careful not to conceive of an epistemic situation that presents itself in the same manner as the object(s) one is attempting to conceive, but is actually not the object(s) one is attempting to conceive. When one conceives in this manner, she is thinking of something similar to the object in question, a symptomatic counterpart. Conceiving of a symptomatic counterpart does not count as genuine conceiving. With the natural kind concept of water, we distinguish between instantiations of the kind and symptomatic counterparts of the kind. Conceiving of symptomatic counterparts of rigidly designated objects does not serve as counterexamples to identity claims like “pain = C-fiber stimulation.”

Wright’s argument suggests that Kripke’s conception of a world in which pain occurs in the absence of C-fiber stimulation fails to adequately engage conceiving of a

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<sup>25</sup> Christopher Hughes, *Names, Necessity, and Identity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 224.

lack of C-fiber stimulation. Just as there is an epistemic gap between conceiving of the indicator features of water and genuinely conceiving of water, there is a corresponding gap between conceiving of a symptomatic counterpart of C-fiber stimulation and genuinely conceiving of C-fiber stimulation. Conversely, there is a gap between conceiving of what appears to be a lack of C-fiber stimulation and conceiving of a genuine lack of C-fiber stimulation. Wright states “Maybe I cannot fail to conceive of pain when there is no C-fibre stimulation by dint of failing to conceive a genuine pain. But surely I may so fail by dint of failing to conceive of a *genuine lack of C-fibre stimulation*.”<sup>26</sup> Just as one could fail to genuinely conceive of water by conceiving only of water’s indicator features, one can fail to conceive of a genuine lack of C-fiber stimulation by conceiving only of the pain’s indicator features. So the conclusion is that Kripke fails to genuinely conceive of a lack of C-fiber stimulation. Kripke has confused an epistemic situation in which he believes he is in pain and C-fiber stimulation is absent for the metaphysical possibility of pain in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. If one cannot genuinely conceive of pain without conceiving of C-fiber stimulation, this would explain Kripke’s erroneous conception. Wright explains away the apparent non-necessity of “pain = C-fiber stimulation” in the same manner Kripke explains away the apparent non-necessity “water = H<sub>2</sub>O,” restoring the analogy made by type physicalists.

Kripke argues that these are disanalogous cases by saying that he can genuinely conceive of pain in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. He might say that the two cases involve different kinds of conceiving. With the case of water, conceiving of it involves conceiving only of non-qualitative things. In the case of pain, conceiving of it involves

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<sup>26</sup> Wright, “The Conceivability of Naturalism,” 414.

conceiving of qualitative phenomenon. Since qualitative and non-qualitative phenomena are different, it may be that the cases are disanalogous and different kinds of conceiving would be involved in the two cases. However, in order to substantiate such a claim, Kripke would need a theory of conceivability. Thus, the point remains that Kripke might be failing to genuinely conceive of a lack of C-fiber stimulation.

Christopher Hughes presents an argument similar to Wright's argument in that it uses Kripkean reasoning to challenge Kripke's conception of pain in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. Kripke's argument explains away the apparent necessity of "pain = C-fiber stimulation" and shows that it is not necessary. Hughes presents an argument that does just the opposite: it explains away the apparent (as it appears to Kripke) non-necessity of "pain = C-fiber stimulation." Hughes accepts that only pain can be an epistemic counterpart of pain. However, a state that is not C-fiber stimulation can be an epistemic counterpart of C-fiber stimulation. The argument begins with supposing that:

...there is a possible world in which we are in an epistemic situation qualitatively indistinguishable from the one we were in before we learned that pain = C-fibre stimulation, and in which we are in the same epistemic situation in relation to a phenomenon with the identifying features of C-fibre stimulation (to an epistemic counterpart of C-fibre stimulation)...<sup>27</sup>

That is, we are in an epistemic situation in which we are unaware of the identity between pain and C-fiber stimulation. Also, we are just as ignorant about a phenomenon that has the identifying features of C-fiber stimulation while it is in fact not C-fiber stimulation. So we notice that this phenomenon – something other than C-fiber stimulation – is absent in the presence of pain. So it appears as though we have genuinely

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<sup>27</sup> Hughes, *Names, Necessity, and Identity*, 226.

