



The Explorations of Descartes and Ryle's Idea of Mind: An Appraisal

Mishra R*

Department of Philosophy and Religion, Banaras Hindu University, India

***Corresponding author:** Rinki Mishra, Research Scholar (Ph.D.), Department of Philosophy and Religion, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, UP, India, Email: mishrarinkiphilosophy@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the idea of Mind on the basis of René Descartes and Gilbert Ryle's vision of mind. According to Cartesian dualism, mind, and body are two distinct entities, the mind is a nonphysical entity that consists of consciousness and rational thought, but the body is a physical entity that is subject to physical laws. Concerning the idea of mind, Ryle in his doctrine Category mistake, rejected Cartesian dualism and contended for the mind-body unity. He suggested that mental states and mental processes are not separate from bodily behavior rather they are intricately intertwined with each other. This comparative analysis explores Cartesian dualism including the interaction between mind and body through the pineal gland and his ideas on the mind's independence from the body. On the other hand, Ryle's rejection of Cartesian dualism on the basis of Category mistake investigates the notion of mind which prioritizes observable behavior over unobservable mental states. The author explores these two contrasting perspectives of mind and aims to grasp the gigantic skeleton of the historical expansion and implications of the notion of mind in an inclusive manner. The main contention of the author is to highlight the influence of Descartes's dualistic framework on the basis of philosophical discourse and Ryle's efforts to challenge it, with the criterion of human cognition and experience considering the relationship between mind, body, and behavior.

Keywords: Mind; Body; Soul; Substance; Cartesian Dualism; Category Mistake

Introduction

The mind is a mental entity that consists of spiritual essence. With regard to this view, it is crucial to cognize the nature of the relationship between these two aspects of our thinking quality (mental) and our physical selves (body). It has been considered that all mental phenomena are the result of a collection of cognitive faculties called the mind. It is the phenomenological perspective of the mind which includes the faculties such as thinking, imagination, memory, will, and feeling. They are in control of many different mental

processes, including perception, the feeling of pain, belief, desire, intention, and emotion. There have been several overlapping categories for mental phenomena proposed. Although minds were originally thought to be physical things, it's more popular today to think of them as qualities or talents that only humans and higher animals possess. The actual nature of the mind or mentality has been defined in several conflicting ways. On the other hand, in Descartes's view of the mind, here mind is invisible because he cannot perceive himself as having any parts of it. He argues that the mind and body can act freely but they are not free one

from another. In contrast, Ryle argues that the mind and its faculties serve not to expand our understanding of the mind, but to refine our existing knowledge. The mind is closely related to consciousness and is not subject to the laws of physics. Descartes also argues that the mind and soul are the same, whereas Ryle challenges this concept by pointing out the category mistake of reducing physical properties to mental ones and vice versa. Descartes believed that the mind and body interacted through the pineal gland in the brain, which acted as a mediator between the two, Descartes's dualism suggests that the mind is the main concerning point of dualism, and there is no distinction between the mind and the soul.

In addition, Ryle's doctrine of mind is based on behaviorism, which proposes that mental states can be reduced to behavioral disposition. Ryle, in his criticism of Cartesian dualism, claims that the physical properties of the body are reduced to mental properties, and the mental properties reduce the physical properties. He criticized Cartesian dualism and challenged the idea of the mind as a separate, immaterial substance. He also proposed the idea of the mind as a set of dispositions or capabilities for action and argues that it is more accurate to understand mental states as landscapes of a person's behavior rather than as entities in themselves [1].

The Mind as a Substance

The concept of substance is a philosophical and scientific idea that refers to a particular type of entity capable of changing while maintaining its identity over time. A substance is a bearer of properties that can undergo change but persists numerically identically through change. In the philosophy of mind, the concept of substance is often used to explain the nature of mental states and their relationship to the physical world [2]. According to one view, known as substance dualism, mental states are regarded as distinct from physical states and therefore require a separate substance to account for their existence. In the philosophy of mind is a variety of theories of substance, there are mainly four varieties of substance dualism. The first one is platonic second is Aristotelian/ Thomistic, the third is Cartesian and the last fourth is non-Cartesian dualism.

Firstly, we will describe the concept of dualism, because dualism is the main concerning point in the philosophy of mind. Dualism is the philosophical idea that the universe consists of two fundamentally different kinds of entities, the mental or non-physical and the physical or material. In the classical and medieval periods. The focus was primarily on the intellect as the aspect of the mind that was considered to be resistant to materialistic accounts [3]. However, with the

rise of modern science particularly after the work of Rene Descartes, the focus on dualism shifted to consciousness. Descartes famously claimed that the mind and body were separate entities and that the mind and that the mind was a non-physical substance that interacted with the body through the pineal gland. Descartes believed that there are two categories of substance, mental and physical. According to him, mental substances are characterized by thinking and it doesn't ability to occupy space.

