

**THE CONCEPT OF MIND  
IN  
CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY**

By

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THESIS

SUBMITTED

IN

FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

To



**NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY**

SHILLONG, INDIA

JUNE, 1993

STOCK TAKING - 2011

Ref.

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Certified that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by Miss Sabita Das, that the contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by her for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character, Miss Sabita Das is a fit and proper person for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Shillong

The 25th June, 1993

(Prof. Mrinal Miri)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It was my unique privilege to have Prof. Mrinal Miri as my Supervisor. His inspiration, guidance and goodwishes were always with me, throughout the period in which I was engaged in the writing of this dissertation. I am deeply indebted to him for his valuable suggestions which went a long way in shaping the dissertation.

I owe a special debt to Prof. (Mrs) Sujata Miri who encouraged me at every stage of my work.

I would fail in my duty if I were not to express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Daniel who helped me in more ways than one.

I also thank my friends Lucy Thomas, Dipali Chattapadhaya, Indrani and Saji who extended their ready helping hands whenever I turned to them.

I also take this opportunity to put on record my sincere thanks to my mother, brothers and sisters for their unstinted support.

Above all, I remember today, with deep love and gratitude my father, Manindra Kumar Das, who passed away while I was still engaged in research for this work. I imagine with pain in my heart, the happiness it would have given him to see the completion of the thesis. I do not think the work would have seen the light of day without his blessings.

Finally, I should express my gratitude to Mr. Kanauj Dey who typed out the final drafts of the manuscript with an efficiency that speaks for itself here.

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SHILLONG

The 25th June, 1993

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of mind has been a central concern of philosophy from ancient times right through to our own times. In contemporary philosophy, there has been an unprecedented urgency in this concern and an equally unprecedented controversy surrounding this concept. Therefore, there is a need to look at this concern and controversy, afresh. In my proposed work, I have not indeed gone into the question of why this should have been so; my interest is in the substance of the concern itself and in details of the controversy.

Although much has happened in Philosophy since Gilbert Ryle wrote his work of classic proportions called The Concept of Mind, this work must inevitably be the starting point of any discussion of contemporary western thinking about the mind. Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations contains strikingly similar ideas to those of Ryle's, but I believe that there are profound differences both in spirit and letter, between these two philosophers. In my dissertation I have examined the views of Ryle and Wittgenstein and tried to bring out the similarities as well as the differences between these views. Both Wittgenstein and Ryle have been praised as well as blamed for propounding a behaviourist theory of the mind. It is interesting that, both of them deny this accusation or

appellation as the case may be and at the same time I have also gone into the question of justification, or otherwise of treating Ryle and Wittgenstein as unqualified behaviorists.

The problem - what is mind ? has been dealt with by philosophers from very ancient times through to our own times. There are different theories of mind based upon different conceptions of the relationship between mind and body. The dualist hypothesis is that human mind is one entity or substance and the human body is another. This was put, strongly by Descartes, who claims that mind and body are substances with diametrically opposite qualities and are distinct in the sense that they do not depend on each other in any way for pursuing their essential roles of consciousness in the one case and space-occupying in the other. At the same time he also believes that sometimes there is some sort of causal connection between mind and body.

But there are certain difficulties in the dualistic Theory of Descartes. They are: If mental states are in principle publicly unobservable, how can I know that we are justified in ascribing them to other people at all ? Even if you have mental states, how can I know that the correlations between them and behaviour or states of the



brain are the same in you as in me? How are we to describe the link between mental states and other states? If they are causal, how does the causal process operate? These are the problems which led the philosophers to look for an alternative theory.

So one way of trying to escape from dualism is to eliminate non-physical mental states by 'reducing' them to actual or potential behaviour. 'Behaviourism' is a term with many meanings. The original formulation was by J.B.Watson, which attracts widespread interest and considerable support from scientifically oriented philosophers. In chapter II, I have discussed in detail the orthodox behaviourists' position and shown its various short-comings. In this connection, I have discussed Gilbert Ryle's Concept of Mind and tried to place it in the context of the general behaviouristic discourse.

In The Concept of Mind Ryle has made a considerable attack on Descartes' mental substance theory. He <sup>i</sup>ridicules the Cartesian view as the dogma of "the ghost in the Machine". Philosophical behaviourism as is advocated by Ryle seems to hold that the meanings of mental predicates must be explained in terms of overt behaviour, or that statements about what other people can or could observe him doing. The philosophical behaviourists like Ryle assimilate

all mental predicates to dispositional terms like intelligent, obstinate etc. noticing that their ascription to a person does not imply anything about "his current experiences". Throughout the discussion of this chapter

I have tried to show that it is a mistake to analyse all mental predicates behaviouristically and Ryle, in particular is guilty of arguing in a circular way in presenting his dispositional analysis of mind.

Though Ryle and Wittgenstein both appear to be logical behaviourists or close enough to such a position, yet the views of Wittgenstein are different from those of Ryle. Both the philosophers have accepted the view that mental states cannot be analysed without remainder into behaviour. But their difference lies primarily in the fact that, Ryle in a most uncompromising way, asserts that there is a clear logical route from statements about behaviour to statements about the mind and vice-versa; Wittgenstein rejects this claim. He says that though there is a link between statements about mental states and ones about behaviour, yet the link is far more subtle or more elusive than entailment. Wittgenstein's claim is that mental states are not reducible to actual or potential behaviour but are still less detachable than traditional dualists have supposed.

In chapter III, I have discussed some of

Wittgenstein's crucial remarks about sensations and mental states. In order to bring out the Wittgensteinian notion of the connection between inner and outer I have considered his so-called "Private language argument". Under normal circumstances, the correlations between behaviour and sensations are not called into question. But it is these correlations that provide the ground for the use of sensation words in our language. However, if these correlations were, merely inductive in the Humean Sense, which would be a natural consequence of a dualist philosophy of mind, then it would be possible to imagine a collapse of these correlations in my own case as well as in the case of others. The private language argument arises in the context of such an imagined collapse. In the absence of the normal correlations, I would have no grounds for ascribing any sensations to people other than myself. But, I could, so it may be thought, still ascribe sensations to myself. Now, the language in which I ascribe sensations to myself in the event of a collapse of the behavioural criteria of ascribing sensations, will be private to me, understandable by me alone because nobody else can have reason to ascribe to me the sensations that I ascribe to myself. In this connection, I have discussed in detail the Section 256 to 258 of Philosophical Investigations and in the course of the discussion I try to show that it is a huge

mistake to think of (Or categorise) Wittgenstein as a behaviourist.

Behaviourism denies a casual account of the relationship between the mind and body. This has generated a controversy which takes us back at once to forms of Cartesianism (e.g. Chomsky) and to forms of materialism of which the most prominent and widely debated is the so-called Identity thesis.

In chapter IV, I have discussed the Identity Thesis. According to this theory, mental states are identical with certain physical states of the brain. To say that someone is in a certain state is to say that something is going on in the cerebral cortex of his brain; he may not know what it is, but, the two are identical, nevertheless. It is not that brain-states and mental states are correlated with one another but that they are literally the same event. In this regard, I have considered the theory in its version popularised by philosophers such as Smart, Place and Armstrong.

The important part of the claim of the identity theorists is that the identity it wishes to establish between mental states and physical states is a contingent, a factual identity, not a logical one. The reason given for this, is that expressions referring to mental states mean

differently from expressions which refer explicitly to physical states. And through out the discussion of this chapter I have maintained that Identity Thesis is untenable, primarily because of the following two reasons: (1) The problem of location of mental states is something that the identity Thesis is not able to account for in any satisfactory way, and (2) The contingent identity that the thesis asserts has consequences which seem philosophically incoherent.

In chapter V, I have discussed a special problem, that is, the problem of understanding the concept of a person and of personal or self-identity. The question 'Whether the concept of a person is distinguished from that of the self or of the mind?' is taken up in this chapter. Regarding the question - 'what is a person?' we find that there are generally three powerful theories which are known as (1) Cartesian concept of person (2) Materialistic concept of person (3) Unitary concept of person. Cartesian concept of person is given by Descartes and his followers. Descartes maintains that 'a person is identical with his mind'. The same view has been propounded by John Locke. Both of their views have been critically examined in this chapter.

The materialistic view of person has been

propounded by Hobbes and his followers. They maintain that 'persons' are 'bodies' and not 'minds' as pointed out by Descartes and his followers. Their view of person has also been critically discussed in this chapter.

The foundational work on the problem of persons and personal identity is that of Strawson's. I have considered Strawson's work in detail and try to link it up with several other contentions both opposed to and in basic agreement with his views. Strawson in his book Individuals maintains that the concept of a 'person' is a 'primitive' concept. It is 'primitive' in the sense that it is the concept of a thing which is not further analysable into two or more things but must be thought of as a 'unitary entity' to which two radically different kinds of predicates are equally, coherently applicable. In this connection, Strawson discusses two views. One of them is what he calls the Cartesian view and the other is what he designates as no-ownership theory. He criticises both the theories and argues that their theories are incoherent. Strawson's theory itself is not free from criticisms. I have highlighted some of the drawbacks contained in Strawson's theory of person.

However, the debate about the concept of a

person and the debate, about the criteria of personal identity has of course, from the nature of the case, been closely associated with one another. The later debate is highly interesting in itself and in order to give an idea of how it has proceeded I have given a statement about it in the Appendix to this chapter. Regarding personal identity there seems to be two rival theories. (1) bodily continuity theory and (2) the Memory theory. The debate between memory and bodily continuity theories seems to consist in each side pointing out logical perplexities of an intractable kind that quickly arise from the acceptance of the opposing theory. And this has been spelt out in detail.

In concluding the thesis, I point out that while the general scope of the work is limited in the extreme, in presenting the selected issues and the way that I have done, the debate will have been advanced by some of my critical comments both on the philosophical problems and on the philosophers that I have chosen to discuss.

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**CHAPTER II**  
**BEHAVIOURISM**



## BEHAVIOURISM

In analytic philosophy, the basic philosophical question about mind or mental states can be put as follows:

"What does it mean to ascribe a mind or mental states to anybody ?" or "How are we to understand the meaning of psychological statements?" The difficulty in answering these questions seems to arise from the fact that there are two kinds of ascriptions of psychological properties; first person ascription and the third-person ascription. (That there are also second-person ascription of mental properties seems to escape the notice of most analytic philosophers). There are those philosophers who believe that third-person ascriptions of mental states are the more basic of the two kinds of ascriptions and that to understand them is to achieve the essential understanding of the concept of mind. On the other hand, there are those philosophers who believe that it is understanding of the meaning of first-person ascriptions of mental states that is central to our understanding of mind. In this chapter, I shall consider mainly what I call the third-person theorists as opposed to the first person theorists about mind or mental states.

