An Evaluation of Ryle’s Criticism of Substance Dualism

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ON
MIND BODY PROBLEM
Observations on the Criticisms of Ryle

• Albert Hofstadter, “Ryle’s Category Mistake” *Journal of Philosophy*, vol.48, No. 9, 1951.

• 1. *The Concept of mind* is a brilliant attack on *Mentalism* in general and dualism in particular

• 2. Dualism is not a factual mistake but a logical mistake. This shown undertaking the study of *the logic of language*

• Ryle’s analysis implies ‘only a certain sort of sophisticated naïve behaviourism”
Hofstadter’s Disagreement 1

• “How are the mental conduct concepts applicable to human behaviour? Is a question about the causation of behaviour.”
  – (Ryle 1950: 67)

• What makes the bodily movement voluntary? Is a causal question.
  – (Hofstadter 1951)
Disagreement 2

- Descartes need not be blamed for advocating dualism. Historically dualism has been advocated by Stoics, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, et. al.
How do we explain action?

- Philosophical explanation is descriptive rather than explanatory.

- How can teleological behaviour be explained with the assumption that the nervous system function like a cybernatic mechanism? And to explain this mechanism we need anatomical and physiological evidences.
  - This would of course weaken the position of dualism.
Ryle’s philosophical Analysis

• Defining the mental substance as observable facts
• All observable facts are explained with the help of a theory
• But mind is not an observable facts
• Hence, it is not part of the explanatory theory, rather it is descriptive.
What is man? And, Why dualism?

• “Man exhibits certain characteristics in behaviour; a complex persistence in variation, teleological unity, multiple tracked dispositions and so on, whereas stones do not.”

• “Men are something more than the bodily, having something competent, as body is not, to make body behave intelligently. This is soul. (It is like pilot in the ship; without the pilot he ship wonders aimlessly)” (Hofstadter 1951: 264)
Searle on Mind and Body Problem

• Why Dualism still remains?

• The commonsensical pictures of man as conscious, free, mindful, rational agents does not go with the scientific conception of the reality. i.e.
  – the world contains nothing but the unconscious physical particles.
  – How does one balance these problems?
Searle’s basic questions

• How human beings represent the world?

• How essentially meaningless world contains meanings?
Spill over of this issue

• “How should we interpret recent work in computer science and artificial intelligence - work aimed at making intelligent machines?

• Does digital computer give us right picture of the human mind?”
  – (Searle 1984: 13)
Mind - Brain Problem

- Mind body problem seems to be difficult
- **Stomach – digestion** problem

- Seventeenth Century Vocabulary still prevails
  - Monism vs Dualism
    - **Monism – idealism or materialism**
      - Materialism – behaviourism or physicalism
Temptation to downgrade the mental

• Materialism

• Subjective, conscious mental states are not real and reducible to any thing else in the universe.
  – Imagining non existence of consciousness is meaningless.

• “Consciousness is the central fact of specifically human aspects of our existence – language, love, humour, and so on – would be impossible.” (Searle 1984: 16)
Problem with Intentionality

• How can this stuff inside my head be about anything?

• How can it refer to anything?

• How does the mind represent the world?
Problem of subjectivity

• ‘I have pain’ – from my point of view.

• I am aware of myself and my internal mental states which are quite different from the mental states of the other people.