

**THE CONCEPT OF MIND WITH REFERENCE TO  
RENE DESCARTES  
AND  
GILBERT RYLE**

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF GAUHATI  
1996**



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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled The Concept of Mind with reference to R.Descartes and G.Ryle submitted by Sri Shanjendu Nath in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work of the scholar. The dissertation has not been submitted anywhere else for a degree. All the quotations, extracts and ideas of other studies has been duly acknowledged.

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## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

At the very outset I express my sincere most thanks and deep sense of gratitude to my teacher Dr. Sauravpran Goswami, Lecturer, Deptt. of Philosophy, Gauhati University, under whose guidance and supervision I could have completed the work. In spite of his busy schedule he constantly helped me when asked for. I am very much grateful to Dr. Dilip Kumar Chakravarty, Dr. Nilima Sharma, Professors, Deptt. of Philosophy for their valuable suggestions and inspirations to me. I express my indebtedness to Dr. Sibnath Sarma, Professor and Head and Dr. Begum Bilkis Banu, Lecturer Deptt. of Philosophy, Gauhati University, for their encouragement and valuable suggestions to me. I extend thanks to Dr. Mrs. Manjulika Bhattacharjee, Principal, R.S. Girls' College, Karimganj for granting me leave from the College. I also thank to the U.G.C. for awarding me teachers' fellowship for one year. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my parents and friends who encouraged me all along in completing the course.

Lastly, I thank Sri Sandeep Bhattacharjee and Sri Pijush Roy for the trouble they have taken in typing out this dissertation within very short time.

Date : 31.3.97

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**CHAPTER I**

**Introduction**

## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'Mind' and its relation to body is one of the most important and complex problems in the history of philosophy. Apart from being itself a problem of vital interest and importance the problem is also closely connected with all the fundamental problems of philosophy. As Bruce Aune says, "The mind-body problem has been called a World-Knot, where all the problems of philosophy ultimately come together"<sup>1</sup>. But though the problem is a fundamental one, yet no precise and fully satisfactory solution is put forward by any philosopher or thinker till today. Thus Wolfgang Kohler says,

"Among the problems with which philosophy and the various sciences have to deal, the mind-body problem is still the most intriguing. No completely convincing solution has so far been offered"<sup>2</sup>.

In the history of philosophy there are different opinions and solutions given by different philosophers as to the question what is soul or mind and how is it related with body? But it is not possible to discuss all the solutions in this work as the scope of the present work is limited. The title of this work is "The Concept of Mind with reference to Rene Descartes and Gilbert Ryle". But for a clear understanding of the problem we shall discuss how the ancient Greek thinkers tried to solve the problem. And finally effort will be made to discuss the problem

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1. Bruce Aune : Knowledge, Mind and Matter, P - 225.

2. Sydney Hook : Dimensions of Mind, P - 15.

in the light of modern philosophers viz., B. Russell, L. Wittgenstein, P.F. Strawson and A.J. Ayer.

Now the questions arise, 'What is Mind' ? 'Is there any distinction between mind, soul and self' ? In regard to the first question it has been said by some philosophers that mind is that which stands for the totality of externally observable reactions of the subject in its relation to object. But in regard to the second there is a controversy among philosophers. They have given different answers in their own way. But of all the answers that seems to be the most satisfactory is that the self is not only the whole of the subject's reactions to the object with which we have equated mind, but also a sense of individuality which owns these reactions. According to the empiricist, mind is equivalent to a sensation or a group of them. They have denied the totality and unity of the reactions of the subject and also denied the individuality of it which owns these reactions and thus they have done the fundamental mistake. But the empiricists hold that mind and self stand undistinguished and both are reduced to uncounted bits of mental reactions, and none of which has anything to do with others. Thus for the empiricist there is no other level behind and beyond the empirical. But in contrast and opposed to this, the idealists hold that there is a trans-empirical level which lends unity and individuality of mental reactions. By 'trans-empirical' they suggest something over and above the mind and the self - the 'Soul'. The distinction between self and soul has its origin in Plato's Writings. He supposed that the self stands for the aggregate of empirical states and processes and by soul he means the noumenal reality which is supposed to stand at the back of these empirical states and processes, and unifies

them just as a substance underlies and unifies its attributes. Thus, in a word, it can be said that for Plato the self stands for the empirical or phenomenal and the soul for the real and ontological aspect of mental life.

But whatever may be the distinction made by the idealists among self, soul and mind, modern philosophers have not always been definite as to their conception of this distinction, and, in fact, they have used in most cases the term 'self' to mean 'soul' and vice-versa. "Modern thinkers instead of regarding mind, self and soul as three independent entities, take all of them as the necessary aspects of the same entity"<sup>3</sup>. Hence, it should be mentioned in this initial stage that throughout this paper the words 'mind', 'self' and 'soul' will be used in the same sense.

The problem of mind-body relation is not a new phenomenon. It is not the case that the ancient Greek philosophers alone thought of it at first, but thousands of years back primitive men thought on this problem and they made this problem the starting point of their thinking. Thus like the case of the category of matter there is a pre-scientific view on the category of mind. But the primitive man never thought of it seriously. "It would, of course, be unwarranted to suppose that primitive man persistently reflected on the problem of the nature of mind ; the problem doubtless caused him no sleepless night"<sup>4</sup>. But though he did not have any clear idea about self, yet he did have certain beliefs about himself

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3. H.M. Bhattacharyya : The Principles of Philosophy, P-271.

4. G.W. Cunningham : Problems of Philosophy, pp - 248-249.

and his fellow beings. It is perhaps the case that he thought of himself as a physical body which is occupying space and consequently it suffers its limitation. But at the same time he believed that within this space-occupying body there was a sort of shadowy duplicate which was inhabiting his body. This shadowy duplicate of body is called by him 'mind'. He thought that this shadowy duplicate of body had a separate and independent existence and that is why it was not subject to any limitation as human body was subject to. "The belief most widely current among the peoples of lower culture is that each man consists, not only of the body which is constantly present among his fellows, but also of a shadowy vapour-like duplicate of his body ; this shadow-like image, the animating principle of the living organism, is thought to be capable of leaving the body, of transporting itself rapidly, if not instantaneously, from place to place, and of manifesting in those places all or most of the powers that it exerts in the body during waking life"<sup>5</sup>. They explained sleep as a temporary separation of this ghostly duplicate from the body and by death they meant its permanent separation. In this way the primitive man explained himself as mental. We find such a concept in ancient Hebrews, one of the earliest tribes. They took the soul to be whatever that resides in a body and which made body alive and which made it living something rather than dead one. This tribe used the word 'Hebrew' for "breath" and as it is an important sign of life, so they refer it to the soul. They believed that this animating force resides in the

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5. W. Mc. Dougall : Body and mind, P-1.

blood and death for them is nothing but the end of life and of the animating force, the soul.

In the history of Greek Philosophy it is seen that the early group of Greek thinkers did not accept the primitive conception of matter and mind. They were inclined to think of mind as a sort of subtle matter. It is accurately said that they drew no sharp distinction between mind and matter. On the contrary they thought that the same original stuff which is basic in material thing is also present in mental phenomena and makes it alive.

"Anaximenes of Miletus ..... says that 'our soul, which is air, rules us' ..... Anaxagoras, who accounts for the ordering of elements into a system of things by referring to the activity of Mind or Reason, calls mind 'the finest of things', and it seems clear that he did not conceive of it as very different in nature from the other elements which enter into the constitution of the world. Democritus ..... developed a materialistic doctrine that admits the existence of nothing save atoms and empty space. He conceived the soul to consist of fine, smooth, round atoms, which are also atoms of fire"<sup>6</sup>. The other Greek physicists also held the same view. All of them tried to identify mind with matter and explained mind in terms of the primitive stuff.

But in contrast to this group of early Greek thinkers there was another group of Greek thinkers who thought that mind is separable from the body. They believed that death does not mean the death of mind. Mind could continue to exist even

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6. Fullerton : Introduction to Philosophy, pp - 101-102.

when body died. According to them death is nothing but the withdrawal of the animating force from the body. "Some of the Greeks, for example, the Pythagoreans (famous for their mathematical discoveries), believed that the soul, after withdrawing from the body, would enter another ; that is called transmigration"<sup>7</sup>.

But though it is believed that the soul is separate from the body and there is the phenomenon of transmigration, yet at the same time it is maintained that the natural place of a soul is in some body. Such type of thinking is found in the writings of Plato. In his view the soul is something that can exist apart from any body whatsoever. He maintained that disembodied existence is the ideal state of the soul and embodied existence is its bondage. Thus when it escaped from this embodied existence then it realises its true nature.

So the popular modern ideas about the soul is largely Platonic. Plato says that soul is an immaterial substance which is distinct from any other things. Its home and destiny is the world of eternal Ideas and its nature has little in common with the earthly things. Embodied existence is only its imprisonment. Plato's teaching clearly shows the personality, individuality and immortality of the soul. He also believes that the individual soul existed somewhere else before the present existence entangled with a body. It is the source of motion in the body and function of knowledge and aspiration. The soul has intuitive knowledge of the world of Ideas and higher values as it possesses inner divine nature.

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7. J.A. Shaffer : Philosophy of Mind, P-2.

Plato attempted to give us a psychological study of self but ultimately he failed to do so and his psychology is largely coloured with metaphysics. But due to some difficulties it is not possible to give a strictly scientific and systematic account of Plato's view of self. One major reason for this is that Plato's teachings about the nature of soul and its relation to body is not systematically worked out ; it is scattered through a number of dialogues which were written at a long interval of time. Again, during the long course of his philosophic activity his views have undergone considerable changes. "Plato's explanation of the connection between soul and body is never precise. He expounds it almost invariably in the form of myth, indicating that he did not believe it possible to give any exact account of it but only pictorial one, 'something like' the actual truth"<sup>8</sup>.

But in addition to this there is another difficulty. Most of his writings on the soul are expressed in the form of symbols in the myths. The reason for this is perhaps moral and aesthetic rather than scientific. It is due to these and other similar reasons it is very difficult to depict precisely Plato's concept of soul.

Plato's view of the soul expressed in the earlier dialogues is part of an ontological scheme whose nature was largely determined by ethical considerations. He distinguishes two realms of being. On the one hand there is the realm of intelligible and true Being which consists of the timeless unchanging Ideas ; on the other hand there is the realm of

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8. Errol Harris : Fundamentals of Philosophy, P-91.

Becoming and all the object of sense perception (including the human body) belong to this realm. In his view the souls exist in the third realm and their function is to mediate between the first two realms. In a sense they belong to both realms for they are active in both the realms and that is why their position in this ontological scheme is peculiar. In virtue of their kinship with the Ideas they are able to contemplate and know the Ideas. The souls, like the Ideas, are wholly immaterial and wholly real, but at the same time they are necessarily different from the Ideas. Similarly, souls differ widely from the body because it has nothing in common with the nature of body.

Plato's famous book the Republic gives us a detailed description of the human soul. In the fourth book of the treatise he speaks about the parts of the soul and they differ from one another, the one with which a man reasons and the other with which he loves and hungers, thirsts and feels any other desires. The first is termed rational self while the second irrational or appetitive. But in addition to these parts Plato further speaks of a third principle, namely, passion of the soul. Passion comes to the assistance of reason against desire but never conversely. Thus we find that according to Plato the soul has three principles - reason, passion and desire. Plato's three parts or aspects or functions of the soul broadly correspond to what in modern psychology, have been called reason, feeling and will respectively. But he forbids us to think of these as three distinct souls. These are the three functions of one and the

same soul. Nevertheless, there is an important difference among them in respect of worth ; the last two are the baser principles. They are close to the physical body, and hence are not immortal. The 'reason' is the "divine" principle and is characteristic of the soul's true being. It is in essence separate and independent from the body. Its embodied life is imprisonment but its ultimate destiny is the eternal life in the intelligible World of Ideas.