The main theory to consider here is that of behaviourism. Behaviourism as a philosophy of mind developed as a consequence of the rejection of Descartes' "Mental

Substance Theory". According to Descartes man is composed of two substances - viz., mental and physical. In other words, it can be said that man is composed of two parts, i.e. one is private and the other one is public. Descartes' theory is something like human bodies are in space and subject to the mechanical laws, which govern all other bodies in space. Bodily processes and states can be inspected by external observation. But Minds are not in space, nor are their operations subject to the mechanical laws. The workings of mind are not witnessable by other observers. For Descartes, whatever is mental is private and the only way to know that one is in a particular mental state is through observation of one's own internal state. To say that one is in pain is to say that one is having a particular kind of feeling or sensation or that one is having a particular kind of experience. Therefore, for Cartesian Dualism mental states have an existence that is entirely non-physical. My feelings of exasperation are located in time but not in space and on their view my feelings are different in kind from anything that could be observed, either by passers-by or by neuro-physiologists. However, though one can never experience the experience of another person, yet one can know what another person is experiencing by observing his behaviour. Whenever I am in pain, I behave in a certain way and therefore, whenever I find another person is behaving in the

same way, I can assume that he also must be in pain for whenever I am in pain, I behave in that way. So the Cartesians maintain that thinking things and extended things are two different entities. But Descartes himself believes that sometimes mind can causally affect the body and sometimes the body can causally affect the mind. It is known as Descartes famous interactionism which can be illustrated with the help of a room and its thermostat. A room and its thermostat act upon each other. A rise in the temperature of the room brings about certain changes in the thermostat. The changes in the thermostat in turn affect the room, that is to say it brings back its temperature to a certain level. If this action and reaction do not occur, the thermostat, cannot act as a thermostat. The Dualist who is an interactionist, specially Descartes, thinks of body and mind are co-related like the room and thermostat.

However, the Dualistic theory of Descartes' present many problems : The difficulties are : If mental states are in principle not publicly observable, how can we know that we are justified in ascribing them to other people at all ? Even if you have mental states, how can I know that the correlations between them and behaviour or states of the brain are the same in you as in me ? How are we to describe the link between mental states and other states ? If they are causal, how does the causal process operate ? These are the problems which led the philosophers to look for an alternative theory.

One obvious way of trying to escape from dualism is to eliminate non-physical mental states by 'reducing' them to actual or potential behaviour. 'Behaviourism' is a term with many meanings. Within the

field of psychology, we find that there are different varieties of behaviourism stretching from J.B. Watson to B.F. Skinner and others. Their theory is known as psychological or scientific behaviourism. Originally the word 'behaviourism' is formulated by J.B. Watson which attracted widespread interest and considerable support from scientifically oriented philosophers.

Psychological behaviourists maintain that human body is a variety of material body. They completely deny the existence of human mind as a separate entity from the body.

There is another variety of behaviourism known as Logical or Analytical or Philosophical behaviourism. In this chapter I will deal mainly with the philosophical or analytical behaviourism.

The traditional "mind-body problem" is the problem of the relation between the mental and the physical in human and other higher animals. To ask about a relation presupposes two different things to be related. Many thinkers reject this presupposition and therefore the alleged 'problem' which is supposed to arise from it. These thinkers do not have difficulty with the concept of the physical body, but their difficulty lies in the mental term of the alleged relation. The genuine problem lies in the fact that there are expressions referring to the mental which have meaning and the expression referring to the physical have a different meaning. This is usually not shown but simply assumed to be the case. This assumption has been powerfully attacked in recent times by Gilbert Ryle. One of Ryle's main theses expressed in an extreme form is as follows :

"It is being maintained throughout this book that when we characterise people by mental predicates, we are not making untestable inferences to any ghostly processes occurring in streams of consciousness which we are debarred from visiting; we are describing the ways in which those people conduct parts of their predominantly public behaviour. Thus, we go beyond what we see them do and hear them say, but this going beyond is not a going behind in the sense of making inferences to occult causes; it is going beyond in the sense of considering in the first instance, the powers and propensities of which their actions are exercises."1

Thus when we attribute some mental predicates to someone, we are attributing to him some kinds of behaviour or a disposition towards some behaviour or both. If Ryle's assimilation of the mental to behaviour is legitimate, then mind and body are not different in principle, and the conventional dualistic theories rest upon a confusion.

Ryle in his famous book The Concept of Mind has made a considerable attack on Descartes' Mental Substance Theory. He ridicules the Cartesian view as the dogma of "The ghost in the machine". Philosophical behaviourism as is advocated by Ryle seems to hold that the meanings of mental predicates must be explained in terms of overt behaviour, or that statements about mind can be completely analyzed in terms of statements about what other people can or could observe him doing. The philosophical behaviourist like Ryle

assimilates all mental predicates to dispositional terms like intelligent or obstinate, noticing that their ascription to a person does not imply anything about his "current experiences".

Before I go further, let me say something about what the word 'disposition' means. The word 'disposition' literally means an ability, tendency, capacity, and liability to do certain things. Therefore, when we say that an object possesses a dispositional property, we simply mean that the object is liable or is capable of doing something. To say that an object that it is soluble, brittle, or to say of a human being that he is genious or considerate is to ascribe certain dispositional properties to them. However, we sometimes describe an object by ascribing certain properties which seem to be non-dispositional. For example - when we talk about the colour of the objects, we seem to talk about "non-dispositional property".

However, Ryle in his book 'The Concept of Mind' gives a dispositional analysis of mind by holding that mind is simply the disposition of the body. A person is not composed of both a body and a mind. With regard to the disposition Ryle says -

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"When we describe glass as brittle, or sugar as soluble, we are using dispositional concepts, the logical force of which is this. The brittleness of glass does not consist in the fact that it is at a given moment actually being shattered. It may be brittle without ever being shattered. To say

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that it is brittle is to say that if it even is, or ever had been, struck or strained, it would fly, or have flown, into fragments. To say that sugar is soluble is to say that it would dissolve, or would have dissolved, if immersed in water." 2

From Ryle's account it appears that dispositional properties refer to capacities, liabilities and tendencies. The distinction between the dispositional and non-dispositional properties is that dispositional properties are non-occurrent whereas non-dispositional properties are occurrent. Dispositional properties are non-occurrent because to say that 'a glass is brittle' is not to say that the glass is at a given moment actually being shattered. It may be brittle without ever being shattered. A thing is brittle if, and only if under suitable circumstances it shatters. It is because of this feature of dispositional properties that the behaviourist can use them in his analysis. So one can define thoughts, feelings, and wishes, etc. not in terms of actual behaviour, but of disposition to behave. If it is so then the man who hides his feelings, thoughts, wishes behind a poker face he would still have the disposition to behave in certain ways. Therefore, to attribute consciousness or some particular states of consciousness is to attribute a disposition to behave in a particular way.

The logical behaviourist particularly Ryle says :-

"To talk of a person's mind is not to talk of a repository which is permitted to house objects that something called, 'the physical world' is forbidden to house; 'it is to talk of the persons' abilities, liabilities and inclinations to do and undergo certain sorts of things, and of the doing and undergoing of these things in the ordinary world". 3

For him, the attribution of intention, desire, intelligence, excitement and fear and so on are to be understood as attribution of a disposition to behave in a characteristic manner in suitable circumstances. Therefore, for the logical behaviourist, when some one is angry this does not consist in some private state, without physical location, of which he alone can be aware. Rather, to be angry is to behave in an angry way : to be flushed, trembling, banging the table, or abusive. Mental concepts which we commonly use to describe and explain people's behaviour signify disposition and not episodes. Mental states are names of particular pattern of behaviour. They cannot cause the behaviour in question. It cannot be said that the man's anger made him shout or that his pride made him stubborn.

However the version of Logical Behaviourism runs into a number of difficulties. In the first place, it is hard to see how it can account for the way we use mental states to explain behaviour. To say that someone is trembling because he is angry would not explain anything if being angry simply con-



sisted in the behaviour to be explained. There is also the problem of accounting for my knowledge of my own mental states. I do seem to know at least in some ways about my mental states differently from other people, also to know about them in a different way. It is not clear what a behaviourist can say about this. Further difficulties arise from the hypothetical statements made by the behaviourists. The logical analysis of hypothetical statements itself presents great problems, and the behaviourist has the additional problem of connecting a hypothetical statement, saying under exactly which conditions the appropriate behaviour would appear.

However the version of behaviourism is open to obvious objections. One obvious difficulty is that it is our common experience that there can be mental processes going on although there is no behaviour at all. For example, a man may be angry but give no bodily sign. He may think, but say or do nothing at all. In order to meet this objection that there can be mental processes going on although there is no relevant behaviour, Ryle and others use the notion of disposition to behave. Their strategy is to argue that such cases, although the subject is not behaving in any relevant way, he or she is disposed to behave in some relevant ways. The glass does not shatter, but still it is brittle. The man does not behave, but he does have a disposition to behave. We can say he thinks but he does not speak or act because at that time he is disposed to speak or act in a certain way. If he had been

asked, perhaps, he would have spoken or acted. We can say he is angry although he does not behave angrily because he is disposed so to behave. Therefore, to be angry does not mean to be in a state of anger, whatever that might mean, but to "behave angrily" in appropriate circumstances.

Ryle says :

"To possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; when a particular condition is realised."4

From the above view of disposition it simply follows that brittleness is not to be conceived of as a cause for the breakage, or even, a factor in bringing about the breaking. Brittleness is just the fact that things of that sort break easily.

Although the Behaviourists in this way try to deal with the objection that mental processes can occur in the absence of behaviour, but they cannot do much. Because they meet with other objections. Suppose, for example, when I think, but thoughts do not issue in any action, it seems as obvious as anything is obvious that there is something actually going on in me which constitutes my thought. It is not simply that I would speak or act or if some conditions that are unfulfilled were to be fulfilled. Rather something is currently going on means, the literal sense of 'going on', and this something is

my thought. Rylean Behaviourism denies this and so it is unsatisfactory as a theory of mind. Behaviourism is a profoundly unnatural account of mental processes. If somebody speaks or acts in a certain way it is natural to speak of this speech and action as the expression of his thought. It is not at all natural to speak of his speech and action as identical with his thought. We naturally think of the thought as something quite distinct from the speech and action, which under suitable circumstances brings the speech and action about. Thoughts are not to be identified with behaviour. A man's behaviour constitutes the reason we have for attributing certain mental processes to him, but the behaviour cannot be identified with the mental processes.

Let us now turn to those cases in which it appears that an essential feature of the case is the inner occurrence of something, as we say, "going on before the person's mind", or "occupying his consciousness". The most plausible candidates are sensations (e.g., feeling pain), mental images (e.g. visualising a scene) and thoughts (e.g., having the thought, that today is holiday). I will first concentrate on having sensation, for example, a sensation of pain. We see a heavy object fall on someone's foot. We see him turn pale, grimace, cry out, clutch his foot, jump up and down so on and so forth. He is obviously feeling pain. But one can very well ask the question - what is it to feel pain? For the logical Behaviourists it is just to behave in these ways under these circum-

stances or at least to be disposed so to behave.

This way of analysing pain by the Analytical Behaviourists invites many questions. One may immediately ask the question - Does not such an analysis leave out just the essential feature, the sharp, highly unpleasant sensation so forcibly there in the forefront of consciousness and so agonizingly distressful? Surely it is the inner sensation which is the immediate cause of the outward behaviour of grimacing, crying out and limping about. That inner cause is left out in the third person account (i.e. in Logical Behaviourism).