conceived of a world in which pain is present in the absence of C-fiber stimulation when we in fact had not. “If we don’t clearly distinguish the impossibility that C-fibre stimulation is absent in the presence of pain from the possibility that an epistemic counterpart of C-fibre stimulation is absent in the presence of pain,”<sup>28</sup> we can be wrongly led to Kripke’s conclusion that “pain  $\neq$  C-fiber stimulation.” Thus, this argument explains away the apparent non-necessity of “pain = C-fiber stimulation” and allows type physicalists to maintain their position that the identity is in fact a necessary one. Just as in the cases of “water = H<sub>2</sub>O” and “heat = molecular motion”, the apparent non-necessity of “pain = C-fiber stimulation” can be explained away.

Wright suggests that Kripke has failed to conceive of a genuine lack of C-fiber stimulation. Hughes says that there is a possible world in which humans are in an epistemic situation in which they take the absence of an epistemic counterpart of C-fiber stimulation to be a genuine lack of C-fiber stimulation. These objections may be seen as a single objection: the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not provide criteria for what counts as a lucid conception. I believe this to be a strong objection to Kripke’s argument. Is Kripke’s conception of a world in which pain was present in the absence of C-fiber stimulation a lucid conception? Or are conceptions like the one from Hughes lucid? As it stands, it is simply a battle of modal intuitions and the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not give us any reason to think that one intuition is better than the other. “It provides no practical controls at all on the ascription of necessity... The consequence is that the

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<sup>28</sup> Hughes, *Names, Necessity, and Identity*, 227.

apparent counter-conceivability of physicalist identifications of the instances of epistemically transparent concepts is of no modal significance whatever.”<sup>29</sup>

In order to settle the question of what a lucid conception is, we must have a theory that stipulates *how we know what could have been the case*. This is the avenue of investigation I will pursue in the rest of the chapter. If such a theory could be formulated, it would lend support to the Counter-Conceivability Principle and premise 2 of Kripke’s argument.

### Conceivability for Kripke

Kripke does not say anything about what conceivability is in *Naming & Necessity* so we can only speculate on his thoughts on the matter. Throughout the book, Kripke makes many appeals to intuition. When speaking of the view that individuals in other worlds are transworld individuals he says “...intuitively speaking, it seems to me not to be the right way of thinking about the possible worlds.”<sup>30</sup> When he begins to argue that names are rigid designators, he says “One of the intuitive theses I will maintain in these talks is that names are rigid designators.”<sup>31</sup> When speaking of how names are used and denying description theory, he says “...it’s something that I have nothing but a vague intuitive feeling to argue for...”<sup>32</sup> Kripke relies upon his intuition a great deal, perhaps rightly so. My only guess is that his theory of conceivability is informed by his intuition. Kripke has some compelling intuitions, but intuition cannot be a complete guide to one’s theory of conceivability. For example, intuition is not useful in telling us when we have

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<sup>29</sup> Wright, “The Conceivability of Naturalism,” 438.

<sup>30</sup> Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 43-44.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

made an erroneous conception. If one arrives at an erroneous conception through intuition, his intuition will not inform him that he has committed an error, at least not right away. When Kripke says that there is a possible world in which pain occurs in the absence of C-fiber stimulation, he seems to be conceiving or imagining this other world. Conceivability and imaginability seem to be plausible guides to possibility. Conceivability and imaginability could mean a lot of different things, so it will be important to give a theory of each. Hence, I will turn in the next two sections to investigating theories of conceivability and imaginability. Since pain is a qualitative phenomenon, providing support to premise 2 of Kripke's argument requires a theory of conceivability that can inform us of the contingency or necessity of the properties of qualitative phenomena.

#### Yablo's Conceivability

Stephen Yablo calls upon a notion stated by David Hume and others – though not in these exact words – that whatever we can clearly conceive is possible. In other words: conceivability is possibility. There are many cases in which conceivability appears to be a useful guide for possibility. This only begins to answer the question of how we know what is possible and raises questions concerning what conceivability means. The issue is that people have been known to make erroneous conceptions. If one conceives an impossibility to be possible, then this in some way is a failure in conceiving. The task is to identify what qualifies as a clear, or lucid, conception.