Thus reflecting on the view of Plato about the nature of the soul, that has been scattered all over his vast area of writings we can summerise the following points : (1) that Plato was greatly influenced by the Eleatic background of thought ; (2) that Reality or Being is entirely opposed to change or Becoming, which is therefore, unreal. This conception of soul is tinged with this initial bias. He says that multifarious states and processes are but changing manifestations of an underlying substance which have all the characteristics of Substance, permanence amidst change, indestructibility and simplicity. If souls were not something changeless, it cannot have been real, but that cannot be. For the human soul is conceived after the World-Soul which is essentially real.

Plato's theory of soul enabled him to account for motion. The early Pythagoreans had the conception of soul as something more than the mere ghost of popular belief. They said that the soul is an "attunement" of the body. Though Socrates has insisted on the reality and eternity of the soul yet Plato was the first to attempt a scientific justification

of this belief.

In the dialogues of Plato we are told that what moves another thing, and is in turn moved by something else, may cease to be moved by, and therefore cease to move, anything else ; but what moves by itself will never cease to move. It is the source and beginning of motion. Now such a beginning can never have come into being ; for everything that comes into being must have a beginning, while this is itself a beginning. Nor can it have any end ; for if it is perished, everything would come to a standstill. Hence he says that such a beginning is the soul, for it is the self-moved, and is therefore without beginning and without end.

Plato distinguishes ten kinds of motion. But out of these only ninth and tenth will be discussed here. The ninth is the motion that can move other thing but cannot move itself, and the tenth is that which can move both itself and other things. Plato says that it is really the first, since it is the beginning of motion to other nine. This kind of motion is never found in earth, fire or water but only to that which lives, or which has a soul. He says that by soul he means the motion which of itself can move itself. The other motions all belong to body, and soul is therefore prior to body.

Aristotle tried to explain a closer and more vital connection between soul and body than what Plato did. He says that the soul is the organization of the body. In his own terminology, the soul is "form" to the body which is its "matter". For him the soul is the organizing principle of the body. But though it is the organizing principle of the body

yet he forbids us to identify the soul with bodily organization. He says that the soul is non-bodily principle within the body. It is the 'form' within the 'matter'.

Inspired by Plato, Aristotle divided the soul into three parts. For him, there are three levels of complexity in the functioning of a living being. The lowest is the nutritive, the second appetitive and the highest rational and cognitive. These levels are termed by Aristotle as the plant soul, the animal soul and the human soul respectively. The vital principle of the plant, i.e., the vegetative soul is the faculty of material assimilation and reproduction. In addition to this the animal possesses the sentient soul. The human soul uniting in itself all the faculties of the other two levels is a 'Microcosm'. The faculty by which it is distinguished from others is reason (nous). The other parts of the soul are inseparable from the body and hence these are perishable. But the nous exists before the existence of the body into which it enters as something divine and immortal. This immortal part is called the active nous which needs the passive nous or an unfilled region of thought where the former manifests its form-giving activity. The passive nous is the form-receiving and the active nous is the form-giving principle. Substantial and eternal existence belongs only to the latter. Critics, however, observe that this account of rational soul where Aristotle speaks even of immortality is not consistent with his general account of soul. This, they say, is a slip into Platonism.

Being a metaphysician Aristotle says that in addition to the vital powers of the living individual organism, there is a spiritual being in man which thinks and conceives. The thinking mind is not bound to the body and its life. In his view mind is pure reason, divine and god-like. Thinking cannot belong to a corporeal entity because, it is found from observation that many bodies are devoid of consciousness. Aristotle's theory of the evolution of mind made a really great contribution to the philosophy of the ancient Greece and in doing so he remained a very influential philosopher for many centuries. Prof. E. Harris aptly writes : "Aristotle is, indeed, one of the great figures in the history of philosophy whose thought, though inevitably a product of a period, rises above the special view-points of the time and comes nearer to grasping the eternal truth which is the goal of the whole historical development"<sup>9</sup>.

Aristotle tries to show that there is a distinction between soul and mind. In his book 'On the Soul' he clearly shows this and says that mind is higher than soul, and soul is bound to the body. He says, "The case of mind is different, it seems to be an independent substance implanted within the soul and to be incapable of being destroyed ..... The mind is the part of us that understands mathematics and philosophy, its objects are timeless, and therefore it is regarded as itself timeless. The soul is what moves the body and perceives sensible objects ; it is characterised by self-nutrition, sensation, feeling and motivity ; but the mind

has no relation to the body or to the senses. Hence the mind can be immortal, though the rest of the soul can not"<sup>10</sup>. Aristotle maintains that body and soul are related as matter and form and the soul perishes with the body. Thus it follows that soul is inseparable from its body or certain parts of it.

So it is clear from Aristotle's philosophy that soul is the 'form' of the body. But when he distinguishes between the soul and mind his philosophy of mind becomes complicated. Thus he distinguishes body, soul and mind as three distinct categories. He fails to establish any rational solution to the problem of the relation between the mind and the body though his explanation of the body-soul relation is quite intelligible. He says that the timeless mind becomes a transcendent entity quite distinct from the corporeal body and its 'form' called the soul. Thus if Aristotle regards mind as the higher part of the soul then his theory of mind can be logically consistent with his general philosophical position. But if he regards mind as quite distinct from the soul and the body, his philosophy is vitiated with the dualism of body and mind in place of the body and the soul. Moreover, in his philosophy Aristotle maintains that the functions of the soul are self-nutrition, sensation, feeling and motivity and the functions of the mind is the understanding of mathematics and philosophy. But knowing and feeling or having are not two entirely distinct processes of mind, they are the same process of the mind - the higher and the lower natures of mind. Thus

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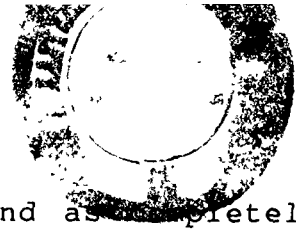
10. Quoted from B. Russell's Western Philosophy ; P-193.

it can be said that both metaphysically and epistemologically Aristotle's theory of mind fails to formulate a satisfactory solution.

Thus Plato's and Aristotle's theory became two distinct trends in the Middle Ages. And in modern philosophy we find philosophers identifying their views either with Platonism or with Aristotelianism. In modern philosophy Descartes clearly distinguishes two substances - matter and mind. He maintains that these two substances can be conceived independently as the extended substance and the thinking substance. But though he believes that mind and matter or thinking substance and extended substance are separate and independent of each other yet at the same time he maintains that there is a causal connection between the two. Sometimes the mind can causally affect the body and sometimes the body can causally affect the mind ; this view is called interactionism.

But it is not necessary to discuss the interactionism here in detail as chapter II of the paper is reserved purely for cartesian dualism. But before stepping to the chapter II, it is necessary to discuss some of the opinions on the nature of mind and its relation with body developed by different thinkers in philosophy.

In the later seventeenth century the famous British empiricist John Locke developed his theory of mind. He was very much dissatisfied with the extreme views in philosophy. He developed empiricism in philosophy as against the rationalism of Descartes. He criticised the doctrine of



innate ideas of Descartes and conceived mind as completely empty and blank, 'white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas'. It is an empty cabinet or 'tabula rasa' and it is experience alone that can furnish it with contents.

Locke maintains that the self is conscious of its own existence. He writes, "We have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence ; a demonstrative knowledge of the existence of God, of the existence of anything else, we have no other but a sensitive knowledge"<sup>11</sup>. He maintains that the existence of self is intuitively and immediately known because it accompanies every act of our sensation and perception. In this sense his view is similar with that of Descartes. But there is a fundamental difference between Descartes and Locke with regard to the nature of mind. Locke disagrees with Descartes on the ground that consciousness or thought is the essence of mind. He says, "I confess myself to have one of those dull souls that doth not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas ; nor can conceive it in any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move ; the perception of ideas being, as I conceive, to the soul, what motion is to the body, not its essence, but one of its operations. And, therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in action"<sup>12</sup>. He continues, "Every drowsy nod shakes

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11. John Locke : An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book - IV, Chapter - III, P - 280.

12. Ibid ; Book - II, Chapter - i, pp - 47-48.

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their doctrine who teach that the soul is always thinking"<sup>13</sup>.

It was not sure to Locke whether the mind is a spiritual or a material substance. But he described mind as merely an 'unknown something', 'I know not what substratum of the ideas'. It was his belief that the soul is originally a tabula rasa, 'a blank labellet', 'an empty cabinet', 'a dark room'. But though the mind is an empty cabinet, it is not windowless. He admits that the empty mind has two windows through which it receives light. These are sensation and reflection. By sensation the mind acquires all knowledge about the external World and by reflection it receives information about the operations of its own processes. Thus, through these two sources the mind receives simple ideas and in our mind these ideas are distinct and separable. He believes that knowledge begins with these simple ideas. In receiving simple ideas our mind is passive, but when the mind becomes active, then we get complex ideas. According to Locke, mind operates to produce three kinds of products, viz., (i) Complex ideas, by the combination of simple ideas, (ii) relations, by comparison of ideas - simple and complex - and bringing them together, and (iii) abstraction, formation of general ideas by separation from all others that normally accompany them.

Another English empiricist philosopher Berkeley occupies a position intermediary between Locke and Hume. In order to avoid the difficulties of empiricism involved in the

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13. Ibid ; Book - II, Chapter - i, P-49.

philosophy of Locke he formulated the theory of Subjective Idealism. He maintains that mind and their ideas are only real things and independent of them nothing exists. In his view mind is a thinking and active being, "a real thing which is neither an idea nor like a idea, but that which perceives ideas and Wills and reasons about them"<sup>14</sup>. He believed that though we donot have any idea of the self yet we have a notion of it. Berkeley writes, "How often must I repeat that I know or am conscious of my own being ; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else - a thinking, active principle that perceives, knows, wills and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds ; that a colour cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a colour ; that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound ; and for the same reason from all other sensible things and inert ideas"<sup>15</sup>. Thus from the above statements it is clear that Berkeley makes a clear distinction between the spirit and the ideas. As distinct from ideas spirit is an indivisible, simple and immaterial entity.

The famous doctrine of Berkeley's philosophy is "esse est percipi". By this he means that if anything exists it must be thought or perceived by the mind. Nothing can exist which is not known by the mind. Thus he says, "all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not

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14. George Berkeley : Principles of Human Knowledge, P-103.

15. Dialogues, (Selection) : P - 163.

any subsistence without a mind - that their being is to be perceived or known, that consequently, so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some 'Eternal Spirit'"<sup>16</sup>. As against Locke Berkeley maintains that mind is an active being. Thus apart from its cognitive attitude he insists upon the conative attitude of the self.

There are many drawbacks in Berkeley's philosophy from the leading and recent philosophical point of view. But in spite of this his account of the nature of mind resembles with the findings of recent psychology. Berkeley's emphasis on the conative aspect of human mind is admitted by modern psychology. Modern psychology no longer recognised conation and cognition as two different faculties of mind. Thus according to Stout, "cognition, feeling and conation are abstractly and analytically distinct phases in any concrete psychosis, but they are not separable. They do not occur in isolation from each other"<sup>17</sup>.

Another empiricist philosopher David Hume strongly criticises the concept of mind as a spiritual substance. His criticism is based on the ground that there is no evidence which one can adduce in support of the conception. He says that if there be really such a thing like spiritual substance

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16. George Berkeley : Of the Principles of Human Knowledge,  
I, pp - 36-37.

17. G.T. Stout : Manual of Psychology, P-117.

some one ought to be able to point to evidence of the fact. But there is not the slightest evidence for its existence. He maintains that consciousness is nothing but numerous experiences, which he calls "perceptions", of pleasure, pain, sights, sounds, thought, desire and the like. In addition to these experiences one cannot find any such thing like spiritual substance as traditional philosophers believe. He therefore concludes that there is no justification for supposing that mind as a spiritual substance does exist. Hume says,

"For my part when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep ; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect non-entity"<sup>18</sup>.

Thus Hume proves that there is no entity as self or permanent substance which is supposed to continue the same from day to day. Consciousness is a constantly changing and

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18. David Hume : Treatise on Human Nature, Book - I, Part-IV  
Sec. vi, P-252.

shifting flow of experiences. He forbids us to identify these continuous changing experiences with any underlying permanent principle. He says that belief in the existence of a permanent self is a mythological conception.