Particular behaviour or dispositions to behave are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for sensations. Not necessary because one can imagine a pain so paralyzingly great or so trivially slight that there is no disposition to behave. And not sufficient because one can imagine such dispositions arising from other causes such as the desire to call attention to oneself, to deceive others or to immitate a person in pain. And one can imagine even that suddenly and unaccountably one might be overcome by a desire to grimace, cry out, and limp about for no reason at all. Such an occurrence is very puzzling, we might not know what to make of it, but surely it might occur. Others might be taken in and believe that he is feeling pain. But only he will know that he is not feeling pain. Therefore, feeling pain is one thing and being disposed to behave in certain ways is another. The feeling may produce the disposition to behave but we cannot say that they are iden-

tical nor even that the one is a necessary or sufficient condition for the other.

It is, therefore, a mistake to try and attempt to analyse all mental predicates behaviouristically. Ryle is mistaken when he thinks that it is necessary to deny not only that there can be Mental Substances but also that there can be mental event or occurrence. There is a distinction between mental occurrence and mental disposition. Jealousy, hatred, hunger, love and so on are mental dispositions because whenever these predicates are applied to a person it implies that he/she is disposed to behave in certain ways. For example, 'x is jealous of y' means 'x is disposed to show certain types of behaviour towards y'. Again there are such things as mental occurrences, for example, concepts like dreaming, imagining, thinking, etc. are mental occurrences and can not be exhaustively understood in terms of behaviour or physical expressions, however complicated the attempted reduction of the one to the other might be. They are occurrences and physical expressions are immaterial to their meanings. One may indulge in thinking without showing any outward sign for it. Therefore, thinking or 'thought' also qualify as mental events. We report such events when we say - "As I walked in a terrible thought occurred to me", "At midnight the thought crossed my mind", "It suddenly came to me", "Just then it dawned on me that ....."<sup>5</sup>

Thoughts of this sort come into one's head and go through one's mind. Whenever we report the occurrence of a thought in one of these many ways, we are reporting the occurrence of an event which took place at a particular time. As in the case of reports of feelings, reports of thoughts are not translatable into reports of behaviour or tendencies towards behaviour. So far as their meaning is concerned, they are reports of genuine occurrences but not overt performances. Therefore, Ryle has to exclude these mental occurrences from his theory and cannot explain them by expounding a dispositional analysis.

But take even cases where a Rylean account might seem at least initially plausible, e.g. the emotion, say, vanity. According to Ryle, to say that person is vain means he is disposed 'to talk a lot' about himself, 'to cleave to the society of the eminent, to reject the criticisms, to seek the footlights and to disengage himself from conversation about the merits of others.<sup>6</sup> If according to Ryle, vain person means he is disposed to behave in certain ways under certain circumstances then immediately the question arises -What does it mean 'to talk a lot' to reject criticism, etc? Does not it imply that some mental processes are going - on in himself ? Or will there not be occasions when the vain person finds his thought peculiarly centered on himself, on his prospect of success or his

appearance and so forth ? From this it proves that the feelings or emotions cannot be described except in terms of the situation and thoughts which occasion them. Because our thought and emotion are more sustained and more interwoven, the vain man can hardly be vain without some explicit thought about himself accompanied by emotions, sometimes more and sometimes less arresting in themselves. The emotion and the thought do not vie with one another nor do either of these have to be suspended for us to act appropriately.

Another point we can put against Ryle when he tries to explain 'love' or 'hate' in terms of dispositional senses. For him 'x hates y' means 'x is disposed to show certain types of behaviour towards y'. This type of analyses of mental predicates is wrong, because we can not act from the motive of love or hate in the dispositional senses, unless we have also experiences of loving and hating. And therefore, these cannot be reduced solely to behaving in certain ways towards others.

Logical behaviourists, particularly Ryle is guilty of arguing in a circular way by presenting his dispositional analysis of Mind. When we apply any mental predicates to a person by saying that 'x is intelligent', this statement, according to Ryle simply means 'x is

disposed to behave in a particular way'. That is to say that x is quick in answering, fast in understanding, the questions so on and so forth. But our problem is not yet solved. By giving the dispositional analysis of the concept of mind, we cannot get the meaning of the word 'Intelligent'. Rather it presupposes that we already know that this sorts of behaviour are regarded as intelligent behaviour. Ryle, if he wants to say that 'x is intelligent' then he must justify it by giving other instances which does not come under this description that 'he is behaving intelligently' or 'he is disposed to show certain kinds of behaviour.' Otherwise it, would be just the saying that 'he is behaving intelligently and therefore 'he is intelligent' which is not a case of proving that 'somebody is intelligent' but simply begging the questions. Therefore, Ryle's logical Behaviourism, i.e. his dispositional account of mind involves the fallacy of begging the question. This charge can also be brought against the analysis of all dispositional mental conduct concepts.

Perhaps the central difficulty of the behaviourist position can be put in the following ways. If the behaviourist contention that the mind is reducible to behaviour is to be taken seriously then it must, in Logic,



be the case that for every mental statement there will be a behaviour statement or a set of behaviour statements which will be strictly equivalent to it. In other word, every mental state - statement must entail a bodily statement (s) about behaviour which in their turn must entail the mental state statement in question. It is notorious that nobody has ever been able to produce such equivalence in practice. In the absence of this the behaviourist claim must loose most of its most of its bite. But perhaps it will be instructive to go into the question of why it is that the behaviourist programme of finding equivalences has failed. It could well be that the reason why the programme has failed is that it is logically impossible that it should succeed.

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**CHAPTER III**  
**BEHAVIOURISM AND THE PRIVATE**  
**LANGUAGE ARGUMENT**

## BEHAVIOURISM AND THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

Though Ryle and Wittgenstein both appear to be logical behaviourists or close enough to such a position, yet the views of Wittgenstein are different from those of Ryle. Both the philosophers have accepted the view that mental states cannot be analysed without remainder into behaviour. But their difference lies primarily in the fact that, Ryle, in his most uncompromising way, asserts that there is a clear logical route from statements about behaviour to statements about the mind and vice versa; and Wittgenstein rejects this claim. He says that though there is a link between statements about mental states and ones about behaviour, yet the link is far more subtle or more elusive than entailment. Wittgenstein's claim is that mental states are not reducible to actual or potential behaviour but are still far less detachable than traditional dualists have supposed.

Wittgenstein's views does not, therefore, fall into any clear theoretical slot in the philosophy of mind - and it thus raises a problem of interpretation. The problem of interpreting Wittgenstein's account may perhaps be reduced to the problem of interpreting a single sentence :

When he says :-

"An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria." 1

Here the crucial word is 'criteria'. As it is well-known Wittgenstein held that philosophical problems arise through misunderstanding concerning the grammar or use of words, caused, among other things by analogies between forms of expression (e.g. 'I feel x') in different regions of language. He often takes a philosophical understanding of the grammar of the use of a word to turn on a recognition and knowledge of criteria, together with the rejection of such analogies as would prevent the recognition and obscure the use of a term, becomes, for him, a main task of Philosophical Investigation. He takes it that many of the words which occasion philosophical puzzlement are applied in virtue of a wide but connected network of criteria :

"We see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss - crossing." 2 (on 'game').

"And in the same way we also use the word "to read" for a family of cases ..... in different circumstances we apply different criteria for a person's reading." 3

It seems then that for Wittgenstein a criterion is something in terms of which a general term is applicable. So a criterion is a ground or reason for classification. Furthermore, and more importantly, it appears that if 'P' is among the criteria for 'q' then the sort of reason 'P' gives for the application of 'q' is neither deductive nor inductive, in the sense of 'deductive' in which if 'P' is a deductive ground for 'q' then 'P' entails 'q' and in the

(rather, special Humean) sense of Inductive in which if 'p' is an inductive ground for 'q' then 'p' is correlated with 'q'. This feature of the logic of criteria has caused much controversy, but there are familiar reasons for regarding it as a desirable one in the philosophy of mind. There does not seem to be any cogent objections to such a notion : if inductive is used in the above sense, there must be other than inductive grounds for any classification for which there are inductive grounds; and it is widely accepted that the universal precision of definitions which would be required if all such non-inductive grounds were to be deductive does not obtain.

Wittgenstein often seems to think that all the criteria employed in ascription of sensations are behavioural, since one uses behavioural criteria in the ascription of sensations to others, and no criteria at all in the ascription of sensations to oneself.

"What is the criterion for the redness of an image ? For me, when it is someone else's image : What he says and does. For myself, when it is my image : nothing." 4

It is also useful to note the distinction between symptoms and criteria that Wittgenstein makes. Two points in particular concerning this distinction are as follows :-

(i) The distinction between criteria and symptoms

does not require that it be decidable for every item of behaviour whether it is one or the other.

(ii) It is very difficult to elicit the criteria governing the use of many mental concepts - Wittgenstein compares the recognition of those patterns in behaviour to the recognition of facial expression which is unmediated by any precise knowledge of the measurement of the features, distance between them, etc.

"Think of the recognition of facial expressions. Or of the description of facial expressions --- which does not consist in giving the measurements of the face ! Think, too, how one can immitate a man's face without seeing one's own in a mirror." 5

Once this notion of criterion in Wittgenstein is accepted it is easy to see that his position cannot be seen as conforming to the paradigmatic behaviourist mould. For the latter believes that mental state statements are logically reducible (in the sense of entailment) to statements about behaviour. To say that the inner stands in need of outward criteria is therefore, not to deny the occurrence or the existence of the inner, but rather to suggest that the inner becomes available at all in language only through its connection with the outer. And these connections can be of diverse kinds.

Perhaps the best way to bring out the Wittgen-

steinian notion of the connection between the inner and the outer is to consider his so-called private language argument. Under normal circumstances the correlations between behaviour and sensations are not called into question. It is these correlations that provide the ground for the use of sensation words in our language. However if these correlations were merely inductive in the Humean sense which would be natural consequence of a dualist philosophy of mind, then it would be possible to imagine a collapse of these correlations in my own case as well as in the case of others. The private language argument arises in the context of such an imagined collapse. In the absence of the normal correlations, I would have no grounds for ascribing any sensations to people other than myself. But I could, so it may be thought, still ascribe sensations to myself. Now the language in which I ascribe sensations to myself in the event of a collapse of the behavioural criteria of ascribing sensations, will be private to me, understandable by me alone because nobody else can have reason to ascribe to me the sensations that I ascribe to myself.

Thus :

"What about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? How do I use words to stand for my sensations? --- As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of



sensation ? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. Someone else might understand it as well as I.

--- But suppose I didn't have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation ? And now I simply associate names with sensations". 6

Wittgenstein's mention of natural expression here need not be emphasised; elsewhere he speaks simply of 'behaviour' which is the expression of sensation or behaviour which expresses, shows sensations. This is what must be abrogated, in the event of a collapse of the behavioural criteria. So that person has only the sensation left. Wittgenstein next argues that if a person attempted to associate a word with a sensation in this way he would not be able to distinguish between using the word correctly and merely seeming to himself to.