After showing the faults of weaker notions of conceivability, Yablo presents his own notion of conceivability.<sup>33</sup> He says “I find *p* conceivable if I can imagine, not a situation *in* which I truly believe that *p*, but one *of* which I truly believe that *p*.”<sup>34</sup> Yablo says that imagining can be either propositional or objectual. Propositional imagining is, for example, imagining *that* there is a tiger behind the curtain. Objectual imagining would be imagining the tiger itself. This is similar to the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* claims: the claim being of the proposition or being of the thing. When imagining the tiger, one imagines it with certain properties such as being poised to leap out from behind the curtain. One may also imagine that the tiger has those properties, i.e., one imagines the proposition. Objectual imagining and propositional imagining often accompany one another. Of most interest to Yablo are cases in which propositional imagining is accompanied by objectual imagining. If one imagines “there is a tiger behind the curtain,” one likely imagines the tiger possessing various properties like facing a certain direction, having stripes, etc., although these need not be exact. One may also imagine other objects such as the curtain and the floor. All of these things serve to verify the imagined proposition. “In short I imagine a more or less determinate *situation* which I take to be one in which my proposition holds.”<sup>35</sup> Yablo says that this is not quite right. When one imagines the tiger, he imagines it having stripes, but it having a determinate number of stripes is unimportant. The imagined tiger may have, say, 37

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<sup>33</sup> Most of the other notions of conceivability Yablo considers have the problem of allowing one to conceive impossibilities. Believability, believability of possibility, and imagining justifiably believing amount to epistemic possibility rather than metaphysical possibility. They involve imagining being in an epistemic situation in which something is the case. Imagining truly believing comes the closest to an epistemically significant notion of conceivability but the problem with it is that one cannot imagine truly believing a proposition that entails that he is not believing.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Yablo, “Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, no. 1 (1993): 26.

<sup>35</sup> Yablo, “Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?” 27.

stripes or 38 stripes. Tigers with different numbers of stripes would fulfill the imagined situation. However, we cannot imagine indeterminate tigers; we imagine determinate tigers. A better description of what happens when we imagine a proposition is that we imagine a determinate situation whose determinate properties are left unspecified to some extent. Yablo stresses that imagining a determinate situation is not the same as imagining a possible world. A possible world is complete in every aspect: temporally, spatially, and so on. One may imagine a situation as part of a possible world, but imagining this part does not entail imagining the whole. Listing all of the details of a possible world is impractical and perhaps impossible, but we need not do this in order to successfully imagine a proposition true.

We can imagine the content of a proposition by thinking of a complete situation within a possible world. Objectual imagining tends to leave many aspects of the object undefined, so it should be acceptable to leave aspects of the possible world undefined as well. Matters unrelated to the truth value of  $p$  need not be specified. When considering the possibility that there is a tiger behind the curtain, we need not think of the activities of the people in the next room, the positions of grains of sand on a nearby beach, or the orbits of planets in distant galaxies even though these would be aspects of the complete possible world. If the situation is indeed possible, then it is a part of a possible world despite the fact that we cannot actually provide all the details of that possible world. We only need to imagine a world that is understood to contain the situation. Given this, Yablo presents his notion of conceivability: “Conceiving that  $p$  is a way of imagining that  $p$ ; it is imagining that  $p$  by imagining a world of which  $p$  is held to be a true description.

Thus  $p$  is conceivable for me... if I can imagine a world that I take to verify that  $p$ .”<sup>36</sup>

This theory of conceivability, which Yablo calls (CON), does not require that one imagine a hypothetical self being convinced of  $p$ , but instead requires only that the person imagine a world that her actual self takes to verify  $p$ . Under (CON), one cannot imagine impossibilities such as a round square or a barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves. This is because imagining, in the sense of (CON), involves the appearance of possibility. When a person imagines a world with certain features, it appears to him that the world could really exist. “When I take it to verify  $p$ , I take it that if a world like that *had* existed, then  $p$  would have been the case.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, Yablo’s notion of conceivability, (CON), involves imagining a world (although the complete details of that world need not be specified) that contains a situation that verifies that  $p$  to the actual conceiver. This seems to be a plausible notion of conceivability. It avoids the problems such as allowing the conception of impossibilities. It allows conceptions in which the conceiver is not believing in the imagined situation. Most importantly, though, it deals with metaphysical possibility rather than mere epistemic possibility.