Thus after rejecting the validity of traditional conception of soul-substance Hume advances his own theory of mind. His fundamental thesis is that any individual's mind is nothing but the sum-total of experiences as pleasure and pain, joys and sorrows, sights and sounds, ideas and deeds. These fluctuating experiences from day to day constitute the individual's mind. In his own words : "The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearances ; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity at different, whatever natural propension we have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind"<sup>19</sup>.

Hume says that these diversities of perceptions or experiences constitute one set since all these experiences belong to the same individual. A person's various experiences of sights, sounds, sorrows and the like are all that person's. Each individual mind is in Hume's language "a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux

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19. Ibid : P - 253.

and movement ....."<sup>20</sup>.

Now the question arises, what is the underlying principle which unifies those diverse experiences ? Hume tries to answer this question with the help of his laws of association. He says that the various experiences that constitute mind are bound together by the three laws : (i) the law of contiguity or nearness in space, (ii) the law of succession or nearness in time and (iii) the law of resemblance or likeness.

Kant also attacked the traditional theory of soul. Though his method of attack against the traditional view of mind is different from that of Hume yet in the end it leads to essentially the same conclusion. He agrees with Hume in that the self is never revealed in experience. But unlike Hume he argues that the traditional view on the soul is self-contradictory. Kant says that it is impossible that each individual knows his self as he knows other objects. Because self is not a direct object of knowledge. Self, according to Kant, is that which does knowing. It is always the subject of knowledge and as such it can never be made an object of knowledge. "I cannot know I but only me; myself as subject I cannot know, but only myself as object"<sup>21</sup>. By 'myself an object' Kant means the various experiences that come and go with passing moments. Thus in this sense Kant's position is

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20. Ibid : P - 252.

21. Quoted from G. Watts Cunningham's: Problems of Philosophy,  
P - 255.

alike Hume and he says that to suppose that mind is known as spiritual substance is not only unjustifiable, but involves a manifest contradiction.

But Hume's solution to the problem of the nature of mind is not accepted by Kant. Kant says that Hume failed to prove the unity of mind. Kant admits that Hume's laws of association are operative within experiences and in this sense he agrees with Hume. But he says that until and unless there be a mind which is something more than a mere haphazard bundle of experiences these laws themselves would be impossible. For these laws of association presuppose memory. But to have memory there must be some sort of agent, otherwise memory is impossible. Thus Kant concludes that Hume's view of mind as a collection of experiences bound together by the laws of association does not solve the problem. He insists that there is more of unity within mind, than Hume admits. In his 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant refers to this unifying function as the "Synthetic Unity of Apperception". By it he means some sort of capacity within the mind to organise different experiences into meaningful wholes either by way of memory and association or by way of inference. Thus for Kant mind is not a 'bundle' of experiences as Hume said ; it is rather an 'organization' of experiences, and this organization is made possible by an actually existing principle or agent of organization. Thus Kant's view is different from the preceding views already discussed on two points : (i) he insists on the necessity of an organizing principle of experiences which Hume denies and

(ii) this organizing principle is an active agent which the traditional Platonic-Aristotelian view denies.

Another German Philosopher Hegel also contributed in the field of mind. In his philosophy the duality of mind and matter is completely overcome. According to him, Absolute Reality is the ultimate reality and everything else is the modification of the Absolute thought. He says that "all being is thought-realised, all becoming a development of thought"<sup>22</sup>. The central philosophy of Hegel can be expressed best in his own words, "The real is rational, and, the rational is real"<sup>23</sup>. According to Hegel, nature and mind are mere phases of the development of the Absolute and as such these are not two distinct entities. He also maintains that the development is going on in a dialectical process - thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. This development is the dynamic self-expression of the whole. Hegel's Absolute is not an abstract reality, it is a concrete reality where all the differences are reconciled. It is unity-in-and-through-diversity. Here none can be thought of without the other. To think of unity one must have to think of diversity and vice-versa.

According to Hegel, mind is nothing but the Absolute and the Absolute is immanent in all things. Nature and our thinking are the phases of mind's self-manifestation. For Hegel mind and matter are essentially one and they are not

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22. Quoted from J.P. Sukla's : 'The Nature of Mind', P-46.

23. Quoted from Y. Masih's : 'A Critical History of Modern Philosophy, P - 292.

two distinct things on the same level. It is only understanding which separates them as substantially different from one another. He maintains that the function of understanding is to divide, classify, analyse and define the deliverances of senses by classifying them into sharply different and exclusive classes. Understanding is the playground of abstraction. Where understanding dominates, mind and matter are sharply divided into two distinct and separate entities. But Hegel says that though mind and matter are one and are manifestations of the Absolute yet mind and matter are not of equal status. They form higher and lower phases in the development of reality.

Thus we find that the history of the mind-body problem is a long one. The search for the solution of this problem was started in primitive age and it is going on till today. This problem is of concern in psychology also. But it is not possible to discuss the problem here from psychological point of view as the scope of the work is very limited. But before going to close the introductory chapter it is necessary to give a brief outline of the plan of the paper. In the second chapter of the paper Cartesian Dualism will be discussed. In the third chapter effort will be made to appreciate Descartes' dualism critically. In the fourth chapter Gilbert Ryle's concept of mind will be discussed. In the fifth chapter there will be a critical appreciation of Gilbert Ryle's concept of mind and in chapter sixth there will be a concluding chapter.

Thus the aim of this present work is to carry out a

critical study of the philosophy of mind with reference to R.Descartes and G.Ryle. Descartes, as we know, emphasised or glorified the role of mind whereas Ryle tries to do with a minimum of mind. Our avowed task will be to see how far the two philosophers, or we should say the two camps, can claim plausibility of their theses. Whether we can, after a careful study, take side with any ? Or, whether we should go for a third alternative ? - are the questions we shall be trying to answer during this course of study.

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CHAPTER II

Descartes' Concept of Mind

## CHAPTER - II

### Descartes' Concept of Mind.

In the preceding chapter we have given a brief description of the nature of the mind conceived by the primitive men and also by some philosophers. Now in this chapter attempt will be made to discuss the problem in philosophy of Rene Descartes.

Descartes, a Frenchman, is the most significant dualist philosopher. His concept of mind and its relation to body is a revolutionary one. No other thinkers prior to Descartes thought of such type of analysis. This evaluation of Descartes' philosophy is further confirmed when we study T.E. Shanmugam's The Concept of Mind. In his preface to the book he writes,

"Till the advent of Descartes in the Sixteenth century, the concept of mind was rather in a nebulous state in the philosophies of the West"<sup>1</sup>.

According to Descartes a human being must be some kind of union of two distinct things : a soul or mind and a body. He believes that body is a part of mechanical nature whereas the mind is a pure thinking substance and it is spiritual in nature.

There are mainly two reasons for which Descartes maintained that mind is a thinking substance. Firstly, he thought that any kind of mental activities, such as, willing,

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1. T.E. Shanmugam : The Concept of Mind, P - VII.

feeling and thinking cannot take place by themselves. To be an act of willing there must be something which wills, to be an act of feeling there must be something which feels and to be an act of thinking there must be something which thinks. Secondly, he thought that this "something" which performs these several functions could not possibly be extended substance. Because extended substance by itself is wholly passive. These are the two reasons for which Descartes thinks that mind is a non-material substance. It is an active something, a spiritual substance which expresses itself in these several ways of thinking, feeling and willing.

It is necessary to mention here that Descartes' concept of mind is derived from his theory of substance. 'Substance', according to him, is a thing that exists. It exists by itself and requires nothing for its existence. He says,

"Everything in which there resides immediately, as in a subject, or by means of which there exists anything that we perceive, i.e., any property, quality or attribute, of which we have a real idea, is called a substance, neither do we have any other idea of substance itself, precisely taken, than that it is a thing in which this something that we perceive or which is present objectively in some of our ideas, exists formally or eminently. For by means of our natural light we know that a real attribute cannot be an attribute of nothing"<sup>2</sup>.

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2. Quoted from Haldane and Ross' : The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol.II, P - 53.

Descartes believes in the existence of three substances, namely, God, mind and body. He defines these three substances thus,

"That substance in which thought immediately resides, I call Mind ..... that substance, which is the immediate subject of extension in space and of the accidents that presuppose extension, e.g. figure, situation, movement in space etc., is called Body ..... that substance which we understand to be supremely perfect and in which we conceive absolutely nothing involving defect or limitation of its perfection, is called God"<sup>3</sup>.

But although Descartes believes in the existence of three substances, he never gives them equal status. He says that among the three substances mind and body are not independent substances. They are created by God and as such they are dependent on God for their existence. It is only God who never depends on anything else for His existence. He is called 'Causa Sui' and He has absolutely no need of any other things to exist. Thus, according to Descartes, the term 'substance' is properly applicable only to God because He alone is absolutely independent and mind and body cannot be called substances in the true sense of the term. Thus, for him, mind and body are relative substances. This point is very aptly remarked by N.V. Banerjee in his book Kant's Philosophy of the Self.

"Neither the self nor matter can, it is needless to

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3. Ibid : Vol.II, P - 53.

mention, be a substance in the sense in which God is a substance, namely, as self-existent. Yet Descartes conceives them as substances in so far as they are, in his view, unrelated to, and undetermined by, God before creation since they did not then exist, as well as after creation, being then outside Him"<sup>4</sup>.

Descartes never holds that particular physical objects are substances. When he comes to understand the physical universe he draws a distinction between the whole and the part. By whole he, however, does not mean aggregate but opposed to it and it is prior to, and of a higher degree of reality than, the parts. He maintains that infinite matter is the whole thing and particular physical objects are parts. This infinite matter is the ground of particular physical objects and as such more real than the parts. But he does not make any such distinction when he comes to understand the nature of the self. He says that self is an absolutely isolated individual and as such he abstracts it from the physical world as well as from the society and doing so he subscribes to an individualistic doctrine of the relation between the individual and society. Thus, his conception of morality is purely individualistic.

According to Descartes, self is created by God and so it is free. He makes a distinction of two kinds of freedom, viz., the power of choice and choice, and says that the former kind of freedom belongs to God only and the latter to

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4. K.V. Banerjee : Kant's Philosophy of the Self, P - 9.

the individual self. He says that the individual self, being the creation of the free will of God, is not the result of any mechanical process. Hence the self is itself free and there is nothing to interfere in his freedom, because he is originally endowed with freedom. But Descartes maintains that matter is not free like self because the physical universe is subject to the principle of mechanical laws.

Descartes maintains that human mind is in contact with objects and their qualities. It is also in contact with external truths. He divided objects into two classes. These are thinking things and extended or physical objects. When he attributes any kind of qualities or affections to object, these are nothing but the result of the interaction between mind and body. He says that the essence of the body is simply to be extended.

But before going for a detailed discussion on the nature of mind and its relation to body according to Descartes, we shall try to discuss how he has proved that there really exists an entity like self and another entity like body.

Before the arrival of Descartes in the philosophic scene there was not a single proposition in philosophy which was certain and beyond dispute. Thus he was very much worried about the uncertain state of philosophy that prevailed in his time although it was cultivated by the best minds for many centuries. Hence in the field of philosophy Descartes tries to contribute a solid foundation to knowledge such that knowledge should be free from all doubt. It also needs to be

mentioned that before the arrival of Descartes in the world of philosophy there was not a generally accepted method of philosophy. So he tries to introduce a method of philosophy for attaining certainty in knowledge.

In his method of philosophy Descartes clearly says that knowledge must be certain, necessary and universal. He says that such a certain knowledge is clearly found in mathematics. Hence, the real philosophical method, for him, should be of the form of mathematics, especially of Geometry. So Descartes devoted himself in understanding the method of mathematics which he thinks, could be utilised for attaining knowledge in any subject. In his Regulae (Rule IV) he called his own enquiry as "Universal Mathematics". From his philosophy we find that he was very much concerned with the enquiry into the method of philosophising. In his Regulae he mentioned thirty one rules although he had proposed to lay down thirty six rules. Descartes believes that if we apply the method of mathematics in philosophy then it is possible to have certain knowledge in philosophy. As a result of his enquiry, he laid down four broad rules for his self guidance. Of these four, the first is that :

"To accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognise to be so : that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgements, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to doubt it"<sup>5</sup>.