"I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. ---I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. ---But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. ---How ? can I point to the sensation ? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation - and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. ---But what is this ceremony for ? For that is all it seems to be ! A definition surely serves to establish the meaning of a

sign. ---Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation. ---But "I impress it on myself" can only mean : this process brings it about that I remember the connexion right in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say : Whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about right". 7

The distinction which does in fact normally exist between a person's using a word in his own case correctly and his merely thinking that he does turn on what is missing from the private language in particular on the behavioural criteria for the ascription of sensations. Roughly we may expect this distinction to be provided by the correlation (or lack of it) between the person's uses of the sensation word with the other criteria for the use of the word. And in so far as such a distinction is a necessary condition of someone's being said to follow a rule in the use of a word, no one, in his use of a sensation word can be said to follow such a rule as would be set up in the kind of correlation suggested in the passage quoted above. (P.I. 258)

Wittgenstein held, as we said earlier that in ascribing a sensation to himself a person uses no criteria. It seems clear that if a person were said to use a sensation word in a self ascription on any basis or ground it would be

nothing but the occurrence of the sensations. In particular Wittgenstein denies that a person ascribes sensation to himself on the basis of the behaviour which others might use in judging that he has the sensation. He says in a parallel case :-

"I do not say it from observation of my behaviour. But it only makes sense because I do behave in this way." 8

The kind of absurdity in the supposition that a person ascribes sensation to himself on these criteria appears in 'I am groaning and grimacing and holding my toes protectively ; so it must be that I have a pain in my toes'.

Thus when Wittgenstein assumes the abrogation of the behavioural criteria for the ascription of sensation, he does not change any basis a person might be thought to have for ascribing a sensation to himself, for using a sensation word in his own case. He rather removes all grounds for a distinction between the persons using the word correctly and merely seeming to himself to do, and so removes the condition of the person being said to use the word correctly or according to rule. This in turn is a condition of the person's being said to recognize or identify his sensation correctly. This then is a requirement to which Wittgenstein is responding when he says - he needs a criterion of correctness for the use of the word or a criterion of iden-

tity for the sensation.

"If I assume the abrogation of the normal-language game with the expression of a sensation I need a criteria of identity for the sensation."9

So in the normal language game with the expression of sensation a person neither has nor needs a criterion of identity for the sensation he ascribes to himself. The required distinction in his use of sensation word in his own case is provided by the behavioural criteria for the ascription of the sensations to others. Although he does not use these criteria, he, like anybody else, can regard them as giving a background against which the use of sensation words in his criterionless self ascription can be judged as correct. So he can be said to use sensation words in his own case correctly and in accordance with rules, if not on the basis of the criteria to which correctness of his uses is answerable.

It follows that it is misleading as regards the role of the sensation itself in the self-ascriptive use of sensation words to speak of as if a person used such a word on the basis of his recognition or correct identification of a sensation. For this implies that the sensation is something which can by itself be said to be correctly identified; whereas the behavioural criteria provide a condition of the sensation's being (significantly said to

be) correctly identified. So a person cannot regard the identification of his own sensation as logically independent of his behaviour.

It should be clear from the above that, (i) Why we said at the beginning that the Wittgenstien view of the relationship between mental concepts and behaviour is much more subtle than a classical behaviourist view can possibly be ; (ii) Why the notion of criterion, in this case behavioural criterion must be other than that of either an inductive basis or a deductive entailing condition and (iii) Why in spite of the logical link between sensation and behavioural conditions, the inner is never abolished in Wittgenstein view of things.

This becomes even clearer when we consider the remarks about memory in the argument of (Section-256 - 258). In the appearance of the sign, the ostensive definition, there is no question of correctness or lack of it; but then the problem is whether there can be a way of telling whether

"this ...brings it about that I remember the connection (between the sign and the type of sensation) right in the future."10

So the question whether the diarist's has a distinction between correct and the merely seemingly correct use of his sign is almost the same as the question whether he has a

distinction between remembering and merely seeming to remember what sensation he had. Now it is frequently urged that Wittgenstein's argument can be reduced to absurdity because it depends on some sort of general assumption of the unreliability of memory for sensations. As it has been urged above only a lack of reasons to make a distinction about memory, in a special case, rather than some assumption about unreliability of memory in general, is at issue in Wittgenstein's argument. In section 265 Wittgenstein imagines a table or dictionary "that exists only in our imagination."<sup>11</sup> and asks whether you can justify a translation by looking a word up in that dictionary. Wittgenstein suggests that it would not be a justification, because a justification involves an appeal to something independent. His questioner then says, 'surely I can appeal from memory to memory', gives an example of such an appeal and asks whether his example is the same sort of case as the imagined dictionary. Wittgenstein says no, that it is not the same; presumably his reason is that one of the memories in the questioner's example, that of a railway timetable, is a memory that can be checked, whereas nothing in the dictionary of the imagination could. In saying that the cases are different, Wittgenstein implies that the appeal from memory to memory in the case of the timetable is legitimate. He then asks whether the appeal, which is legitimate, given that the cases are different would remain so if the cases were more alike;

if, contrary to fact, the image of the timetable could not be tested. There is nothing in the passage to suggest that Wittgenstein thinks that an appeal to memory, or from memory to memory, is subject to some general objections. To think so would be to take Wittgenstein's "no" for "yes".

In the case of the putative private language, because of the abrogation or collapse of behavioural criteria for ascription of sensation to others, an appeal from memory to memory would be illegitimate because there could be no independent check on any particular memory impression. Such a check could be provided only by the possibility of appealing to others, that is on a return to behavioural criteria for the ascription of mental states to others. Wittgenstein's claim may be questionable, but it is clear that it has nothing to do with the view that (i) remembering is not an inner process, (ii) that remembering consists simply in behaving or in being disposed to behave in certain sorts of ways; and (iii) statements about behaviour entail statements about mental states. What however the argument does claim is that my ascriptions of mental states to myself is in some deep sense parasitic upon my ascription of mental states to others; and this is very different from the central behaviourist thesis.

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**CHAPTER IV**  
**IDENTITY THEORY**

## IDENTITY THEORY

The complexities of Wittgenstein's account of mental states are such that, even when one is convinced by the power of many of his remarks one seems to be left at the end without a great deal of general clarity about the matters. Of course Wittgenstein's refusal to theorise and his view that theories in philosophy are essentially misleading and therefore need to be - to use a much later term - "Deconstructed" may have something to do with it.

In this chapter, however, I shall once again consider what can only be termed as a philosophical theory of the mind, namely, The Identity Theory. I shall consider the theory in its version popularised by philosophers such as Smart, Place and Armstrong.

It is an important part of the claim of the identity theorists that the identity it wishes to establish between mental states and physical states is a contingent, a factual identity, not a logical one. The reason given for this is that expressions referring to mental states mean differently from expressions which refer explicitly to physical states. We can distinguish at least three different ways in which this is taken to mean : (1) The descriptive phrases we use in describing mental states differ in meaning from the descriptive phrases we use in describing the corresponding physical states, just as "morning star" differs in meaning from "evening star". (2) Expressions referring the mental states as such have no descriptive content at all,

whereas expressions referring to brain states have. Thus Smart, for example, says that mental states can be characterised no more precisely than as "something going on, which is like what is going on when ....."<sup>1</sup> where the gap is completed by the description of some physical events.

Armstrong, expressing a similar view says -

"The concept of a mental state is the concept of that, whatever it may turn out to be, which is brought about in a man by certain stimuli and which in turn brings about certain responses. What it is in its own nature is something for science to discover." 2

(3) Mental predicates very often, if not always, have a component of meaning which physical predicates do not have, and this is referred to as "intentionality" of mental predicates. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that mental states are identical with brain states, for Leibniz' Law of Identity of Indiscernables -

"requires that if two things are identical they have all their non-intentional and non-modal properties in common." 3

The proponents of the identity theory are not clear about which of (1), (2) and (3) they wish to assert when they say mental predicates are different in meaning from physical predicates, and this unclarity reflects an unclarity about

the kind of theory that they are propounding. For (1) and (3) seem to imply that mental states are independently characterizable, describable items, and the identity theorist is presumably wishing to say that these independently characterizable items are in fact identical with physical states of the body which are, of course, also independently characterizable. On the other hand, (2) seems to imply that we have, as things are, absolutely no way of describing mental states except in a trivial and question begging way as some thing or other which takes place in some specified physical situation, and which tends to produce empirically observable bodily changes. Now the Identity Theorist who says (2) is holding a theory which is different from the one which is specified in the last but one sentence : he is saying that an item hitherto unknown to us, is made known to us, identified for us, by Science. He is not saying that two items, X and Y, are in fact identical with each other, but rather that one item, X is made known discovered. Because of this difference he is vulnerable to an objection from which the other type of identity theorist is, at least prima-facie, free. The objection can be stated as follows : Suppose, as is conceivable, scientific methods with its increasing sophistication, were persistently to fail to discover what mental states in themselves are, and scientists were to become doubtful whether such a discovery would be possible at any future date; then the identity theorists under discussion would have to say either that we have, and can have, no knowledge of what mental states are, or that some discipline other than science discover them for us, or that there are, so far as we can reasonably tell, no mental states at all. Now all the three

alternatives would in one way or another be unpalatable to the Identity Theorists. About the first alternative one could justifiably say, no matter what science discovers or fails to discover, we have had and shall continue to have knowledge of mental states at least in so far as we understand and successfully ascribe to ourselves as well as to others predicates implying mental states. The same reply would be appropriate to the second alternative except that one could also rightly demand from the Identity Theorist an account of the kind of non-scientific method which could now allegedly discover the nature of mental states; and it is, to say the least, very difficult to envisage any such method. As for the third alternative, the Identity Theorists cannot even get off the ground at all without the assumption that there are mental states to be discovered.

The other version of the Identity Theory, namely, the version according to which the identity claimed is between two independently characterizable items, escapes the above objection, but an objection frequently urged against it, is that mental states necessarily lack a property, which all physical states necessarily have, and which it is essential that mental states have if there were to be even the logical possibility of their being identical with physical states. Thus Shaffer in his article - "Recent

work in the mind-body problem" says :

"the physical events which are intimately connected with my having particular mental events have some definite location, probably in the brain. .... However, so far as thoughts are concerned, it makes no sense to talk about a thought's being located in some place or places in the body." 4

Another philosopher Don Locke (Myself and Others) has argued that

"Thinking and preceiving are hidden, silent, internal, incorporeal, ghostly processes."

This, according to him, may mean any or all of three things:

(i) that they do not consist in

"changes or movements of things which are solid in the way that running consists a various movements of legs".

(ii) that they do not consist in

"changes or movements of things which have a spatial location, things like legs, lungs and heads."

and (iii) that they do not consist in

"changes or movements of perceptible items, things which we can perceive as we can perceive legs, lungs, and heads". 5

An Identity Theorist might say that there can be nothing logically wrong with locating mental states (events) because we do, in fact, locate for instance, pain the whole time. The reply to this is that although bodily

sensations like pains, itches and tingles and so on undoubtedly have a place in the body, the logic of the location of such sensations in the body is so vastly different from that of the location of a material object or a physical process, that it would be simply wrong to conclude from the mere fact that we talk of the place of a sensation that the latter therefore is a physical process. As Armstrong says in an earlier work of his:

"It is clear that to say that I have a pain or an itch or a tingle in my hand is not like saying there is bone or blood in my hand. A bodily sensation is not a material object."<sup>6</sup>

Some of the crucial differences are : (i) We - the person currently having the bodily sensation as well as others - do not perceive it in the way that we perceive the bodily wound which causes it, or can perceive the bone inside the flesh or blood, or corpuscles in the blood, (ii) My knowledge of my sensations is different from another's knowledge of my sensations. Although I might have to find the place of my pain by probing for it, just as the doctor might, my awareness of the pain itself is different from the doctor's knowledge of it. No such difference in our knowledge of material objects and processes. (iii) Sensations do not exclude one another from one place as material objects do.