Does this notion of conceivability provide Kripke what he needs to support his claims about conceivability, especially his claim that one can conceive a world with C-fiberless pain? Next I will investigate whether Yablo’s notion of conceivability provides support to Kripke’s claim. If this theory of conceivability allows one to conceive a world with C-fiberless pain, then we can conclude that under that theory premise 2 is true. Recall that (CON) states that  $p$  is conceivable if and only if one can imagine a world that one takes to verify  $p$ . This kind of conceivability involves imagining a world – of which

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<sup>36</sup> Yablo, “Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?” 29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

all the details need not be specified – and a determinate situation within that world. Kripke states that there is a world in which pain occurs in the absence of C-fiber stimulation, but he does not say much about the situation beyond that. More specificity is needed before we can call this a determinate situation. Is he thinking of disembodied existence? Humans with some other neural structure associated with pain, say D-fibers? Some other kind of beings whose pain is associated with E-fibers? What Kripke has said is too vague to be a determinate situation within a world and does not involve the appearance of *p*. Under (CON), Kripke has not done enough to present a world that verifies “pain  $\neq$  C-fiber stimulation.” Kripke might say that he has presented a determinate situation because all there is to pain is the *qualia*. However, this is the very claim for which I am attempting to provide support; it cannot be used to support itself. Thus, under Yablo’s (CON) more work must be done to establish the truth of premise 2. Until then, premise 2 of Kripke’s argument remains unsupported.

### Kung’s Imaginability

Peter Kung, like Yablo, calls upon Hume’s maxim that whatever we can clearly conceive, whatever we can imagine, is possible. This inspires Kung to investigate the nature of imagination: of what does imagination consist? What kinds of imaginings are there? Imagining may consist of sensory imagining which “involves *mental imagery*.”<sup>38</sup> That is, we picture the object in our mind’s eye. Additionally, imagining may consist of assignments that include labels, background stipulations, and foreground stipulations. A label is simply the name of the object being imagined, but a label contains lots of

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Kung, “Imagining as a Guide to Possibility,” *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research* 81, no. 3 (2010): 3.

information about the appearance of the object that helps us picture the mental image of it. Background stipulations do not specify anything pertaining to the mental image. They merely fill in background details of the imagined situation. Foreground stipulations are claims about the object(s) being imagined that are not depicted by its image. Kung presents an amusing example to illustrate these concepts. Suppose we imagine that Dick Cheney and a small bunny are good friends. With our sensory imagining, a mental image comes to mind of a figure having the appearance of Dick Cheney and a smaller figure next to him having the appearance of a bunny. Background stipulations include, but are not limited to, their location. They could be in a meadow, a café, or a spaceship; their location has no impact on the mental image being considered. The foreground stipulation is that they are friends. Nothing about the image indicates this. If it is to be part of the imagined situation, it must be stipulated. So imagining may consist of sensory imagining and assignments that include labels and stipulations, background and foreground. The reason “may” is used in the previous sentence is that some imaginings lack sensory imagining. “Imagining based solely on assignments is not good evidence for possibility,”<sup>39</sup> because “stipulations and labels are virtually unconstrained, and what minimal constraints there are have no modal epistemological value.”<sup>40</sup> For example, suppose one reads some of the works of Russell and Quine and sees some similarity between them. Furthermore, she is aware that both Russell and Quine studied under Whitehead. However, the person has never seen a picture of either of them. Recognizing similarities between the two and having never seen a picture of them, the person imagines that they are the same person, that one is a pseudonym for the other. So she makes the

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<sup>39</sup> Kung, “Imagining as a Guide to Possibility,” 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

identity claim “Russell = Quine.” This is of course incorrect and Kung would explain that the error occurred because the imagining was done purely through stipulation and labels. There was no sensory imagining of the objects under consideration, for had there been, it would have been clear that these are two distinct individuals. Thus, it is only the combination of assignment and sensory imagining that allows imagining to be a guide to possibility.