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5. Descartes : Discourse, Pt - II, P - 92.

It is Descartes' belief that from poorly comprehended experiences or from hasty, groundless and preconceived notions errors arise. So he suggests that, to overcome such situation one should resolutely refuse to believe in what is not clearly and distinctly perceived.

So far we have discussed his first rule of method we find that it is very fruitful for finding certain knowledge. But the remaining three rules of the method, as he stated in the Discourse, Pt II, are epistemologically less important than the first although these are methodologically very important. They are not concerned with the principles on which the very existence and possibility of knowledge depend rather they concern the best way to proceed in acquiring knowledge.

Now a question arises, how can we find something which is sure and certain ? Descartes believes that by deliberate doubt we can have the simple and certain truth. If we start our searching the truth by doubting everything then ultimately we will be able to find something which is indubitable and clearly perceivable.

"Dissatisfaction with current learning induces Descartes to reject all his former opinions, but in following his resolution to accept nothing which is not clearly recognisable as true he goes much further and determines, at least provisionally and for the purpose of discovering a solid foundation on which to build, to reject any proposition which is in any way susceptible of doubt"<sup>6</sup>.

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6. Errol Harrish : Fundamentals of Philosophy, P - 115.

Thus in each of his famous books viz., the Discourse, the Meditations, the Principles of Philosophy, we find the initial gesture of doubt.

In his Meditations I Descartes thoroughly examines all the categories of knowledge and tries to find out whether any assertion in any one of them is free from doubt. In order to discover the indubitable intuition Descartes doubts everything in this world.

Thus Descartes started his philosophy by doubting everything in this world. But his doubt could not continue infinitely. He had to stop somewhere and to start to believe the existence of something. He says that he may doubt anything but he must believe the fact that he is doubting. His doubting may be a dream or a real consciousness, but he must exist as a doubting being.

He further says that if he thinks that there is a demon who deceives him then he must believe that he exists as a thinking being to be deceived. Thus from the knowledge that he is thinking Descartes concludes that he exists. "I doubt or think, therefore I exist, i.e., Cogito ergo sum". This 'Cogito ergo sum' is the one certain truth which he proves from his doubting or thinking and this is taken by him as the foundation of his philosophy.

"In part IV of the Discourse Descartes enunciates the famous dictum on the strength of which he proceeds to rebuild the edifice of knowledge. To doubt, or to think all opinions as false, necessitates the existence of the doubter. If I

doubt, I think ; If I think then I exist - Cogito ergo sum"<sup>7</sup>.

Thus in his 'Cogito ergo sum' Descartes discovers the indubitable existence of 'I'. But this 'I' is not the empirical 'I' instead it is the thinking 'I'. Hence he concludes that thinking is the essential attribute of 'I'. 'I' is to be identified with the thinking substance. The extended substance can be the object of doubt. Hence the discovery of the extended 'I' is secondary and dependent.

Thus after proving his own existence Descartes did not stop his enquiry. By applying the same method he proved the existence of the external world, God etc. He next proceeds to find out what he is. "I know that I exist and I inquire what I am, I whom I know to exist"<sup>8</sup>. He wishes to examine himself carefully. He must examine carefully and must be cautious to see at the time of examination he does not wrongly take some other things in place of himself. In order to find out what he is he asks himself variously. He searches thoroughly to find out which 'pertains' to him or which cannot be separated from him. He tries to discover his 'principal attribute' or 'principal property', or as he himself puts it, he is trying to discover his 'essence' or 'nature'.

Descartes formerly believed that he was a man having a face, hands, arms, and composed of bones and flesh as seen in a corpse which he designated by the name of body. Further there were other actions, such as, he was nourished, that he

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7. Ibid : P - 120.

8. Quoted from Haldane and Ross' : The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol. I P-152

walked, that he felt and that he thought, which he referred to the soul. Descartes did not stop to consider what the soul was. He imagined that it was something extremely rare and subtle like a wind, a flame, or an ether which was spread throughout his grosser parts. Similarly, regarding the body he had a very clear knowledge. By the body he understood that it was something which could be defined by a certain figure. According to him it is something which can be confined in a certain place, which occupies 'the' space that cannot be occupied by any other body or bodies. That body is something which can be perceived either by touch, or by sight, or by hearing, or by taste, or by smell. It is that thing which cannot move by itself but can be moved by others.

Thus Descartes comes to the conclusion that he is a man who possesses both a soul and a body. One cannot feel without body. Again, he finds that thought is an attribute that belongs to him ; it alone cannot be separated from him. He says that he is a thing which thinks. It is a thing which doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.

From his analysis we find that Descartes never explicitly defines the terms 'essence' or 'nature'. He says that by essence he means that which is necessary for the existence of a thing. "Nothing without which a thing can still exist is composed in its essence"<sup>9</sup>. But Descartes does

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9. Ibid : Vol. - II, P - 97.

not say that the essence of a thing contains everything that is necessary for the existence of the thing. He says that the essence of a thing is not sufficient for the existence of that thing. If we think that the essence of a thing is sufficient for the existence of that thing then the essence of anything would imply the existence of that thing, which is not true. Descartes says that this is true only of the essence of God. But whatever may be said by Descartes regarding the relation between 'essence' and 'existence' he admits that his essence is thinking. He says,

"Just because I know certainly that I exist and that meanwhile I donot notice that any other thing necessarily pertains to my nature or essence, excepting that I am a thinking thing I rightly conclude that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing"<sup>10</sup>.

Thus from the above statement we find that, for Descartes, self is a thinking substance. It is the unifying principle behind the multiplicity of experiences and as such it is directly opposed to body. But before going to a detailed analysis of Descartes' conception of mind - body relation it is necessary to discuss elaborately the nature of self conceived by him.

Descartes believes that self is a simple or indivisible and timeless substance. His belief on such characteristics leads him to regard it as eternal. But when he considers it to be a created substance (created by God)

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10. Ibid : Vol.- I, P - 190.

and when he advocates the traditional moral belief, he discards the conception of eternity of the self and tries to prove it to be immortal. But he never says that self is immortal like God. He says that self is immortal because it maintains its continuity of existence in a series of discrete moments. By saying this he, for the time being, gives up his earlier view of self as a substance and says that it is not timeless but subject to time. He says that God creates and recreates the self in an infinite number of times at His will. Hence the self maintains its existence through an infinite series of moments, and thus it is immortal.

But from the above we find that there is a fluctuating attitude in Descartes' opinion. Sometimes he says that self is a created substance of God and it is timeless and sometimes it is not.

Regarding the self's knowledge of the external world Descartes says that self is not related with the external world directly but it possesses the peculiar quality of consciousness by virtue of which it can be aware of the external objects. In order to maintain the self's knowledge of the external physical objects without there being any direct relation between the two, Descartes takes the help of ideas and these 'ideas', according to him, are copies or representations of physical objects. Hence he is called the founder of the famous doctrine of representationalism. His representationalism is thus the logical counterpart of the dualist's metaphysics.

According to Descartes, self is a qualified existent.

And being so, it is the perceiving agent. He also ascribes other faculties to the self, namely, feeling, emotion etc. which are regarded by modern psychology as subjective but he calls them objective. He also says that 'will' is purely a subjective faculty, although he occasionally mentions it among the faculties ascribable to the self as it is a mental faculty. But there is a great difficulty in attributing all the objective faculties to the self in the same sense and Descartes realises this.

There are some qualities, such as, colour, smell, taste etc., which are changeable while other qualities, such as, extension, figure and motion are unchangeable. Realising this difference Descartes says that the former qualities have nothing in the external world corresponding to them and so these are ideas of our mind, but he believes that the latter qualities correspond to real properties of the physical world.

In his earlier view we find that Descartes believes all ideas as innate. But afterwards he gives up this view and admits the existence of two distinct groups of ideas. He says that the ideas of colour, taste, smell etc. are originated in our mind through the influence of external world and so these are confused ideas. But the ideas of extension, figure and motion are, according to him, innate. Thus he draws a qualitative distinction between ideas and calls the world of extension, figure and motion as understanding or thought, and the ideas of colour, taste, smell etc. as sensing. Regarding the position of remaining objective faculties, such as,

feeling, emotion, imagination etc., Descartes says that since there exists nothing corresponding to their contents in the world, so these are also sensing. Thus all the objective faculties except thinking or understanding are called by him as imagination. He is of the opinion that thought alone constitutes the essence of the self because self is not conceivable apart from thought. And in order to establish the truth that self is a 'qualified existent' he says that imaginative faculties are inessential to adequate knowledge and as such self is conceivable apart from them. Though Descartes holds the view that imaginative faculties belong to the self yet he regards that these are externally related to the self. Hence here once again Descartes takes the shelter of the difficult concept of mode and holds the view that these imaginative faculties are mere modes of the self. Descartes thus makes the distinction between two kinds of self. These are essential self and modal or inessential self. The former is, according to him, constituted by thought while the latter is by the imaginative faculties.

Thus from the above discussion it appears that the influence of Descartes' physical studies in understanding the nature of the self is immense. The distinction between the sensible or secondary qualities and the real or primary qualities of physical objects determines his view of the distinction between sense and understanding, between the sensible or modal self and the rational or essential self. His understanding of the self on the analogy of physical objects is accepted till today. Now-a-days the self is not

merely understood as a qualified existent but is also believed to be of two-fold in nature, namely, essential self and model self. It is to be mentioned that in Kant's philosophy we find the reappearance of Descartes' qualitative distinction between sense and understanding "..... Kant's distinction between the real and the phenomenal self is the ghost of the Cartesian distinction between essential and the model self and comes out of the grave where Hume buried the latter"<sup>11</sup>.

Descartes later realizes that the true essence of the self is not thinking self but it is sensible self because it, like the senses, is passive and determined by external objects. In his view innate ideas are also external to the self and so are determined by external objects. Thus this latter view of Descartes legitimately demands for giving up of his original view that self is a qualified existent, which Descartes fails to realize. He rather says that the true essence of the self is 'will'. In his enquiry into the nature of the self Descartes is mainly inspired by moral consideration. It is true that the self as a volitional, a moral individual, is essentially in relation to other individuals and also to the external world. But Descartes obviously ignores this fact and conceives that the self has its true being in moral will.

It is the opinion of Descartes that self can be known very easily than any other matter and thus we find that

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11. N.V. Banerjee : Kant's Philosophy of the Self, P-14.

self-knowledge occupies an important place in his philosophy. Now the question is, what does Descartes mean by self-knowledge? If by the knowledge of the self he means clear and distinct conception of the self's essence, then his assertion is not justified. Because, in his view our conception of self is as clear and distinct as our thought. Again, by self-knowledge Descartes should not mean the knowledge of the object. Because according to him, the knowledge of object is nothing but ideas and these ideas are not the part of the essence of the self. Again, objects are external to the self and thus the apprehension of the ideas is not the apprehension of the self. There might be another possible way of knowing the self; this is intuition or inner sense. But in Descartes' philosophy we do not find any such conception. Thus N.V. Banerjee in his book Kant's Philosophy of the Self says,

"His real meaning of self-knowledge, therefore, seems to be that the self, in virtue of its being constituted by consciousness, is a self-luminous or self-revealed existent and, as such, is opposed to physical objects which can be revealed only in the light of the conscious faculty of the self"<sup>12</sup>.

Hence Descartes concludes that self-knowledge is the knowledge of self's peculiar existence which differs from that of physical objects and as such it has no epistemological significance. Such a view of Descartes means

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12. N.V. Banerjee : Kant's Philosophy of the Self, P-16.

that psychology is not an empirical science but a rational science and its foundation lies in our clear and distinct conception of the mind.

There are different angles from which Descartes tries to show that mind is opposed to body. He says that, body acts in a purely mechanical way, because there are certain actions which the body performs without any intervention of the soul. There are certain relation between perception and action and reaction. Because by reflex we spread out our hands to save ourselves from falling, or react to certain stimuli by behavioural expression of emotion. In all these cases the body is acting as a reactive machine. It is only the mechanism of the brain and the nervous system which produces bodily changes. Descartes believes that the behaviour of all animals other than man is reactive. He further believes that it is only man who possesses at least some consciousness of the occurrence of these processes which is not possible on the part of other animals because other animals donot possess soul or mind and hence they possess no consciousness at all.