An apologist for the identity theory might say although as things are we do not in fact have a convention

of locating conscious processes there is nothing to prevent us from adopting such a convention whereby we should locate conscious processes, say, in the brain. But this idea seems to be mistaken. It seems that there is something in the nature of conscious processes which would resist the adoption of any convention of locating them, as we locate physical processes in some part or other of the body. This can be seen from the following consideration : Suppose we adopted the convention of locating conscious processes in the brain and agreed with the Identity Theorist that they are identical with the brain processes which occupy the same place as they. Now, it is conceivable that brain could have an existence separately from the body in which it is housed; and it is also conceivable that exactly the same physical processes with which mental processes are identified went on in the separately existing brain. Would we then say that there were conscious processes going on in the independently existing brain ? The idea of ascribing conscious processes to things which are not even remotely similar to the standard human body seems quite beyond our grasp. And yet, if the Identity Theory were correct, and there were nothing wrong with locating mental states in the brain, we ought to be able to have some intellectual grasp on this idea. Armstrong reply to this objection is that processes in a separately existing brain, even if they were



exactly similar to those that were going on in it when inside the body, could no longer be properly identified as mental processes, for

" a mental state qua mental state is nothing but ' a state of the person apt for the bringing about of certain sorts of behaviour".<sup>7</sup>

But the difficulty in fact is not resolved. Armstrong conceives the relationship between a mental state and behaviour as a causal one. That is, to put it crudely, a mental state is supposed to be the cause of some characteristic kind of behaviour. The relationship therefore, however, intimate must be a contingent one, since all particular causal relationships are contingent relationships. Thus Armstrong makes essentially this point when he says -

" By saying only that mental states are states apt for bringing about behaviour we allow for some mental states being actual occurrences, even although they result in no behaviour."<sup>8</sup>

But if this is so mental states must be allowed the possibility of having an existence independently of the behaviour they are apt to produce- and this even if we grant the rather dubious assumption that in spite of the contingency of the relationship mental states cannot be characterised except as something which tends to cause behaviour. And if mental states can occur independently of

behaviour, why -if they are identical with brain processes- can they not occur in an independently existing brain ? After all it is there that according to the identity theorist they did occur, whether or not they were followed by appropriate sort of behaviour. The difference is that while the brain was in the body a mental state which was identical with a state of the brain frequently tended to produce behaviour, but once outside the body it is physically impossible for an exactly similar state to produce behaviour. But since the relationship between it and what it produces is a contingent one, the mere physical impossibility of bringing about the characteristic result cannot deprive it of its very existence. So, it seems the identity theorist is still left with the task of showing that we have at least some hold on the idea of ascribing of mental states to things which do not have even a remote resemblance to the standard human body.

The identity theorists might now concede that it is mistaken to think that we can locate, or at any rate, adopt the convention of locating, mental states in the brain, but he might still insist that this has no tendency to disprove the thesis that mental states are identical with physical states. Nagel, for instance, suggests a way of stating the identity which would not involve identifying a

mental state with a brain state. He thinks that physical side of the identity should be regarded as a "condition of the body" rather than as a condition of the brain, because, as he says, it is doubtful that -

"anything without a body of some conventional sort, could be the subject of psychological States".<sup>9</sup>

The physical side of the identity is -

"my body's being in that state which may be specified as having the relevant process going on in its brain, it has been located as precisely as it can be when we have been told the precise location of that of which it is a state-namely, my body"- 10

This version of the Identity Theory does seem to escape the particular difficulty about location that we have been considering, but, only at the expense of becoming inconsistent or at any rate vague. For one thing, how should we distinguish it from a theory according to which mental processes are distinct from physical process, but that they can nevertheless be identified only as being possessed by somebody or another? It would be quite consistent for such a theory to say that mental states are indeed located. That they are located in the body whose properties they are, and that any more precise specification of their location is impossible. The advantage of such a theory over the version of identity theory that we are now considering is that it can give a very good reason for saying that mental states

cannot be located more precisely, namely, that they are not physical processes; whereas for an identity theorist even to say that mental states can be no more precisely located seems quite inconsistent with its fundamental position that mental states are in fact identical with certain physical processes. He could perhaps say that the mental state at time t is identical with the total physical state of the body at time t. But the notion of the "total physical state of the body at time t" is quite vague; and at any rate changes in the body have very often nothing to do with a currently occurring mental process.

The problem of location is therefore, a genuine one for the identity theory, and one it must solve before it can be regarded as a cogent theory of mind. Another difficulty for the theory which is no less crucial is that because it treats the alleged identity as only contingent, it is incumbent on the theory to give some account of what it would be like for the identity not to hold. And no identity theorist seems to have attempted any such account. Identity theorists would perhaps all agree that mental states are states, they can be identified only as states of something or other. As Armstrong says-

"mental experience, like grins or  
soporific virtues, require  
something further to have them".-11

And according to him - it seems rightly - it is the violation of this logical principle that renders any Humean "bundle theory" of mind incoherent. If mental states are incapable of independent existence, one could only hold any of the three theories about what it is that has them:-

(1) With the identity theorist one could say that mental states are identical, though contingently, with certain physical states of the body. (2) Or with the Cartesian one could say that mental states are states of a mental or spiritual substance, and therefore, that they are possessed by this substance which can exist independently of the body. (3) Or, finally, one could say that mental states, though distinct from physical states, can nevertheless be possessed by nothing other than the body itself:- the "requirements of identity" to use Strawson's phrase, rule out the possibility of their being possessed by anything other than the body. Now, since identity theorist holds that the identity between mental and physical states is only a contingent one and rejects (3), it looks as though the kind of contingency he envisages is that mental states instead of being physical states of the body could well have been spiritual states of a spiritual substance.

Indeed Armstrong regards it as a strong point in favour of his theory that it allows for the logical

possibility of a spiritual substance, capable of existing independently of the body. And yet, this alleged possibility is not explored in any detail at all. The only argument one could extract from Armstrong's book in support of his thesis that disembodied existence must be logically possible seems to beg the whole question at issue.

He Says :

"Consider the case where I am lying in bed at night thinking. Surely it is logically possible that I might be having just the same experiences, and yet not have a body at all? No doubt I am having certain somatic, that is to say, bodily, sensations. But if I am lying still these will be not very detailed in nature, and I can see nothing self-contradictory in supposing that they do not correspond to anything in physical reality. Yet I need be in no doubt about my identity."12

Surely this cannot be sufficient to prove the logical possibility of disembodied existence. Certainly there could be bodily sensations which were felt in no part of the body, because, for instance, the part of the body where it seems to be felt is missing. One could hardly claim that from this it follows that there could be sensations where there was no body at all. It may be said that one can easily imagine oneself being without a body just as one can easily

imagine oneself being housed in a body other than one's present body. But perhaps, one can also imagine being two persons at the same time. The point is that unless one can spell out the contents of such imaginings and show that there is no incoherence involved in their detailed statement, mere ability to imagine something is no proof of what is logically possible.

Armstrong's rhetorical question -

"Surely it is logically possible that I might be having just the same experiences, and yet not have a body at all?"<sup>13</sup>

Of course merely states his position. The crucial statement in the passage from Armstrong quoted above is the very last one:

"Yet I need be in no doubt about my identity".

A disembodied substance which is a mind, i.e., has mental states must be a more or less enduring entity. Therefore, in order for it to exist there must be conditions under which it persists, i.e., retains its identity. And in order for us to show that it is possible for a disembodied mind to exist, we must be able to specify the persistence conditions, the conditions of continued identity of such a substance. "I need be in doubt of my identity", is of course extremely vague. When need I be in no doubt of my identity? When I am engaged in the kind of imagining that Armstrong envisages?

But then I know that I am lying in bed, physically relaxed and comfortable; and if I were to be in doubt about my identity I would know what sort of consideration would resolve my doubts. But what Armstrong's statement means perhaps is that my imagined self need be in no doubt of its identity. But this, while it shows that the crucial question is that of the identity of the disembodied self, does not prove anything. Even granted that my imaginary disembodied self need at any particular time, be in no doubt of its identity, doubt cannot be logically ruled out. This follows from the fact that statements identifying the present item with a past item are always corrigible. But if doubt is logically possible, there must be a way of envisaging conditions under which the doubt could be resolved. What this means is that one must be able to specify the conditions under which a disembodied self would persist, so that a doubt about its identity can be resolved by an investigation of these conditions. And Armstrong himself has shown in meticulous detail that it is impossible for us to specify such conditions. Thus he asks whether the dualist theory of mind can "Provide for the numerical difference of spiritual objects".<sup>14</sup> and for "the identity of one spiritual object of <sup>the</sup> collection of objects over a stretch of time".<sup>15</sup>

As for the first question his answer is that it cannot,



because (i) it cannot consistently appeal to difference in the spatial position of the alleged spiritual entities; (ii) it cannot appeal to the past histories of the entities, because there is nothing logically to prevent them from having the same past histories (from beginning to end; and (iii) "even in a case where this is not so and the spiritual histories are identical in character for a limited time, what differentiates the objects during that time"? <sup>16</sup>

As for the second question his answer is again "No", because failing to appeal to spatial continuity, the dualist can appeal only to resemblance between two spiritual entities at different times, and resemblance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of identity. The natural conclusion from such considerations should have been at least to cast doubt on the alleged logical possibility of disembodied existence. But Armstrong thinks that this cannot be the correct conclusion, because the dualist can still appeal to some other non-spatial 'principle of individuation' (which, however, cannot be characterised in any way other than as a non-spatial principle of individuation), <sup>17</sup> and therefore the logical possibility of disembodied existence remains unassailable. But in what does the intelligibility of such an alleged principle consist? The only way one could claim intelligibility for a principle is for one to be able to

spell it out in terms that are intelligible. But if one of the conditions of the principle is that it cannot be spelt out at all, then to insist on its intelligibility seems, to say the least, highly irrational.

Now, if the notion of a disembodied self is an incoherent notion it will have awkward consequences for the Identity Theory. According to the theory, there is only a contingent identity between mental states on the one hand and physical states on the other hand. Since it is impossible for mental states to exist in isolation by themselves, i.e., since mental states must be states of something, it seems to follow from the contingency of the identity between mental states and physical states that if, in fact, mental states were not identical with physical states, then they would have to be states of a spiritual substance. This however, involves the hidden assumption that bodies can have only physical states, that it is impossible to ascribe non-physical states to bodies. But this is an assumption which all Identity Theorists seem to find no difficulty in making. Now, if the notion of disembodied existence is incoherent, then the Identity Theorist, via his assumption that bodies can only have physical states, would involve the logical anomaly of saying that the denial of a contingent statement is not just contingently false, but necessarily false.