On the other hand, Gilbert Ryle rejected the idea of substance as a separate entity or category of things. Instead, he proposed the concept of "category mistakes" According to Ryle, category mistakes occur when one treats a particular phenomenon or aspect of something as a substance or thing itself when it is just a feature or aspect of a larger system or whole. He argued that the traditional idea of substance was based on such category mistakes and that it was a confession of language to talk about mental and or physical substances [4].

The Element Mind: Human and Other

Descartes and Ryle had contrasting perspectives on the concept of the mind. Descartes believed in the dualistic theory of mind and body, while Ryle argued for a monistic perspective. Mind is one of the central debates in the philosophy of mind it is the question of whether the mind is a separate entity from the body, or whether it is simply a product of the physical process of the brain because sometimes the brain has both qualities like physical and mental. The human mind is generally understood as the set of cognitive processes and faculties that allow for perception, thought, consciousness, and mental states. It encompasses the process involved in reasoning, imagination, and emotion, among others.

While others argue for a more dualistic view that separates the mind from the body. On the other hand, the philosophy of mind also explores the nature of other minds. Does it ask questions such as how can we know that other people have minds like our own? And how can we communicate with others and understand their mental states? These questions are important for understanding the nature of social interaction and the possibility of empathy and understanding between individuals [5]. John Searle said that according to Descartes each of us is a mind and that each of us knows the contents of his or her mind directly, but how do I know that other people have minds? Descartes defined this view through the argument of analogy, saying that we might think that we can infer the existence of mental states in us by analogy with myself. I deduce by analogy that you must have an inner mental state corresponding to mine. Ryle's view of

other minds is that we can understand other people's mental states and activities by observing their behavior and actions in the context, without assuming the existence of a separate, disembodied mind [6].

The Mind and the Body: A Dichotomy

Mind-body dualism is a philosophical concept that proposes the existence of two distinct substances: the mind and the body. In the general view, the mind and the body are separate entities that interact with each other. One of the most influential proponents of mind-body dualism was René Descartes, who argued that the mind and the body are two fundamentally different types of substances. He believed that the mind is a non-physical, thinking entity, while the body is a physical, extended entity. Descartes suggested that the mind and the body interact through the pineal gland, which he considered the seat of consciousness. Dualism suggests that mental states, such as thoughts, emotions, and consciousness, are distinct from physical states, such as brain activity or bodily sensations. Proponents of dualism argue that certain aspects of human experiences, such as subjective consciousness, cannot be explained solely by physical processes [3].

However, mind-body dualism has been subject to criticism and debate. One of the primary challenges is the problem of interaction: how can a non-physical mind interact with a physical body? This question has led some philosophers and scientists to propose alternative perspectives, such as materialism or monism. Materialism, in contrast to dualism, asserts that the mind is not a separate substance but rather an emergent property of the physical processes occurring in the brain. It suggests that all mental phenomena can be explained by neural activity and the laws of physics. Conversely, Monism posits that there is only one fundamental substance in the universe, which may be physical or mental. Descartes' mind-body dualism has been subject to criticism and debate throughout history. One common criticism is the problem of interaction, questioning how an immaterial mind can causally interact with a material body. Additionally, scientific advancements in understanding the brain and its functions have challenged the plausibility of a distinct immaterial mind [4]. Despite these criticisms, Descartes' mind-body dualism has significantly impacted philosophy, psychology, and the study of consciousness. It has influenced subsequent philosophical discussions on the nature of mind and body, and it remains a notable position in the ongoing exploration of the mind-body problem. On the other hand, Ryle rejected the traditional Cartesian view that the mind and body are two distinct entities, arguing instead for a perspective known as "logical behaviorism". Ryle's criticism of mind-body dualism can be understood through his famous analogy of "ghost

in the machine". He argued that the dualist view treats the mind as a ghostly entity that inhabits the body. Operating it from within like a driver controlling a car. Ryle proposed that mental states and processes should be understood in terms of our behaviors and dispositions to behave. He emphasized that mental phenomena are not separate from the physical world but are intricately connected to our actions, habits, and observable behaviors. Ryle's critique of mind-body dualism and his logical behaviorism provide an alternative perspective that challenges the traditional separation of mind and body, emphasizing the inseparability of mental and physical aspects of human existence [7].