Hence the Cartesian believes that animals are automata, highly complex machines. He says that not only animals but also the human body is a highly complex machine. But though Descartes maintains that human beings are complex machines yet he could not regard them as automata. Because in human beings the thinking substance is obviously conjoined with extended substance. But question arises, "how" ? If human body be taken as a part of mechanical order then it is itself a mechanical instrument and thus its every reaction could be

explained without referring to consciousness. Moreover, if one tries to introduce conscious interference into it, how could the mind control the body without exerting physical force ? And finally, how could mind, which is immaterial, unextended substance, having nothing in common with matter, be conceived in any sort of contact with body ?

Thus facing with these difficulties Descartes tried to answer very cleverly. He asserted that the mind merely directs the course of the currents of motion flowing through the body, without in any way altering their volume. In order to justify this he located the soul's point of contact with the body in the centrally situated pineal gland, buried deep between the two hemispheres of the brain. This is a kind of bottle-neck through which the incoming sensory currents of "animal spirit" passed, and in which they are transformed into outgoing impulses terminating in muscular movement. This is the natural spot for the mind to intervene and switch the trains of movement set up by sensory stimulation to the appropriate volitional and motor or outgoing paths.

Descartes says that only a human being possesses mind because it is only man who has a language which no other animals could have. Again, he cited that only conscious human beings possess free will. But this distinction of Descartes have a very little force in denying the fact that animals possess consciousness of pain or some other kinds of feelings or sensations.

In his Meditations Descartes establishes a rigid dualism between mind and body. He says that mind and body are

two antagonistic substances. What is there in the mind is never found in the body and what is present in the body is absent in the mind. In his view there is nothing common between these two substances. He identifies body or matter with extension. It is passive, subject to mechanical laws. It is also devoid of thinking, feeling, willing or power of spontaneous action. In sharp contrast to this extended body there exists the non-extended substance called self whose essence is thinking. It is a thing which doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels. Thus thinking comprises all the activities which is called mental, namely, desiring, feeling, judging, willing and so on. Descartes says that apart from a thinking substance there can be nothing called mental. Self is that thinking substance which is indivisible and unextended as opposed to body which is essentially divisible and extended substance. The self is conscious, being a thinking substance, it always thinks. Thus according to Descartes, it is absurd to think that there exists a self which is unconscious and also exists a matter which is unextended.

"Descartes admitted two independent entities of body and mind, each having a characteristic of its own and neither having anything in common with the other, so that mind and body normally cannot meet on a common platform. Consciousness or thought which is the essence of mind is opposed to extension of bodies by a whole diameter of being"<sup>13</sup>.

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13. H.M. Bhattacharyya : The Principles of Philosophy, P-281.

According to Descartes, God is free from all kinds of errors. Thus in order to make him free from errors he imposed it on the shoulder of man. This leads him to a second dualism, within his dualism of mind and body, viz., intellect and will. According to him error arises from the unrestrained will, which affirms the truth of ideas that are not clear and distinct to the intellect. In one way he shows that man is less than God and in another way he shows that man is like God. In respect of intellect man is less than God but in respect of will man is like God.

"The intellect is limited in its perception of truths; in this respect man is less than God. But the will is unlimited, it is wholly free ; in this respect man is like God"<sup>14</sup>.

If the will permits itself to believe, for instance, in the unqualified reality of the objects of sense then it can run into error. It may perceive something erroneously. It may confuse dreaming with waking state, heat with cold and like this thousand other illusions. But for avoiding error he hints the following rule :

"Deliberate carefully and give your assent only when you have attained absolute clarity in thought - this is the rule for avoiding error"<sup>15</sup>.

The most systematic dualist thinker Descartes holds that mind is the subject of consciousness and it is a thing or entity which is distinct and separate from the body. The

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14. Quoted from R.M. Eaton's (Ed.) Descartes' Selection, P-XXXIII

15. Ibid : P - XXXIV.

body is that thing whose essence is occupying space, i.e., having shape, size and location in space. But in no way consciousness can be ascribed to body.

"Everything that can think is mind or is called mind, but, since mind and body are really distinct, no body is a mind ; hence no body can think"<sup>16</sup>.

Descartes says that being a thinking substance mind is completely different in its nature from the body. It is non-spatial, having neither shape, size, nor location. Its defining characteristic or essence is simply having consciousness, i.e., thoughts, feelings, memories, perceptions, desires, emotions etc. But here we find contradictory view of Descartes. Once he declared that self is located in the pineal gland but here he says it has no location. Thus such contradictory opinions cannot be accepted.

Descartes further holds the view that both mind and body can exist independent of each other as they are separate and distinct entities. His view is correct to some extent. Because it is obvious and undeniable fact that some bodies e.g., stones and lakes do exist without minds. He believes that all other animals excepts man are bodies without minds. He also believes that minds continue to exist as disembodied mind after the body has perished since minds are immortal.

Thus Descartes very clearly shows the existence of two

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16. Ibid : P - 178.

separate substances, matter and mind and he also says that the existence of the extended substance and the thinking substance can be conceived of independently. In his reply to the question asked by his critics that how does he prove that his body is distinct from his mind ? Descartes says,

"Although I have a body very closely conjoined with me, yet since, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am a thinking thing and not extended ; and, on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of the body in so far as it is an extended, not a thinking thing, it is certain taht I (that is the mind) am really distinct from my body and can exist without it"<sup>17</sup>.

Hence there is a dualism in Descartes' philosophy and this dualism is permanent. Descartes' view is that like all other bodies human body is a machine. But he makes a difference between artificial bodies and human bodies only on the ground that the artificial bodies are made by the hands of man whereas the human bodies are fashioned by God, the most perfect Being. So being the creation of Supreme Being, the human body can move and perform actions.

But though it appears from the above that Cartesian philosophy is a dualistic one, as it divides the universe into two hemispheres - spirit and matter, yet in thorough examination it is found that this is not the case. His philosophy is really "Trialistic". Because as we have mentioned earlier that Cartesianism believes in the existence

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17. Ibid : pp - 177-178.

of three substances - Mind, Body and God. Of these the first two are not absolute but dependent substances as they depend on God for their existence. They are created and sustained by God and so these are called created substances. But the third one, i.e., God, is the only absolute substance which is not created by anything else. It is called uncreated substance. The concurrence of God is urgently necessary for the existence of matter and mind. But God requires nothing but Himself for His existence. Thus according to Descartes the whole system of the universe is constituted by the three realms of being and their relations to one another.

It is commonly regarded that Descartes is a typical dualist and Leibniz is a pluralist. But if Descartes is called a dualist then in the same sense Leibniz is to be called a monist. Descartes says that mind and matter are two substances and both are equally real and one cannot be reduced to another and in this sense he is a dualist. But Leibniz maintains that there is nothing which is called matter ; everything which appears as matter is really mind. In this sense Leibniz can be called a monist. But there is another angle from which both Descartes and Leibniz are called pluralist. Leibniz never believes in the existence of a single mind rather he is of the opinion that there is a very large number of minds and each mind has an independent existence. Descartes also agrees with him and in this respect both of them are pluralist.

"Descartes was a pluralist about mind and a monist about matter, for he agreed with Leibniz that minds are

continuants and with Spinoza that bodies are occurrents"<sup>18</sup>.

Cartesianism is blended with the elements of at least three widely different philosophies, viz., pantheism, materialism and idealism. If it thinks that mind and matter are co-ordinate aspects of God, who becomes the indwelling substance of all things, we find it to be like the pantheism of Spinoza. Again, if we abolish mind as a thinking substance and think that thought is nothing but the function of a bodily machine, then we have the materialism of Hobbes or La Mettrick. Again, if we abolish matter and absorb it into spirit, as a thought in the Divine Mind, then we have the idealism of Malebranche and Berkeley. But Descartes forbade us to think in such ways. To him, mind and matter are created substances of God and as such they are not aspects of God. These created substances are brought into being by a free act of God's will, and hence they are distinct from Him. Descartes would never agree with the materialist that matter could think even though it performs many remarkable things.

Thus from the above discussion it appears that we can not strictly place Descartes into a definite location. Sometimes he resides in the dualist camp and sometimes in that of the pluralist. Again, sometimes he can be thrown into the camp of pantheism, sometimes to that of idealism and sometimes to that of materialism. But wherever he may be left, it is true that he is after all a typical dualist as he believes that mind and body are two distinct things. His

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18. C.D. Broad : The Mind and its Place in Nature, P-21.

argument that mind is distinct from the body cannot be proved until and unless we study his sixth Meditation. In this Meditation he proves that since he has a clear and distinct idea of himself as only a thinking and unextended thing and since God is an omnipotent Being, His omnipotence could make him exist apart from body. Therefore, he is distinct from his body. Thus he says,

"God can effect whatever we clearly perceive just as we perceive it. But we clearly perceive the mind, i.e., a thinking substance, apart from the body, i.e., apart from any extended substance, and vice versa, we can perceive body apart from mind. Hence, at least through the instrumentality of the Divine power, mind can exist apart from body, and body apart from mind"<sup>19</sup>.

Once Descartes proves that there is a God, and that all things are depended on Him and that He is not a deceiver. He maintains at the end of Meditation V, that what he perceives clearly and distinctly cannot fail to be true. So by the strength of this conclusion in Meditation VI he asserts that,

"It suffices that I am able to apprehend a thing apart from another clearly and distinctly in order to be certain that the one is different from the other"<sup>20</sup>.

Descartes' conclusion that 'in reality he is a distinct thing from his body' is deduced from the fact that

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19. Quoted from Haldane and Ross' : The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol.II,P-59.

20. Ibid., Vol. I, P-190.

he perceives himself clearly and distinctly as only a thinking and unextended thing.

There is another point of view from which Descartes proves that there is a real distinction between mind and body. In his view substance is that which can exist by itself and being self-existent it is really distinct. Mind and body being substances, though relative substances of God, can exist apart from each other. Hence they are distinct from each other.

In his Meditation VI Descartes puts forward a supplementary argument to prove that mind is really separate from body. He says that if he had not proved the fact by his argument from clear and distinct ideas then this argument is sufficient to prove the fact that the mind or soul of man is entirely different from the body. All of us know that our body is divisible in many parts if we wish but our mind cannot be divided into parts in any way if we wish to do so. Human mind is completely indivisible. From this fact it is plain to us to believe that there is a separateness of mind and body. He says,

"When I consider the mind, that is to say myself in as much as I am only a thinking thing, I cannot distinguish in myself any parts, but apprehend myself to be clearly one and entire ; and although the whole mind seems to be united to the whole body, yet if a foot, or an arm, or some other part, is separated from my body, I am aware that nothing has been taken away from my mind"<sup>21</sup>.

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21. Ibid : P-196.

Descartes says that it is not correct to think that the faculties of willing, feeling, conceiving etc. are the parts of the mind, because mind cannot be divided. All the faculties of willing, feeling and understanding are employed to the one and the same mind.

Descartes, again, constructs another argument in order to prove that there is a distinction between mind and body. In this argument he adopts the method of doubt. As we all know that he started his philosophy by doubting everything of this world in order to find out something that is certain and which is beyond all possible ground of doubt. In this process he even doubts his own body but not that he exists. Thus he separated himself from his body.

He further proceeds to show that mind is separate from the body on the ground that body is perishable but the mind is by nature immortal. He says that human body is composed only of a certain components and of other similar accidents but human mind is not composed of in such way. Mind is pure substance. Thus though in different occasions human mind is changing or though it thinks certain things, wills others, perceives others, etc., yet there is no possibility of emerging another mind from these changes. But in the case of human body there happens different things. If the figure or form of any portion of human body is found to be changed then it becomes a different thing. Hence human body is distinct from human mind.