It may be said that although the Identity Theorists are unanimous in maintaining that only a contingent identity can be established between mental states and physical states, this is not an essential element of their theory. They could quite consistently - however unplausibly - maintain that the identity in fact is a necessary one. And this would remove the logical anomaly of asserting a contingent proposition whose denial was logically incoherent. The view that mental states are necessarily identical with physical states may be thought to be reinforced by the acceptance of a causal analysis of all mental concepts. Armstrong though he is strictly against the view that mental states are necessarily identical with physical states of the body, offers such a causal analysis of all mental-state concepts :

"The concept of a mental state is primarily the concept of a state of the person apt for bringing about a certain sort of behaviour". 18

The phrase "apt for bringing about a certain sort of behaviour" is understood in a strictly causal sense. But the concept of a cause of behaviour, it may be said, must be that of something physical. For, on any view of a causation, the cause of any physical event, must be spatio-temporally traceable from the effect; and, therefore, the cause of behaviour must be something spatial, physical,

whether or not this kind of causal analysis is adequate for all mental-state concepts, any causal analysis which takes seriously the suggestion that a cause must be a physical entity or process of some sort, soon runs into a difficulty of a particular kind: it would be agreed by all that our understanding of, our use of, the notion of a mental state is not contingent upon our discovery of any internal physical state or process which is related in a very intimate way to the mental state whatever the nature of the relation might ultimately be. This does not, of course, mean that our understanding of mental concepts will not be enhanced by such a discovery. All that this means is that in so far as we can use the notion of a mental state at all, our failure or success in doing so, does not, as things are, depend upon our discovery of any internal physical state. But if this is so it is logically possible that we should fail, however hard and long we tried, to discover any such states at all, and yet be able perfectly well to use the notion of a mental state. If our failure was persistent, it would at some stage become unreasonable not to say that there were in fact no such internal physical states. But as long as we had bodies which externally looked the same as our present bodies and which behaved externally in the same way, there seems no reason why we should not go on ascribing mental states to ourselves as well as others, in the way that

we have always done. This at least shows that it is impossible to establish a necessary identity between a mental state and physical state via the notion of cause.

I think, enough has been said in the preceding pages, to show that the identity theory in all its variety of incarnations is wrong. There does not seem to be any coherent philosophical route to the thesis that mental states are the same as physical states, in whatever way "this same" is taken. We shall in the next chapter consider, a theory which, while avoiding the logical pitfalls of the identity theory, seems at the same time to be able to be give an adequate account of the role of the body in the intelligible articulation of mental-state concepts. This is the theory of P.F. Strawson as expounded in his favous paper entitled "Persons".

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**CHAPTER V**  
**PERSONS**

## PERSONS

In this chapter, I wish to deal with a special problem which is of permanent interest in philosophy. The problem is the problem of understanding the concept of a person and of personal or self-identity. The expression "self" and "person" are often used interchangeably. While the term "self" is commonly used by the philosopher as a synonym of the word "person" the term 'self-knowledge' clearly does not mean the 'knowledge of a person'. Self knowledge means the knowledge of one self. It is because of the existence and nature of self-knowledge that there is a special problem or set of problems about the nature of persons and of personal identity. In this chapter, we shall consider why the nature of persons, and of personal identity is regarded as posing a distinctive philosophical problem in a way in which the nature and identity of other things does not. For instance, in the case of ordinary 'material things', e.g., 'table', 'chair', we can without much likelihood of controversy (except in marginal or "borderline" cases) speak of spatio-temporal continuity as the criterion, or logically necessary condition of identity. But it is well-known that to treat spatio-temporal continuity as the criterion of personal identity leads immediately to intractable puzzles.

It is obvious enough that the existence of a special problem about the nature of persons and personal identity is somehow connected with the fact that persons have minds. To



many it makes no sense to say that mind is a material thing. There is a philosophical tendency to regard minds as non-physical entities and to identify persons with their minds. But in merely pointing out that persons have minds and that minds cannot be said to be 'material things', one has, as it were, merely stated a problem, and not solved it !

It has sometimes been thought that the special nature of the problem about persons can be adequately appreciated by reflecting on the distinction between first-person ~~ps~~ychological statements and third-person psychological statements. But the most striking fact about the problem is that it is often raised by a question which does not even contain the word 'person' or any synonym of it, namely, "What am I ?" In order to answer this question it will be better to start with the traditional philosophers, like Descartes. He says -

"While I was trying to think everything false it must be that I, who was thinking this, was something."1

According to Descartes man is composed of two substances, viz., mental and physical. In other words, it can be said that man is composed of two parts, i.e. one is private and the other one is public. Descartes' theory is something like : human bodies are in space and subject to mechanical laws, which govern all other bodies in space. Body can be extended and its processes and states can be

inspected by external observation. But minds are not in space, nor are their operations subject to mechanical laws. The essential attribute of mind is 'thinking' and a person is identical with his mind only, because 'he is a thinking being'. Descartes' theory of 'person' i.e., 'he is a thinking thing' has been subjected to diverse criticisms and arguments. This theory has been criticised by many philosophers. Though it is true that a person is a 'thinking thing', yet, at the same time can his body and bodily properties be logically totally detached from this fact? Moreover, 'what is the thing that thinks?' is also debatable problem. Descartes' theory of 'thinking thing' has been criticised from many angles. It has been argued that mere diversity of thought and extension and the fact - if it is a fact - that they can exist apart from one another would not imply that there could not be a thinking substance which is also extended. Thus Hobbes says, that it could be the case that something that thinks should be something corporeal. And the same view has been shared by Locke who thinks corporeal body might be able to think. There is another great disadvantage in Descartes' theory. For him, the essence of mind is thought, and the essence of body is extension. These two are the essential features of both mind and body respectively. From this it becomes clear that, for Descartes both mind and body have one fundamental attribute each, so that each one is reducible to its fundamental attribute, i.e. 'mind'

is reducible to 'thinking' and 'matter' is reducible to 'extension'. Some critics are of the opinion that, from such a distinction, it becomes clear that Descartes seeks to sort out the 'mind-body' problem by a simple definitional device. His account says nothing more than that 'what we mean by body is that it is extended'. But Descartes is

not correct at all for the following considerations: Though it is true that thinking is one of the chief characteristics of mind, yet 'mind' cannot be totally identical with 'thought'. There are other characteristics of mind such as memorising, imagining, intending, etc. Descartes cannot avoid attributing these to the mind. Similarly, though it is true that extension is an attribute of body, yet extension is not the only attribute of body. Body possesses other attributes such as weight, senses, motion etc. qualities which distinguish body (physical) from body (material). If we apply Descartes' theory, then there will be no difference between physical body and material body. In fact, we know that these two are quite different from each other, because physical body possesses these attributes which material body lacks. Descartes makes a serious mistake by identifying extension with bodies (physical).

From these considerations it becomes very clear that Descartes' categorial distinction between mind and

thinking is a product of the body. But this does not mean

body is more a matter of implicit, half-formulated assumption, than one of explicit concern.

We have seen that, if we make a categorial distinction between mind and body, then serious problems arise which cannot be avoided very easily. Now another question arises - if 'person' is not identical with his mind, then, is he - no doubt in much qualified way - identical with his body ? The materialist would answer this question in the affirmative. They say that a 'person' is identical with his body, because there is only one ultimate reality in the universe, and that is matter. There is nothing but only matter and motion. Extension and impenetrability are its essential attributes. Motion is the primary form of activity. Only matter and motion can explain all processes of reality, the physical processes as well as the mental processes. Therefore, from materialism it follows that 'person' is a material body consisting of matter only and though there are mental events and states, these events and states are only the products of the physical body. Thus under this assumption materialism tries to establish that a person is his physical body. His thought, emotions, his feelings, his desires are thus the products of this body.

Such an approach has been criticised by John Locke. Locke points out that it is possible to imagine that thinking is a product of the body. But this does not mean

that a person is his body. He tries to establish that a person is not his body rather it is his mind. For him a person is identical with his self because consciousness is the attribute of the self and it is consciousness that determines the identity of a person. A person's body changes, but his consciousness "remains the same" and that is why consciousness is the person.

The materialists' position faces other difficulties. Though it may for argument's sake, be allowed that a person is his body, yet there may be a problem about the nature of mental processes whose existence cannot be denied. If we agree with the materialist that mental processes are a by-product of the physical body, yet we cannot deny the occurrence of different kinds of mental phenomena. We know that a human being possesses both mental processes and physical processes. The materialist cannot deny the existence of mental process and in fact, they believe in it, but only deny that there are minds. The materialist also believes that a person is a 'complex being' with the mental processes and physical processes'. Thus materialism like dualism believes in the duality, as it were, of personal existence; and though it tries to establish that a person is his body, it fails to prove the same.

It is clear that neither Cartesianism nor materialism has an adequate way of overcoming the problems posed

by the apparent duality of the mental and the physical - duality if not of substance, at least of processes. The reason why it is important that this duality be overcome somehow is as follows :-

The concept of a 'person' seems quite unquestionably to be a 'unitary concept', i.e., a concept that somehow overarches the duality of the mental and the physical; and unless this overarching character is adequately accounted for, it would seem that the 'concept' has not quite come under our philosophical grasp. P.F.Strawson's theory seems to be an attempt at grappling with this very problem. I propose, therefore, in what follows to consider the Strawsonian's theory in some detail.

The starting point of Strawson's argument is the fact - or at least what we ordinarily regard as the fact - that we ascribe to ourselves two radically different kinds of predicates. We ascribe to ourselves predicates such as spatio-temporal location ('I am on the sofa') and relatively enduring characteristics such as height, colouring, shape, and weight. Such predicates are also ascribed to what we regard as only material bodies. On the other hand, we also ascribe to ourselves predicates which in Strawson's words, we would not 'dream' of ascribing to just material bodies, predicates such as intentions, thoughts, feelings, perceptions and memories. The important point to note here is that

these two diverse kinds of predicates are, in our ordinary discourse at any rate, are ascribed to one and the same thing. That is one's states of consciousness, one's thoughts and sensations are ascribed to the very same thing to which these physical characteristics, this physical situation is ascribed. The philosophical problem here is that of understanding how this is possible.

Strawson's answer is rather the simple one that this possibility is grounded in the fact that the concept of a 'person' is a 'primitive concept', in the sense that it is the concept of a thing which is not further analysable into two or more things but must be thought of as a 'unitary entity' to which two radically different kinds of predicates are equally coherently applicable. But before we come to this answer we must look at the way in which Strawson deals with the possibility that the concept of a 'person' which seems to underlie our ordinary ways of talking about ourselves might be wrong or confused. In this connection Strawson discusses two views. One of them is what he calls the Cartesian view and the other is what he designates as a no-ownership theory.