Arguments of the Idea Mind: Descartes and Ryle

Though there are several philosophers of mind have been arguing concerning the existence of mind and body and their relationship, our main concern is how Descartes and Ryle offer contrasting perspectives on the nature of the mind, where it is Descartes emphasizes the separation between mind and body, while Ryle criticizes the concept of a "ghost in the machine" [7-9]. In Descartes's philosophy, the mind is an immaterial, thinking entity, while the body is a material, extended entity. Descartes proposed the existence of a "thinking thing" that is separate from the physical body. Descartes begins his argument by doubting everything he believes to be true. He realizes he can doubt his senses, perception, and even the physical world around him [3]. However, he also recognizes that there must be a thinking entity that is doing the doubting itself. This thinking entity according to Descartes, is the mind. Descartes famously formulates, "I think therefore I am". He argues that even if all his beliefs and perceptions are false, the fact that he is doubting and thinking implies his existence as a thinking thing [4]. Here, Ryle provides some of the main arguments and puts these against the concept of mind, As follows:

The Category Mistake

Ryle argued that the concept of the mind as a separate entity from the body is a result of a fundamental error in understanding language and the way we categorize things. He claimed that when we say "mind", we are not referring to something distinct and separate from bodily disposition. Instead, he posited that mental states and behaviors are the same [10-13].

The "Ghost in the Machine"

Ryle criticized the idea that there is a "ghost in the machine" or an immaterial entity, the mind, controlling and directing the body. He believed that this view was based on

a mistaken belief in a separate mental realm that interacts with the physical world [14-17]. Ryle's arguments aimed to dissolve the traditional mind-body dualism by reinterpreting mental states as expressions of behavior, dispositions, and capacities rather than as distinct, non-physical entities [2].

Assessments of the Idea of Mind: Descartes and Ryle

It is considered that the study of mind refers to the study of mental processes like thinking, perceiving, feeling, experiencing, etc. It also included the investigation and understanding of cognition, emotions, consciousness, subjective experiences, etc [18,19]. Descartes's philosophy of the mind holds a central and distinctive role in his dualistic theory of mind and body, which asserts that the mind and body are separate entities [3]. Here is a common judgment of the mind in Descartes's philosophy. These are as follows:

Substance Dualism

Descartes famously argued that the mind and the body are two distinct substances. The mind is a non-extended, thinking substance, while the body is an extended material substance [20].

Cogito ergo sum/ I think therefore I am

Descartes recognized that the act of doubting or thinking itself proved his existence. He recognized that if he was able to doubt, question, or think about anything, then there must be a thinking entity or self that exists.

Clear & Distinct Ideas

Descartes via clear and distinct ideas, establishes a secure and unshakable foundation for knowledge, free from the doubts and uncertainties of the senses or external influences. He believed that by starting from these questionable truths, he could reconstruct his knowledge and develop a comprehensive understanding of reality.

Immortality of the Mind

The concept of the immortality of the mind suggests that the mind or consciousness continues to exist even after the death of the physical body [21]. Descartes proposed the possibility of the mind's immortality, suggesting that it can persist beyond the demise of the physical body.

But, Ryle in his philosophical appraisal of the mind, challenges the dualistic approach by stressing that the mind is not a separate entity but rather an integral part of our embodied existence. His logical behaviorism approach

suggests interpreting mental states and processes in terms of observable behaviors and dispositions, thereby rejecting the notion of a private inner realm of the mind [22].

Conclusion

In the submission of the view regarding the idea of the mind, Descartes and Ryle disclose contrasting views on the nature of the mind-body relationship. The exploration of Descartes' and Ryle's ideas serves as a starting point for contemplating the intricacies of the mind and its integration with our physical selves, inviting us to immerse deeper into this fascinating field of inquiry. Descartes suggests a dualistic perspective since the mind is an immaterial entity that is separated from the body. For the existence of a distinct, and immaterial mind, he claims that the mind interacts with the physical body through the pineal gland. So, the mind is an invisible and indivisible substance. However, Ryle's view is based on the role of observable behavior in order to understand mental states that should be seen as dispositions or capabilities for action. He argues that mental phenomena are better understood as features of a person's behavior rather than as independent entities. While Descartes associates the mind with consciousness and considers it synonymous with the soul, Ryle challenges this notion, highlighting the category mistake in reducing physical properties to mental ones and vice versa. Ryle's "ghost in the machine" metaphor criticizes the reductionist tendencies of Cartesian dualism. Considering these perspectives, it becomes clear that the nature of the mind-body relationship is a complex and debated topic. Cartesian dualism and Ryle's behaviorism present contrasting viewpoints, with Descartes emphasizing the separateness of the mind and body, and Ryle emphasizing the interconnectedness of mental states and behavior. The mind-body problem remains an ongoing inquiry, with no definitive resolution in sight. Ultimately, understanding the mind and its relationship to the body requires further exploration and consideration of various philosophical, scientific, and experiential perspectives.

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