Thus Descartes repeatedly declared that mind and body

are two independent entities and each have its own characteristics. They have nothing in common and for this reason their meeting on a common platform is not normally possible. The essence of mind is thought or consciousness which is wholly opposed to the essence of body. But it is very difficult to stick on this hard and fast distinction between mind and body. Our very being and its daily commerce with the world present conceived us the evidence of their interaction. Our very being, which is made of our mind-body complex, gives us the experience that our entire psychological life of feeling, thinking and doing is a joint product of psychical and physical forces. Perhaps it is this experience which made Descartes believe that there is interaction between mind and body and thus he believed that there is mutual influence between the two.

Thus according to Descartes there is interaction between mind and body. He says that sometimes mind causes bodily changes and sometimes body causes mind's changes. It is an experience of daily life that if there be any kind of disease in the body then it affects mental life and thinking. If there be a blow on the head it may cause our loss of consciousness. It is well known that uses of drugs, alcohol and coffee cause mental affect. If anyone's digestive system is disturbed in any way then he may become depressed. Again, if anyone's bodily posture or functioning are smooth he cannot concentrate his mind or think clearly. In addition to these there is a common experience that with the development

of brain and nervous system thinking power of mind also increases. These examples prove that physical conditions affect mental condition.

But it is, further, obvious that mental experiences also affect bodily processes. If a normal human being thinks about something, it pushes him to materialise his thinking through activity. A person's physical condition may be deteriorated by his worries. A person's blood pressure may be increased by his anger or mental effort. A person's heart beat may be increased by fear.

Thus though Descartes believes that there is a well known distinction between mind and body, as they are independent of each other, yet at the same time he firmly asserts their intimate union in man's nature. In a letter to Regius he categorically affirms that soul or mind is really and substantially united to the body and not merely by its place and disposition. Descartes says in his Meditations that the sensation of 'hunger', 'thirst', 'pain' are nothing but confused modes of self-consciousness which arise from the union of mind and body. In a similar way Descartes emphasizes the distinction between a purely mental or intellectual joy and animal pleasure and says that animal pleasure is confused consciousness involving the co-operation of the bodily mechanism. Thus there are so many references which show that Descartes not only makes distinction of mind and body but shows their co-operation and mutual interaction.

Descartes sometimes calls the mind-body relation as 'Substantial Union'. Because according to him, this union

cannot be analysed and so it is, in fact, a primitive one. Yet in his later work The Passions of the Soul he depicted a thorough-going causal account of the relations involved between the two. But before going to this point Descartes emphatically says that my soul is not in my body as a "pilot in a ship". By this he means that the soul is able to move the body "directly" and also that the soul feels all sorts of sensations 'in' the body. It does not merely appreciate the needs and other states of body intellectually from outside.

In his The Passions of the Soul Descartes says that the soul is really joined to the whole body ; for body is a complete and organic totality. Its all parts are related to one another. If any one of its organs is destroyed then the whole body becomes defective. Its all parts are equally related to the soul. But Descartes says that although the soul is joined to the whole body, yet he believes that there is a certain part in which it exercises its functions more particularly than all the others. He believes that this part is brain and possibly the heart. The reason behind this belief is that the brain is the part where the organs of senses are connected. Again, it is heart, because it is the part where we experience passions. But soon Descartes changes his language and says that it is neither the whole brain nor heart where soul exists but the most inward of all its parts - pineal gland, where soul exists. Thus, according to Descartes, the pineal gland in the centre of the brain is the principal seat of the soul. The reason for selecting this particular place for the soul is given by Descartes as

follows :

"The reason which persuades me that the soul cannot have any other seat in all the body than this gland wherein to exercise its functions immediately, is that I reflect that the other parts of our brain are all of them double, just as we have two eyes, two hands, two ears, and finally all the organs of our outside senses are double ..... but there is no other place in the body where they can be thus united unless they are so in this gland"<sup>22</sup>.

Thus Descartes selects, particularly this organ for the existence of soul because it appears unique in the brain in being single and also because he believes, though falsely, that it does not occur in other animals, for which the question of the relation of soul and body does not arise. Descartes says that in human being the soul directly moves the pineal gland and thus affects the animal spirit ; it is only the direction of movement of these spirits that is affected by the soul. In the opposite direction the affects of external objects on the sense organs are transmitted to the pineal gland by the spirits and the soul is affected by causing sensation in it.

Thus before closing this chapter we should emphatically say that though Descartes shows the distinction between mind and body in several ways yet he was not rigid in this distinction. He believes that there is a close

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22. Quoted from R.M. Ealon's (Ed) : Descartes' Selection,  
P - 372-373.

connection between the two. In his sixth Meditation he says :

"I here show that the mind of man is really distinct from the body, and at the same time that the two are so closely joined together that they form, so to speak, a single thing"<sup>23</sup>.

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23. Ibid : P - 88.

CHAPTER III

Critical Appreciation of  
Descartes' Concept of Mind.

CHAPTER - III

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF

DESCARTES' CONCEPT OF MIND.

Descartes presented the most systematic dualistic theory. Though the problem of mind-body relation was a topic of interest in primitive period also Descartes was the first philosopher who brought to the limelight the problem as a separate and distinct field of study. G.J.W. Patrick writes, "In the seventeenth century this dualistic conception was crystallised into a distinct philosophical system by Descartes"<sup>1</sup>. He further says, "This extreme dualism of Descartes performed the great service of laying a solid foundation for the development of modern physical science and does no violence to the religious prepossessions concerning the soul"<sup>2</sup>.

But inspite of his great contribution, his dualism has to face a lot of criticism from different angles. His conception of mind and body as dependent substances is strongly criticised by Spinoza. According to Spinoza, the phrase 'dependent substances' is a contradiction in terms. To be a substance it cannot and should not depend on anything else and that is why he believed in the existence of only one substance. His concept of substance is that it is a self-dependent entity. He criticised Descartes' conception of three substances. He said that if there be more than one

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1. George Thomas White Patrick : Introduction to Philosophy,  
P - 244.

2. Ibid : P - 245.

substance then there will appear discrepancy and there will be the possibility of limitation of one by another and consequently the character of self-sufficiency of the substance will be taken away. Hence Spinoza believes in the existence of only one substance and says that in nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute. Spinoza's single substance is called by him as God. He further identified God with Nature and so his concepts of 'Substance', 'God' and 'Nature' mean one and the same thing. He used one term or another according to its suitability.

Descartes' concept of body as substance is divisible into many parts though mind is not. But Spinoza criticises this and says that substance is simple and so it is absolutely indivisible. He believes that Substance is infinite so it does not admit of any parts and consequently it cannot be divided.

Descartes ascribes 'consciousness' as the essence of soul-substance. But Spinoza forbids us to ascribe any qualification on the substance. Because if we qualify it by saying that it is something then it implies that it is not another thing and thus it will be limited by this qualification alone.

Spinoza maintains that substance is not attributeless. Attributes, for him, are the constituting essence of the substance. The nature of substance can be understood only by means of its attributes. According to him the infinite substance possesses infinite number of attributes and each of

them infinitely expresses the essence of substance. He says that it is not possible on the part of human intellect to ascribe attributes on substance but only to discover them what is there in the substance. Attributes are the real existence of the substance.

According to Spinoza, although infinite substance possesses infinite number of attributes, it is not possible for the human intellect to know all of them. There are only two attributes, viz., thought and extension, which the human intellect can comprehend. These two attributes are independent of each other and being independent they do not limit each other. Thus while Descartes maintains that mind and body are substances, Spinoza completely disagrees with him and regards mind and body as two attributes of one substance. But he maintains that these two attributes are not distinct entities but are one and the same thing, i.e., two aspects of the same substance and as such interaction between them is not possible. These two attributes being co-existent and two aspects of the same thing, none of them can exist without the other. These two aspects run parallel. In different occasions substance can be apprehended through different attributes. Sometimes substance is known through thought and sometimes through extension. But Spinoza's parallelism can never explain one attribute with the help of other. Thus this theory does not accept materialism which explains mind with the help of matter and it also rejects idealism which explains matter with the help of mind.

Descartes' view that mind and body are causally

connected is refuted by Spinoza. Unlike Descartes he maintains that mind and body exist parallel to each other and corresponding to any mental experience there is bodily activity. In a constant order they always happen together. He says that though mind and body run parallel yet they are not causally dependent on each other. Thus Cunningham says,

"For the parallelist, then, mental experiences are causally connected with mental experiences, and bodily processes are causally connected with bodily processes ; but there is no causal connection between the two systems. These two series are parallel, but causally independent of each other"<sup>3</sup>.

Thus though Spinoza rejects Descartes' theory of causal relation between mind and body yet he says that there is a one-to-one correlation between mind and body. There is a one-to-one correlation between certain physical states of the brain and certain mental events, so that if a certain physical event is repeated corresponding to it certain mental events would be repeated. In this way there is always simultaneous occurrence of physical brain events and its corresponding mental events.

The Cartesian notion of substance is also criticised by other thinkers. Berkeley says that in the physical world we have only experience of qualities like colour, shape, motion, sound etc., and we never have any experience of a material world. On the similar ground Hume denies the

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3. G.W. Cunningham : Problems of Philosophy, P - 286.

existence of the mental realm. According to Hume, we have no direct knowledge of thinking thing but only experiences that are passing and repassing. He says that mind is not a substance but a stream of sensations, thought and feelings. Leibniz also criticised the Cartesian notion of substance. He says that a substance is a centre of activity. But this activity is not the activity of matter or substance. It is activity itself which is the substance and matter is nothing but an appearance of this activity on the surface.

Again, we find that the present day thinkers also discarded the Cartesian notion on substances. In his essay "Does Consciousness Exist" William James boldly criticised the possibility of substantial soul. That consciousness is a thing is denied by him. He says that consciousness is a function. But this function is not the function of any underlying stuff.

There is another group of philosophers known as epiphenomenalist who also criticised the double-way causality of Descartes. Though they are also called the dualistic thinkers yet they reject Descartes' theory of dualism and say that there is only one-way causality, from body to mind. Thus we find that this theory accepts one half of the interactionist theory. They believe that all the mental activities are nothing but the by-product of bodily activity and thus this theory holds that bodily events can cause mental events but not vice-versa.

Descartes' famous proposition 'Cogito ergo sum' is

criticised by A.J. Ayer. Ayer says that the proposition 'I think therefore I exist' is not a question for psychology. It is physically possible to doubt that one is thinking but it somehow involves a logical impossibility. In his view 'I doubt whether I am thinking' is not self-contradictory. Again, that statement 'I am thinking' is not a necessary truth. Because 'I am not thinking' is not self-contradictory but must be a false statement. It is not self-contradictory on the ground that it might have been true. Ayer says,

"I am now thinking but I might easily not have been. And the same applies to the statement that I exist. It would be absurd for me to deny that I existed. If I say that I do not exist, it must be false. But it might not have been false. It is a fact that I exist, but not a necessary fact"<sup>4</sup>.

Ayer says that 'I think' or 'I exist' is not a logical truth. The logical truth is only that 'I exist if I think'. The truth of one's own existence follows from one's doubting it. Hence Ayer says that he cannot doubt the statement that he thinks because his doubting itself entails its truth and in the same logic he cannot doubt his existence. He therefore says,

"There was therefore no need for Descartes to derive 'sum' from 'Cogito' ; for its certainty could be independently established by the same criterion"<sup>5</sup>.

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4. A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge, P-46.

5. Ibid, P-47.

Bernard Williams in his article "The Certainty of the Cogito" asks whether the proposition 'I think, therefore I am' is or is not an inference. In Descartes' philosophy the foundation stone of entire system is 'I exist'. But question arises is there any logical relation between 'I exist' and the indubitable proposition 'I think' ? Williams says that at first sight the 'Cogito' certainly seems to be an inference and seems to him that Descartes speaks of it as such. He cites an example from the letter of 1640 to show that Descartes speaks of 'Cogito' as an inference.

"(Seeing) that.....from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed very evidently and very certainly that I was....."6.

or again ;

".....to infer that one exists from the fact that one doubts is something so simple and so natural of itself that anyone might have written it down"7.

Williams is aware that Descartes seems to deny that 'Cogito' is an inference. To save him M. Gilson writes that it is not Descartes' intention to say that 'Cogito' involves an argument ; but critics and historians have not heard what Descartes says, and maintain that 'Cogito' is nothing but an inference. Williams says that it may mean that Descartes' 'Cogito' is not a syllogistic inference - that is it may appear that it is not a syllogism with a hidden major premise - "Everything that thinks exists". But he says that it is not to be supposed from this that 'Cogito' is not an inference in

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6. Quoted from Willis Doney's(Ed.) Descartes - A Collection of Critical Essays. P-89.

