

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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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 ⁱridicules 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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