Any philosophical theory which aspires to clarify the concept of a 'person' must, according to Strawson, answer the following two questions:- (1) Why are

states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all? and (2) Why are states of consciousness ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc? According to the Cartesian view the second question is a question that does not arise, because it is only an illusion on this view that both these kinds of predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing. But the first question on this view does seem to demand an answer. On the no-ownership theory either question does not arise. For on this view it is a mistake that one ascribes one's states of consciousness to anything at all, and therefore, the question of ascribing them to the same thing as certain physical characteristics etc. cannot arise. To take the no-ownership theory first, the crucial thing according to this theory that must be appreciated is the fact that all ownership must be transferable ownership but it is wrongly presumed in our ordinary ways of talking about mental predicates or properties that these are owned in a necessarily non-transferable way. Thus it is thought that 'my pain' or 'my thought' is such that I cannot possibly give to anybody else. 'My thought' or 'my pain' is logically necessarily mine. Since, according to the no-ownership theory, only those things whose ownership is logically transferable can be owned at all, mental states or experiences cannot be owned by anything and therefore cannot



be ascribed to anything. It is possible however, to understand why people should have thought that mental states must not only be owned but owned in a non-transferable way. One's experiences are uniquely causally related to one's body and this unique causal relationship might, as long as one is clear about the fact, be expressed in terms of notion of ownership, e.g, as the body itself as 'having' the experiences in question. This of course must be seen as just another way of expressing the unique causal relationship between the body and experiences. However it is easy to slide from this notion of 'having' to the other illegitimate notion of 'having' according to which experiences are owned in a non-transferable way. Having taken the step, it is but another small step to postulating an owner in this very sense, an ego whose sole purpose is to own the experiences non-transferably.

Strawson's criticisms of the non-ownership theory is that it is incoherent. He says-

"It is not coherent, in that one who holds it is forced to make use of that sense of possession of which he denies the existence, in presenting his case for the denial".<sup>2</sup>

This comes about in the following way - He must present his thesis in something like the following way: 'All my experiences are owned' in the sense that they are uniquely

casually dependent on the state of body B'.<sup>3</sup> Now any attempt to eliminate the 'my' from this presentation poses insurmountable difficulties for the theorist. For instance, the elimination of the 'my' yield the following proposition: All experiences are uniquely causally dependent on the state of the body B; and this is a plain falsehood. Another proposition that the elimination of the 'my' may yield is : 'all experiences which are uniquely causally dependent on the state of body B are so causally dependent on the state of body B'.<sup>4</sup> But then this is not a contingent proposition as required by the theory but an analytic proposition. As Strawson says -

"He must mean to be speaking of some class of experiences of the members of which it is in fact contingently true that they are all dependent on body B. The defining characteristic of this class is in fact that they are my experiences' or 'the experiences of some person' where the idea of possession expressed by 'my' and 'of' is the one he calls into question." <sup>5</sup>

The incoherence in which the no-ownership theory is necessarily entangled is crucial because the theory seems to deny the very basis of our being able to talk about experiences or mental states at all. This basis consists in the fact that experiences can be identifyingly referred to. And they can be so referred to only as experiences or states of consciousness of some already identified person!;

The experiences owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose experiences they are. In other words, it is impossible that an experience of a state of consciousness, identified as a particular item can belong to or be possessed by someone other than the person with reference to whom they have been identified. Thus experiences must be possessed or ascribable in just that way which the no-ownership theorist ridicules.

"The requirements of identity rule out logical transferability of ownership. So the theorist could maintain his position only by denying that we could ever refer to particular states or experiences at all; and this position is ridiculous". 6

Strawson's criticism of the Cartesian theory centers round his claim that,

" it is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself."7

The short answer to Cartesianism is as follows:

" One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experiences. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them only as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness". 8

The only way, therefore, to free oneself from the difficulties of both the no-ownership theory and

Cartesianism is to acknowledge with Strawson, that the concept of a person is a 'primitive' concept i.e.,

" the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation & etc. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type." 9

To return to the two questions which according to Strawson any adequate theory of person must confront: (1) Why are one's states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all? (2) Why are states of consciousness ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, physical situation etc.? Strawson's position is that a necessary condition of states of consciousness being ascribed at all is that they should ascribe to the very same things as certain corporeal characteristics physical situation etc. That is to say that the states of consciousness could be not ascribed at all unless they were ascribe to a person in exactly the Strawsonian 'primitive' sense.

Strawson tries to further clarify the concept of a person as a necessarily 'primitive' concept by making a distinction between "M-predicates" and "P-predicates". "M-predicates" consist of those which are also properly applied to material bodies to which, as he says, we would not dream of applying predicates ascribing states of consciousness. They include things like 'weights 10 K. gs', 'is in the class-

room' and so on. The second kind consists of all the other predicates we apply to persons. Obviously, there is a great variety of 'P-predicates', they include things like 'is smiling', 'is going for a walk', as well as things like, 'is in pain', and 'is thinking hard', 'believes in God' and so on.

To realise the full force of the thesis that the concept of a person is a 'primitive concept' is according to Strawson, to acknowledge the truth of the following propositions: (1) Both "M-predicates" and "p-predicates" are equally applicable to persons; (2) There must be, at least in the case of some 'p-predicates' logically adequate criteria for ascribing them to others than oneself, (3) One ascribes some P-predicates to oneself without any criteria of application and (4) That behavioural criteria for ascription of 'P-predicates' to others must, at least on occasions, be logically adequate criteria for such ascription. To take these in order: It is clear enough that (1) is the basis statement of Strawson's position. As for (2): if none of our ways of telling that some individuals other than ourselves had 'p-predicates' were logically adequate then the relationship between these ways of telling (i.e., observation of behaviour) and the 'p-predicates' would be that of pure inductive co-relation. But co-relations can be established from the nature of the case only in one's own case. But in:

that case there would be no ways of talking about even my own case because one can talk of about one's states of consciousness at all only if one can also talk about states of consciousness of others, but one could not talk about states of consciousness of others unless there were occasions on which one knew that one's ascriptions of states of consciousness to others were correct. And this would be so if and only if the behavioural criteria for ascribing states of consciousness to others were at least occasionally logically adequate.

Strawson's (3) can be accounted for only on the supposition that the concept of a person is unique and primitive in exactly the Strawsonian sense. Thus the truth of this proposition provides, as it were, a transcendental justification of Strawson's theory of person.

As to proposition (4) it is clear that if what has been said in explication of proposition (2) were correct then it would necessarily follow that behavioural criteria, which are the only possible criteria that we have, for ascribing 'p-predicates' to others must at least be occasionally logically adequate.

— Strawson's theory of persons undoubtedly avoids many difficulties which what he considers to be rival theory of persons are subject to. However there are many loose ends

in Strawson's own theory, some of which he recognizes himself. But his attempt to tie these loose ends up are anything but satisfactory. For example, Strawson recognizes that we need further clarification of his notion of a logically adequate criterion in connection with his claim that our behavioural criteria for ascribing 'p-predicates' to others must at least occasionally be logically adequate. But his clarification consists simply of the following cryptic passage"-

"If one is playing a game of cards, the distinctive markings of a certain card constitute a logically adequate criterion for calling it, say, the Queen of Hearts; but, in calling it this, in the context of the game, one is ascribing to it properties over and above the possession of these markings. The predicate gets its meaning from the whole structure of the game. So with the language in which we ascribe 'p-predicates'. To say that the criteria on the strength of which we ascribe P-predicates to others are of a logically adequate kind for this ascription, is not to say that all there is to the ascriptive meaning of these predicates is these criteria. To say this is to forget that they are P-predicates, to forget the rest of the language - structure to which they belong."10

This argument from analogy raises many questions about the analogy itself and without further clarification from Strawson one does not know how to make the analogy, as it were, work in support of Strawson's thesis.

In any case there seems to be clear admission that P-predicates necessarily carry a residue of meaning not covered by the criteria for that ascription. Is not this sufficient for the sceptic to get a foothold even in Strawson's own theory?

There is also the rather curious insistence that the causal relationship between my body and my experiences, unique as it is, is purely contingent. Strawson seeks to justify this in terms of his thought-experiment about the possibility that there is one subject of experience with more than one mutually independent bodies which have a special causal relationship with the experiences of that subject. The thought-experiment is alleged to show the logical possibility of their being only one subject of experience, S, (as it were) having several different bodies (e.g. A, B, C). Let us suppose that S is a subject of visual experience:

"(1) Whether the eyelids of B and C are open or not is causally irrelevant to whether S sees; but S sees only if the eyelids of A are open .....(2) Where A and B may be, however, is quite irrelevant to where S sees from, i.e., to what his possible field of vision is. This is determined only by where C is..... But (3) The direction in which the heads and eyeballs of A and C are turned is quite irrelevant to what S sees. Given the station of C,



then which of all the views which are possible from this position is the view seen by S, depends on the direction in which the head and eyeballs of B are turned, wherever B may find himself."11

Apart from the quite incredible difficulties that would be involved in spelling out his story in detail, Strawson would have to face the question that rises immediately to mind in view of his theory of persons: Where is the person, the entity which has the experiences? Presumably this entity is the same as S? One possible answer is that S is equally present in all the three bodies. But then persons would be too much like universals for Strawson's taste. Is S uniquely associated with only one of the three bodies? If so, the very idea of the thought-experiment becomes questionable. Does S alternate its existence between the three bodies? If it does, how is one to know that it is not replaced by another exactly similar subject of experience on transit from one body to another?

This may, however, be thought to be too short a way with Strawson's story; for it ignores—so it may seem—one perfectly plausible answer to the question, "Where is S?". If we assume with Strawson, for the moment, that he has no separate problem of personal identity, because, for him, persons, unlike Cartesian egos, must have bodies, could not S be supposed to be wherever bodies A, B, C are? I.e. Could

not S have a body which has A, B and C are its parts?

Although it is quite easy to produce examples of single material objects which have parts which are spatially discontinuous with one another, i.e. parts, the space between which does not contain any other parts of the material object in question, one would feel intuitively unhappy about treating Strawson's A, B and C as parts of a single material object. Leaving aside such dubious cases of material objects as universities, cricket teams and so on, there are such perfectly recognizable cases as, for example, complexes of buildings. A complex of buildings may, without much bending of our concept of singularity of material objects, be regarded as a single material object, and yet it would consist of parts which would be spatially discontinuous with one another. And if we accept a primitive atomic physics, the human body itself may be thought to be a perfect counter - example to the thesis that a single material thing cannot have parts which are spatially discontinuous with one another. For, on such a view, a human body, or any other body, consists of atoms which may be spatially discontinuous with one another. We must, however, note a significant difference between the two examples. One refers to macro parts of a single material object, while the other refers to micro parts of a single material object; and what we are really concerned with here is the relationship

between a single material object and its macro parts, and not also between it and its micro parts; and what is true of one relationship need not be true of the other. But this difference perhaps need not present any crucial problem to us. It may be said that both the examples are examples of single material objects because they satisfy the following condition of singularity of material objects; Any part of a single material thing must be nearer to some other part of it than to any other material thing.

But in fact neither of the examples satisfies this condition; and it must therefore be doubted whether it is a condition of singularity of material objects, for both the cases seem to be clear enough cases of single material objects. A constituent part of a complex of buildings may be nearer to a constituent part of another, adjacent, complex of building than to any other part of the former. And if someone stuck a pin into me, I could, I suppose, imagine an atom which is a part of my body being nearer to some other atoms constituting the pin than to any other atoms which are parts of my body. But although this way of dealing with the examples must be wrong, it nevertheless points to what, I think, is the correct why of dealing with them; and this would be to say that for anything to be a part of a single material object there must be severe restrictions on its capacity to move through space

independently of the rest of the object. A constituent building of a complex of buildings may be, if it is made of prefabricated, collapsible material, moved around a little, but there must be a limit to the distance to which it can be moved apart from the rest of the complex; when it crosses the limit, which need not be absolutely precise, it ceases to be a part of that complex. Similarly, I think, with the other example. And this explains why Strawson's A, B and C cannot be part of a single material object. There are no restrictions at all on movement through space of any of them independently of the others. Or, if there are, Strawson does not say so, and presumably he does not think that there is need for any in order coherently to tell his story.