7. Ibid, P-89.

any sense. He believes that 'Cogito', in fact, is a kind of inference, though this inference is not syllogistic in form.

Thomas Hobbes, one of the critics of Descartes finds the weak point of Descartes. He says that it is quite correct that Descartes said 'I am a thing that thinks'. But from the fact that 'he thinks' or have an image, whether sleeping or waking, Descartes inferred that he is exercising thought. Thus, for Hobbes, here Descartes equated the statement 'I think' with the statement 'I am exercising thought'. Again, according to Hobbes there arises doubt when Descartes says that 'this is the mind, the spirit, the understanding, the reason'. Because, for Hobbes, it is not a good reasoning to say that 'I am exercising thought, hence I am thought'; or 'I am using my intellect, hence I am intellect'. It is generally distinguished between a subject from its faculties and activities. Because the entity itself is one thing and its essence is another thing. Thus a thing which thinks is the subject and it is corporeal and its opposite is assumed not proved. But Descartes seems to establish the conclusion on the basis of this inference.

Hence it is Hobbes' opinion that the knowledge of 'I exist' depends upon the knowledge of 'I think' and again, the knowledge of 'I think' is also based upon the fact that thought and matter of thinking cannot be separated from each other and hence, it means that that which thinks is not immaterial but material.

Descartes says that what is clearly and distinctly perceived is true and he takes it as a universal test of

truth. But his clearness and distinctness is derived from the 'Cogito ergo sum' and his 'Cogito ergo sum' is derived from its clearness and distinctness. Thus A.K. Stout in his article "The Basis of Knowledge in Descartes'" rightly says that Descartes' universal test of truth logically involves a circle.

Descartes' assumption of the existence of innate ideas are without any evidence. When he is asked about the origin of these ideas he sometimes adopts the help of interactionism and says that innate ideas are originated in mind as a result of bodily action on the mind. But by stating this he surrenders his view of the self as a substance. Again, sometimes Descartes opines that all ideas are innate, and saying so he gives up the distinction between primary and secondary qualities of things on the one hand and discards the distinction between thought or understanding and the imaginative faculties on the other. There is another question which arises in our mind is that since ideas are mental and so are unextended, how can these be copy or representation of the extended or material object.

There is obviously another difficulty in Descartes' theory of ideas. If ideas, being the copies of the extended or the material objects, could be really known, then there is no reason for denying the fact that self can know the extended object itself. And if the extended objects be directly know then the admission of the ideas is not needed. Moreover, if we cannot know anything but ideas, there is no means of speaking of the existence of external object or to

recognise the idea as the idea of external objects.

Finally, as regards the status of the ideas Descartes says that ideas are modes of the mind, and being so, ideas are mental. But he believes that though ideas are mental yet there is an external relation between mind and ideas. There are mainly two purposes behind such assertion of Descartes. (i) he tries to maintain the position of self as substance and so says that ideas are not the essence of the self and (ii) he tries to restore the view that the relation between self and objects are cognitive one.

Arnauld, a follower of Cartesianism challenges the possibility of innate ideas of Descartes. According to him, the innate ideas cannot be known by any actual and direct evidence. Hence unlike Descartes he holds that instead of innate ideas the self is directly and immediately conscious of external objects. But this view is absolutely inconsistent with dualism although it has its inherent value.

Another follower, Guelinex, also tries to explain the possibility of volitional action and knowledge. He says that the bodily action is caused not by human will but by God. Similarly, he says that ideas are produced in the human mind by God and, hence, these are not produced by the occurrence of brain processes. He further maintains that God constantly interferes in the activities of the self as well as those of the body. But his explanation is not only fanciful and unscientific but it reduces the substantial character of mind and body to a figment one.

Arnauld further criticises Descartes' dictum 'I think,

therefore I exist'. He says that taking the dictum to be correct, the question arises how from this principle can it be demonstrated that mind is separate and distinct from body. He says that it is possible to doubt whether he has a body or whether any body exists at all ; but he has no right to doubt whether he is or he exists, so long as he doubts or thinks. Hence he who doubts and thinks is not a body. But the fact is that one doubts about the existence of his body or deny that body exists ; but from this it does not mean that no body exists. Thus he says, "The problem is : how it follows, from the fact that one is unaware that anything else (except the fact of being a thinking thing) belongs to one's essence, that nothing else really belongs to one's essence"<sup>8</sup>.

Malebranche, another follower of Cartesianism criticises Descartes' conception of ideas and says that it is absurd to think that the ideas of extension, figure etc., are the modes of the self. He says that the attributes like extension cannot be ascribed to mind as its mode because mind itself is unextended. As against Arnauld he admits the possibility of the existence of ideas and holds that extension is the idea of God. But there is an obvious difficulty in his view because extension cannot be the mode of God's mind but man's. The more serious difficulty in his view is that he abolishes the existence of actual extension and holds it as the idea of God. While in Descartes' philosophy actual extension and the idea of extension both

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8. Quoted from R.M. Eaton's (ed.), Descartes' Selection, P-204.

are real.

Furthermore, according to Malebranche, since the external world is the idea of God, the self can have the knowledge of it only when it participates with God. Thus he denies the possibility of self as an independent existent and thereby he denies its substantial character. Malebranche asserts that 'Will' cannot be the essence of the self because as we can conceive body apart from motion so the mind can be conceived of apart from will. He thus denies to call the self, either of its nature - thinking self or volitional self, as substance.

Hence denying the essentiality of the human will, Malebranche faces another difficulty of explaining morality, and in order to overcome this difficulty he says that human freedom is mysterious something. But he does not draw the proper conclusion that self is not a substance although he denies substantiality to the thinking and volitional aspects of the self. He says that the self has all the substantial character, but it is not possible to know its essence. Unlike the essence of the matter, self's essence is unknown and unknowable. Malebranche denies the possibility of rational science of mind, as Descartes holds. He also disagrees with Descartes' conception of self-knowledge and denies the self-luminous character of self.

Malebranche believes the empirical character of the modal aspect of self and says that it is within the sphere of our enquiry, but he denies the knowledge of the essential self. But there is a failure in Malebranche's philosophy.

Once he declared that the essence of the soul is unknown and unknowable, he could not say about the modes of the self and the means of determining its nature. In agreement with Descartes he says that sensation, feeling, emotion etc., are the modes of the self. He further agrees with Descartes on the points that the conscious acts of sensing, feeling etc., and their contents, for example, colour, smell, pleasure, pain etc., are purely subjective and as such these cannot be attributed to God. Like Descartes he holds that the relation holding between the conscious acts of sensing, feeling and their contents are not external but internal. Hence it can be said that though Malebranche denies the possibility of any rational knowledge of the self or model self yet he believes the possibility of empirical knowledge of the model self by means of inner sense. Thus the foundation of empirical psychology is laid down by Malebranche.

Descartes maintains that mind and body are of opposite character and there is nothing common between the two, and at the same time he says that there is interaction between these two substances. But it is very difficult to understand such a thesis. Because it is generally admitted that if one thing is to act upon another thing, the two things must be of the same character, otherwise nothing could pass from one to the other. It is a common fact that only like can act upon like. But as mind and body have nothing in common, how can one act upon the other ? Again, all the processes of the material world are modes of motion. When we say that one thing acts upon another it means that motion is transferred from one

thing to another. But according to Descartes, consciousness is not any motion of particles in space. Thus the problem arises in accounting for how can processes of body, which consists in motion of particles, produce processes in mind ? Again, as thought is not itself motion, how can it produce motion in body ?

Descartes' supplementary argument to prove the separateness of mind and body is very weak. It is true that thought is not possible to be divided into spatial parts. This is also true in the case of weight. Yet no one could deny the fact that weight is a property of bodies. If on the empirical consideration Descartes were offering the claim that some one who have lost some parts of his body but it has no affect in his mind would be totally unconvincing. Is it true that some one has lost his head but he is aware that he has lost nothing in his mind ?

Descartes' theory that mind influences the body and the body influences the mind is also criticised by Gassendi. He says that if mind really touches and influences the body at some point, then mind must be extended and material, at least at that point which touches the body. And if the mind is found to be material at one point then in no way it is different from body in essence. His theory implies that only a physical thing can act on a physical thing. In the similar way he tries to prove that body cannot act on the mind. If the body is to influence the mind it must be spiritual in nature. But this is not found in practical life. It is not possible to bring together a soulless body and a bodyless

soul.

Descartes' theory that animals are automata and they do not possess mind is criticised by Spinoza. According to Spinoza, everything of this universe which existed had two aspects : thought and extension. This theory of Spinoza is known as panpsychism. He says that everything that existed possesses consciousness though not of equal degree. He believes that tree, rock, cloud and even every atom is conscious to some degree. He says that all things do not have a fully developed consciousness like that of man. Thus he believes that a rock's mind is presumably very crude and inferior, but it is conscious to some degree.

Descartes says that mind and body are two different entities because they possess different properties. The essence of mind is consciousness and the essence of body is extension. But this argument is not strong. Having different sorts of attributes do not necessarily make the possessor two different things. Because one and the same thing can have both these properties. The defining characteristic or essence of a husband is that he must be a married man and the essence of a parent is that he/she must have children. But it is a true fact that both the characteristics can be ascribed to one and the same person. Spinoza, the follower of Descartes, was the thinker who first pointed out this gap in Descartes' reasoning. He realised that "although two attributes may be conceived as really distinct we cannot nevertheless thence conclude that they constitute two beings or two different

substances"<sup>9</sup>. Thus Spinoza goes beyond Descartes and holds that both thinking and space-occupying are the characteristics of one and the same thing in the case of human being.

Again, Descartes holds that thinking substance and extended substance are so different in nature that one and the same substance could not have both these characteristics. That is, the same thing cannot be a space-occupier and thinking at the same time. And, perhaps for this reason, he maintained that thinking substance cannot be divided into parts whereas extended substance can be. But this argument is very weak. It is natural that there will be differences between 'thinking' and 'space-occupying' because these are characteristics. And a thing having the characteristic of thinking (non-extended) will be indivisible. Whereas a thing having the characteristic of space-occupying or extended will be divisible. But this talking of divisibility or indivisibility is only with regard to characteristics. But a thinking thing can also be divisible if it also possesses the characteristic of extension at the same time. It cannot be said that a thing possessing one characteristic cannot have the other. The same jewel may be red, valuable and holy at a time though these are different properties of things. Thus Descartes' argument that thinking thing could not be extended and extended thing could not be thinking is not sound.

Again, there is no continuity between the physical

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9. Quoted from S.A. Shaffer's : Philosophy of Mind, P - 36.

state and mental state in Descartes' philosophy. So, from the doctrine of the continuity of evolution a serious criticism comes against the Cartesian dualism. The theory of evolution holds that from the lower levels of animals through the higher animals to the man, there is a continuity in the mental process. But Descartes denies the possibility of mind in animals and says that animals are automata. Hence his theory goes against the continuity of evolution.

Descartes maintained that though mind and body are bearing opposite characters yet there is a causal relation or interaction between them. But it is wholly inconceivable how a causal relation could possibly exist between the two utterly different entities like mind and body. The causal connection between one bodily process and another can be easily understood. Similarly, the causal connection between one mental experience and another can also be understood by us. But it is beyond our powers to comprehend how a bodily process can cause the mental process and how a mental process can cause the bodily process.

"It is much as if we were asked to comprehend how an image of fire could set the coal on the hearth burning. The two terms, body and mind, are so utterly different that they stare vacantly at each other and refuse to link themselves causally. A causal relation between body and mind is inconceivable - such is the first objection to the interaction theory"<sup>10</sup>.

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10. G. Watts Cunningham : Problems of Philosophy, P - 282.