Kung says that [MEI], modal evidence from imagining, for situation *S* provides evidence that *P* is possible if the following conditions are met. “The qualitative content *Q* and the assigned content *V* (if any) make it intuitive that, in *S*, *P* is the case.”<sup>41</sup> The qualitative content refers to sensory imagining and without it, it cannot be said that, in *S*, *P* is intuitive. Additionally, *V* will consist of  $V_1 \& \dots \& V_n$  and the imaginer must be in a position to show that their combination is possible – that they are compossible – through sensory imagining or some other source (like logic). Also, there cannot be conflicts with assignment and intuition. Even if one intuitively believes that round squares are possible, that intuition would cause a conflict in assignment. And last, the content of *S* must be literal; it cannot be metaphoric. If all of these things are true of one’s imagining, then it can serve as evidence for the possibility that *P*. Kung presents a robust theory of imaginability and I will now use it to evaluate premise 2 of Kripke’s argument.

Kripke suggests that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation. So, to imagine this situation using Kung’s theory of imaginability, we picture in our mind’s eye a person in pain. Kripke did not restrict his argument to humans, so “person” is a background stipulation I filled in. So far, so good, but what about C-fiber

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<sup>41</sup> Kung, “Imagining as a Guide to Possibility,” 37.

stimulation? There is nothing in the mental image of pain that tells us anything about C-fiber stimulation. The notion that C-fiber stimulation is absent is a foreground stipulation. No independent reason is provided as to why this assignment is indeed possible. Perhaps Kripke could have said that there could be a person in pain and through neuroscientific investigation it is shown that there is no C-fiber stimulation. One problem is that this would make Kripke's argument too specific. He wanted to speak in general of the type "pain." Second, including a premise such as that would make the argument question-begging. It does not seem that there is a way to make Kripke's argument work under Kung's theory without weakening the argument or making it logically invalid. Thus, under Kung's [MEI], premise 2 of Kripke's argument remains unsupported.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I presented two main categories of objections to Kripke's argument. The first category of objections challenged premise 1 by questioning the notion that pain is a rigid designator. These objections are inconclusive because they rely upon other contentious issues being settled. The second category of objections challenges premise 2 by questioning the Counter-Conceivability Principle. The objection is that the Counter-Conceivability principle does not provide any guidance for what counts as a lucid conception and it presupposes such guidance. Premise 2 of Kripke's argument, the claim that it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of C-fiber stimulation, relies upon this principle. Thus, the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not provide adequate support for premise 2. I explicated theories of conceivability or imaginability that might provide the support needed for premise 2. However, the theories of Yablo and Kung do not allow one to make the possibility claim that Kripke makes. These theories involve

imagining physical objects. Kripke needs a theory of conceivability that can inform us of the contingency or necessity of the properties of qualitative phenomena. A physical object is publically accessible while a qualitative phenomenon is available only to the individual who experiences it. Physical objects may be tested again and again while qualitative phenomena are fleeting. Qualitative phenomena are an entirely different kind of evidence from physical objects. Thus, I conclude that the objection against the Counter-Conceivability Principle stands. This means that premise 2 of Kripke's argument lacks adequate support and type physicalism can be maintained.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

In this paper I have evaluated Kripke's argument against type physicalism. In the second chapter I presented the argument along with the background information important in understanding the argument including Kripke's framework, previous theories of names, and other concepts. In the third chapter I reviewed two main categories of objections to Kripke's argument. The first category of objections questions the idea that pain is rigid designator. These objections are inconclusive because they rely upon other contentious issues being settled. The second category of objections challenges the usefulness of the Counter-Conceivability Principle. The objection is that the Counter-Conceivability Principle does not provide any guidance as to what counts as a lucid conception. I reviewed the theories of Yablo and Kung in order to provide precise theories of conceivability and imaginability since the Counter-Conceivability Principle relies upon some notion of those concepts. These theories were found not to lend the support Kripke needs for the Counter-Conceivability Principle and premise 2 of the argument. Thus, Wright's objection to the Counter-Conceivability Principle stands and Kripke's argument against type physicalism fails. Kripke did present an interesting challenge to type physicalism, but it seems that type physicalism can be maintained due to the reasons I have discussed.

However, Kripke's arguments have illuminated the importance of having a precise theory of conceivability when making modal claims. Without such a theory, claims of necessity and possibility are just unsupported claims that cannot be a part of any good argument. Kripke's work is part of what has inspired philosophers in recent decades to develop modal epistemologies so that we have precise theories of how we know what could have been the case. Further research in modal epistemology, particularly modal epistemologies that handle qualitative phenomena, would be helpful in lending support to Kripke's argument.

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## **VITA**

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