It may be objected that this criticism rests on a simple but fundamental mistake, namely, the mistake of supposing that we can count or individuate material objects qua material objects. The notion of a material object is too general for enumeration and individuation to be possible under it. "How many material objects are there in this room?" is an unanswerable question; whereas "How many books are there in this room?" is answerable. Enumeration and individuation of material objects can begin only after the concepts under which the material objects are to be treated have been specified. Now it may be suggested that the argument of the preceding paragraph ignores this fact about

enumeration and individuation of material objects, because it treats A, B and C of Strawson's example simply as material bodies; and in so far as it does so it must be at least inadequate. The criticism perhaps, is justified, but it is not crucial. Part of the trouble is that Strawson himself does not specify the concept under which A, B, C are to be treated. But even if this inadequacy were removed from his argument, the main difficulty would remain.

The only relevant concept under which A, B and C can be treated is the concept of a human body. And since the whole point of the exercise is to show that it is only a contingent matter that experiences of a single subject of experience are dependent in the way that they are dependent on the states of a single human body, A, B and C are presumably to be conceived as three distinct human bodies. Now there may be thought to be two possible ways in which A, B and C can be regarded as parts of a single material body: (I) They could be regarded as constituting a single human body, i.e., as parts of a single human body. But our notion of a human body being what it is, this alleged possibility does not at all seem a plausible suggestion. (II) They could be treated somewhat on a par with the notion of a single complex of buildings discussed above, the only difference being, it may be suggested, that what gives unity to a single complex of buildings is the restriction on

the capacity of any part of the complex to move about in space independently of the rest, while what gives unity to A, B, C, in spite of their being three different human bodies, is that they are the bodies of a single subject of experience. This way of treating the matter of course begs the question, for part of what we want to be clear about is precisely the relationship of 'of' that is alleged to obtain between a subject of experience and the three relevant bodies A, B and C.

How are we to conceive this relationship? On Strawson's theory of persons it would seem that the relationship is to be understood in terms of his view about the ascription of M-and P-predicates to persons.<sup>12</sup> A person has that body some of whose M-predicates are the person's M-predicates, and whose behaviour constitutes a 'logically adequate' criterion for the ascription of P-predicates to that person. But when we apply this in the present case we seem immediately to face grave difficulties. Suppose A, B, C are all of different heights : A is five foot, B six and C seven foot. Then on Strawson's Theory of persons it would follow that the relevant person or subject of experience is at the same time five foot, six foot and seven foot tall. It may be thought that the difficulty is not of any fundamental importance, for all that a contingency such as Strawson's story represents demands, is that our language of

persons be revised in certain ways, and this need not involve any fundamental revision of our concept of a person. But we must at least be uneasy before accepting this answer. The difficulties presented by P- predicates would seem to be even greater. Even if we grant that we could, on the basis of observations of A, B and C and their respective environments, ascribe sense perceptions to S, how should we ascribe emotions and actions to S ? Suppose S is confronted with a tiger. There are several questions we can ask : (i) Does S see the tiger, and if so how do we know that he does ? (ii) Is S afraid, and if so how do we know that he does so, and how does S know that he does ? Even if we grant that, on the basis of what Strawson says about A, B, C, question (i) can be answered, it is difficult to see how on the three-distinct-human-bodies hypothesis, questions, (ii) and (iii) can be answered at all. Suppose body B behaves as though it (?) is afraid, but body A does not and instead moves intrepidly towards the tiger and tries 'fondly' to stroke it. Should we say S is afraid and not afraid at the same time ? Similar difficulties would arise with regard to the attribution of 'running' to S. To say that these difficulties could be resolved by a simple revision of our language of persons seems highly unpalatable. The revision required would be so drastic that we would not be certain that we were talking about the same

thing, or that we were talking coherently about anything at all. <sup>13</sup>

While Strawson claims that the notion of a "pure ego" as a basic notion is incoherent, he admits that once the primitive character of the concept of a person is granted and thus the parasitic character of the notion of ego is realised, there is no logical difficulty in imagining the possibility of a disembodied ego surviving the death of a person. Although it is not clear that, within the framework of his theory, Strawson must admit such a possibility, the fact that he does admit this possibility seems to point to the suspicion that there is much more to the so-called primitiveness of the concept of a person than Strawson is either willing or able to make clear.

Strawson's theory is quite clearly a bold and skilful attempt at transcending the confines of the traditional debate about the nature of persons. However, this attempt does not seem to have made a great deal of difference to the debate after Strawson. The debate, for all practical purposes has relapsed into an argument between the materialist and, for want of a better word, the Cartesian. No doubt there has been an increasing sophistication on either side but it can hardly be said that the debate has achieved a substantial advancement. Like most philosophical



debates, this debate will also perhaps, when it has reached the point of exhaustion, will be set aside until such time as something strikingly new can be said about the problem.

The debate about the concept of a person and the debate about the criteria of personal identity has of course, from the nature of the case, been closely associated with one another. However the later debate is highly interesting in itself and in order to give an idea of how it has proceeded I add a statement about it in the Appendix to this chapter.

## APPENDIX

The debate about personal identity seems to have been dominated by a particular conception of identity. And this is the conception that identity is a relation and this relation is such that it is both symmetrical and transitive as between the terms of the relation. Thus if A is identical with B, on this conception of identity, B must be identical with A; and if A is identical with B and B with C then A must be identical with C. It is stressed that we need this conception of identity so as to be able to demarcate similarity from identity; without such demarcation, so it is alleged, identity will collapse into similarity and this will result in a general collapse in the functioning of our conceptual scheme. There are powerful arguments in Wittgenstein, for example, against such delimiting of the concept of identity. It is not the purpose, however of this appendix to go into these arguments. I merely wish here to present as it were a skeletal philosophical picture of the debate.

Given the above notion of identity a philosophical problem about personal identity arises in the following way : There seem ordinarily to be two apparently unconnected, and therefore mutually independent criteria of personal identity. These are : (1) bodily continuity and (2) memory. A person A at time  $t_1$  is identical with a person B at time  $t_2$ , if B has the same body as A and the criterion for B's having

the same body as A's is the spatio-temporal continuity of A's body with B's. On the memory criterion a person B at time  $t_2$  is the same as a person A at time  $t_1$  if B remembers, or is at least capable of remembering, being A at time  $t_1$ . These statements of the two criteria for personal identity find, of course, a great deal of qualification and refinement<sup>14</sup> in the debate. It is not necessary for us however to go into this.

The interesting thing about the two criteria is that under normal circumstances they yield, when correctly applied, the same result. If A is found identical with B on the bodily continuity criterion the application of the memory criterion will yield the same result. However, it is not difficult at all to imagine circumstances under which the application of the two criteria produces diametrically divergent consequences.

Thus take the following story : A person X suddenly claims to be identical with a person who is known to have been long dead, say, Sivaji. Of course the initial rational presumption would be that the person is either telling a lie or that he is a suitable case for mental treatment. But after prolonged and most scrupulous examination of the memory claims that the person makes, it seems beyond doubt that these claims are authentic (e.g.

such examination makes it possible to rule out that the person had merely learnt from various sources the details of Sivaji's life. Also in the light of the memory claims that X makes it becomes possible to explain some hitherto dark area of Sivaji's life and so on). If this is accepted, on the memory criterion X has to be regarded as identical with Sivaji. On the other hand, it is quite clear that X's body is discontinuous with that of Sivaji's and therefore is not the same as it. So on the bodily continuity criterion X is not identical with Sivaji. Thus here is a case where the application of the two criteria of personal identity give us diametrically opposed results.

The debate consists primarily of a confrontation between the memory theory and bodily continuity theory of personal identity. Each side in the debate points out logical perplexities of an intractable kind, that quickly arise from the acceptance of the opposing theory. For instance, referring back to the story narrated above, it may be pointed out that there is nothing in logic to prevent another person Y, from making the same memory claims whose authenticity can also be equally well established. It will then follow that on the memory criterion of personal identity two obviously distinct persons are identical with one and the same person, namely, Sivaji. And this will violate the logic of the concept of identity, thus : the logic of

the concept requires that if X is identical with Sivaji and, Y is identical with Sivaji, then X must be identical with Y and this last obviously is not the case. Thus, it is claimed that the application of the memory criterion leads under imaginable circumstances, to logical contradiction. But one can also imagine the following happenings : The body of a person X, splits, as is logically possible, into two, Y and Z. In course of time, both Y and Z grow into complete human bodies. Now X is bodily continuous with Y as well as with Z; and the transitivity of the notion of identity requires that if X is identical with Y and also with Z then Y must be identical with Z. But obviously Y is not identical with Z. It seems thus that the application of the bodily continuity criterion can also, under imaginable circumstances lead to a self-contradictory situation.

The debate proceeds by an ever greater refinement in the statement of the two rival criteria of personal identity. The logical puzzles however tend persistently to reappear in some form or other --- the refinements notwithstanding. It does seem as though here we have reached a point where philosophical thinking needs to come out of a groove in which it seems to have got stuck. There have been signs of this happening in recent times. For example, the problem of personal identity is now seen, not so much as a logical problem of coping with the sharp boundaries of the

concept of identity, but as one of a moral - intellectual inquiry into oneself. On such a line of thinking personal identity cannot be separated from questions such as what ought I ultimately to be ? Or what kind of a person am I really as opposed to the kind of person that I merely seem to myself to be? I find this a fascinating line of enquiry. However it will probably require a different kind of thesis from the one I have been able to put together.

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1. Sydney Shoemaker., Self-knowledge and Self-Identity, P.9.
2. P. F. Strawson., Individuals, P.96.
3. Ibid., PP. 96-97.
4. Ibid., P. 97.
5. Ibid., P. 97.
6. Ibid., PP. 97-98.
7. Ibid., P.99.
8. Ibid., P. 100.
9. Ibid., PP. 101-102.
10. Ibid., P. 110.
11. Ibid., PP. 90-91.
12. Ibid., P. 104.
13. I owe the argument about to M. Miri's article "Person and Their Bodies," Philosophical studies, 16th August, 1972.
14. See, for instance, Sidney Shoemaker's Self-knowledge and Self-Identity.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CONCLUSION**



## CONCLUSION

The thesis, as will be obvious, has been very limited in its scope and in the depth of philosophical probe into some of the issues about mind with which contemporary western philosophers have been intensely concerned. For example, I have had nothing at all to say about problems concerning the emotions and those relating to the will and action. Yet these are issues which have drawn the attention of philosophers belonging to different styles of thinking in the west. But my intention was not to be exhaustive which in any case would not perhaps have been possible in the course of one thesis. I have picked up problems from the debate, which seem to me to be somewhat more basic than some of the other problems. I have also picked up for detailed consideration philosophers whom I consider to have been seminally influential in modern western philosophical thought. My purpose has been the altogether modest one of presenting these problems and the views of these philosophers in a critical perspective. Hopefully in the course of this presentation I have been able to make a few points which may prove to be important enough for the debate to have been somewhat enriched by them.

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