Though Descartes regarded that mind and body are two different metaphysical entities it was not possible for him to deny that it is a psychological fact that there is a relation between mind and body and this compelled him to admit the possibility of interaction between mind and body. His psychological consideration could not satisfy his dualistic followers. The followers of Descartes attempted to dignify metaphysical dualism and that is why they have explained the mind - body relation from the standpoint of theology. Descartes also suggested the problem from this light but he did not develop it. Descartes' interactionism is criticised by the occasionalists who did not accept the act of mind on body or that of body on mind. According to them there must be a higher reality viz., God, who is the sole real cause and He is responsible for the mutual action and reaction of mind and body. They maintained that mind and body could never act and react upon one another as they had dual existence and so there was no causal efficiency between them. But they believed that either mind or body was the instrument or occasion in the hands of God who used that for His thinking or will. Thus in the history of philosophy this theory has been known as Occasionalism. In their view,

"When I will to do a thing, it is not I who do it, but God uses my will as an occasion for His producing a change in the world. Both mind and the world live, move and have their being in God and therefore it is not impossible for God to influence one by the other, making either body or mind the

occasion for His act and thought"<sup>11</sup>.

In the similar way Leibniz by his theory of pre-established harmony attempted to account for mutual influence between mind and body. He maintained that though mind and body were apparently distinct yet one could affect and be affected by the others as God, the monad of monads established beforehand the law of their co-operation or harmony.

Thus if someone ponders closely over Descartes' assumption of sharp distinction between mind and body and at the same time over his theory of interactionism, it will appear that it is purely arbitrary. Descartes could have easily avoided the matter if looked with the eye of an evolutionist who believed that consciousness is a necessary accompaniment of the developed organic structure known as the brain and not alien function of the bodily organization.

In his conception of self as a 'qualified existent' Descartes didnot say that it is at once sensible, rational and moral. This is no doubt a drawback in his philosophy. But to say that self is essentially volitional or moral and not sensible or rational is not the way to overcome this difficulty. Because in the case of knowledge sensible or rational is not less important than morality in the life of man. For many philosophers, in order to solve the antinomy between sense, understanding and morality, believe that the

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11. H.M. Bhattacharyya : The Principles of Philosophy, P-282.

self is primarily, essentially or really moral and only secondarily, inessentially or phenomenally rational or sensible. Hence for them, it is only when the self is thought as a qualified existent, such antinomy between sense, understanding and morality arises and as such it is not real. And its proper solution lies in surrendering such view totally.

Descartes conception of the immortality of the soul begets difficulties. In his initial scheme of ultimate reality Descartes didnot take time as the infinitely atomistic series but here he does so very ignorantly. In his previous writings he says that the divine creature is original and there is no continuous divine creation but here he introduces a new doctrine and admits that there is a continuous divine creation. This contradicts his view that self is independent of God.

There is another difficulty which Descartes has to face. This difficulty arises when Descartes says that it is possible on the part of self to act on body and secondly, self can gather knowledge of the external world. In both these cases, from the metaphysical standpoint his initial view was negative. Bodily action is a physical phenomenon and not metaphysical one and thus cannot be created by the will of God but can be possible only as the result of mechanical causation. So Descartes' admission of self's action on body as an empirical fact is not intelligible with his concept of reality.

In his The Passions of the Soul Descartes said that

the particular location of the soul is pineal gland. He also clearly stated how soul is affected by body and vice-versa. But whatever be the explanation given by him, it remains a mystery how a non-corporeal - unextended entity like soul can be united with a material organ like a gland. Again, it is more mysterious how soul's thoughts can stimulate glandular action and affect the animal spirit through the nerves. Similarly, it is still an impossible fact to understand in whatever manner external bodies affect the sense organs and these impulses pass to the pineal gland or brain through the nerves. It is also impossible to understand how mere matter in motion can produce a thought in an unextended, thinking substance.

"There is a question which has been argued about for some centuries now under the name of 'Interaction' ; this is the question whether minds really do act on the organism which they animate, and whether organisms really do act on the minds which animate them"<sup>12</sup>.

Thus it is seen that the dualism of Descartes has been criticised from different corners though it is a satisfactory theory to common sense. Now-a-days, it reveals that, the tendency of philosophy is to overcome dualism and to reach monism. There are obvious reasons for this. The reality is so great and united that it repudiates all the views which regard it as composed of entirely two different entities. Moreover, it is the tendency of thought to simplify reality.

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12. C.D. Broad : The Mind and its Place in Nature, P - 95.

When thought goes to explain things it reduces the manifold phenomena to simple principles.

But whatever may be said against the dualism of Descartes it still occupies an important place in the history of philosophy. It has been very aptly remarked by R.M. Eaton in this way :

"The Cartesian gives to subsequent thought, not only a general setting for the mechanical view of nature, but something very different - a strain of subjectivism. The axiom "I think, therefore I am", places the self in high relief as the primary datum of philosophy. It sets the fashion of philosophizing outward from the inner world of self-consciousness. Other selves and a common realm of objects are no longer taken for granted but must be proved to exist. A strange new problem enters philosophy - 'is there anything in existence beyond my own mind and its thoughts'<sup>13</sup>?

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13. Quoted from R.M. Eaton's (ed.) : Descartes' Selection,

CHAPTER IV

Gilbert Ryle's Concept of Mind

## CHAPTER - IV

### GILBERT RYLE'S CONCEPT OF MIND

So far we have discussed the concept of mind depicted by Rene Descartes and its critical appreciation. We have seen that Descartes offered a unique theory although it has some drawbacks. In our critical appreciation we tried to discuss very briefly other dualistic thinkers like Spinoza and the epiphenomenalists. In these discussions we have found that Spinoza disagreed with Descartes' interactionism and his three substance theory. As against Descartes Spinoza advocated double aspect theory of one substance and there was, according to him, no interaction between mind and body but parallelism. Similarly, in the epiphenomenalist's theory we have seen that there is only one way causality, from body to mind, though these theories have their own defects.

In this chapter we shall try to discuss Gilbert Ryle's concept of mind. In his famous book The Concept of Mind, G. Ryle very clearly describes what he understands by mind. He says that this book will not increase our knowledge about the mind but it will remove our misunderstanding about the knowledge of the concept of mind that we already acquired. In his own words he says :

"This book offers what may with reservations be described as a theory of the mind. But it does not give new information about minds. We possess already a wealth of information about minds, information which is neither derived from, nor upset by, the arguments of philosophers. The

philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess"<sup>1</sup>.

However, this book has created a stir in the world of philosophy and a new line of discussion about the nature of mind has started. His chief aim is to refute the myth of the "dogma of the ghost in the machine" and to rectify the notions about mind. By 'myth' he does not mean a 'fairy story'. By it he means "the presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another. To explode a myth is accordingly not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them"<sup>2</sup>.

From these sentences it is clear what Ryle tries to do. Thus the arguments which he employs in his book is mainly "to show why certain sorts of operations with the concepts of mental powers and processes are breaches of logical rules"<sup>3</sup>. By this he mainly indicates Descartes' theory of mind. Another intention in his argument is to re-allocate the concept of mind after a thorough investigation. For serving these double purposes he uses the reductio-ad-absurdum arguments.

Thus the main task of Ryle is to prove the falsity of the Cartesian dualistic theory of mind. According to Ryle,

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1. G. Ryle : The Concept of Mind, P - 9.

2. Ibid : P - 10.

3. Ibid : P - 10.

there is an obvious mistake in Cartesian philosophy which he calls "a category mistake"<sup>4</sup>. In his view the entire philosophy of the dualistic concept of mind is based on such mistake. In the past philosophers had conceded the dualistic theory of mind as a satisfactory theory and thus, they wrongly allocated the mind to a category to which it actually does not belong. Hence it is Ryle's efforts to prove the falsity of such allocation and to reallocate the facts of mental life.

But before going to discuss the category mistake we shall try to discuss Descartes' dualistic concept of mind in the eyes of G. Ryle. This discussion is titled by Ryle as "**Descartes' Myth**"<sup>5</sup>. Ryle calls this theory as "**Official Theory**"<sup>6</sup>. He writes, " There is a doctrine about the nature and place of mind which is so prevalent among theorists and even among laymen that it deserves to be described as the official theory"<sup>7</sup>. Ryle admits that this official theory occupies an important place in the minds of philosophers, psychologists and religious teachers. This theory has its own difficulties but they never think of it to be major difficulties and believe that these minor difficulties can be overcome without modification of the basic concepts of the theory. But Ryle maintains that the central principles of the

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4. Ibid : P - 17.

5. Ibid : P - 13.

6. Ibid : P - 13.

7. Ibid : P - 13.

dualistic theory are unsound and full of conflicts.

According to Ryle, Descartes believe that every human being possesses a body and a mind. But it is doubtful whether idiots or infants have minds. In further writings he believes with emphasis that some people say every human being without exception has both a body and a mind. In his living life he is a complex of body and mind but his mind may continue to exist and function after the destruction of his body.

Human bodies, though it is subject to destruction, occupies an important place while the man is alive. It governs all other bodies in space because it is superior than other bodies. It occupies space and is subject to mechanical laws. As it is externally perceivable so its states and processes can be observed by other persons. So, like the lives of animals, reptiles, trees, crystals & planets man's bodily life is publicly observable and is subject to public affairs. But minds are not so publicly observable as it does not occupy space and not subject to mechanical laws. One cannot know what is going on in other's minds. One's mental states and processes are wholly and directly perceivable by one who possesses them. In his own language,

"A person therefore lives through two collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to his body, the other consisting of what happens in and to his mind. The first is public, the second private. The events in the first history are events in the physical world, those in the second are events in the mental world"<sup>8</sup>.

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8. Ibid : P - 13.

Whether a person is aware of the happenings of his own mind, either fully or in parts, is a disputed matter. This official theory maintains that one's own mental occurrences can be cognised by him alone, though not whole of it but at least some of it, directly without any doubt. In introspection one can be authentically aware of the present occurring of one's mind. A person may be wholly ignorant about the occurrences of the physical world but he is fully aware of, at least in parts, occurrences in his mind.

Thus Ryle observes that Descartes bifurcates the person's life into two halves, one is external and the other is internal. All the physical things including human bodies belong to external world while the states and processes of one's own mind are internal. But Ryle maintains that this antithesis of outer and inner world is nothing but metaphor. Because if the spatial existence of mind is denied then it is not possible to speak of the mind as being spatially "inside" something.

But though Ryle interpreted the official theory as metaphor, he is very much conscious about the theoretical difficulties of the influence of mind and body to each other. It is true that there is some kind of influence of mind on body and vice-versa. But it remains mysterious how two opposite existents can influence each other. This kind of knowledge cannot be described by one's autobiography of inner life.

"They can be inspected neither by introspection nor by laboratory experiment. They are theoretical shuttlecocks

which are forever being bandied from the physiologist back to the psychologist and from the psychologist back to the physiologist"<sup>9</sup>.

In addition to this metaphorical bifurcation of person's two lives there is another philosophical assumption. The official theory believes that there are two kinds of existences or states, one is physical existence and another is mental existence. Thus whatever exists must have either physical or mental status. It is like the faces of the coin which must be either heads or tails, or it is like the living creatures which must be either male or female. Thus what has physical existence occupies space and time and what has mental existence is found not in space but only in time. The physical existence consists of matter whereas the mental existence consists of consciousness.

Thus we find that in the 'official theory' there is a polar opposition between mind and matter. This opposition can be explained in this way : Space is the common field where material objects are situated. Thus being spatially related, there is a causal connection between one material object and another which is not possible in the case of mind. "..... what happens to one body in one part of space is mechanically connected with what happens to other bodies in other parts of space. But mental happenings occur in insulated fields, known as 'minds', and there is, apart may be from telepathy, no direct causal connection between what happens in one mind and

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9. Ibid : P - 14.

what happens in another"<sup>10</sup>. It is only publicly observable physical body through which one person's mind is distinguished from another. The mind exists in our inner life which is its place and each of us possesses this ghostly thing. One person can see, hear and touch other person's body, but it is totally impossible for any one to see or hear the workings of another's mind.

This official theory maintains that the working processes of one's own mind is best known by the person himself. There is no doubt or illusion in the process of knowing one's own mind because mental states and processes are normally conscious states and processes. So it is absurd to say that one is unaware of what is going on in his mind because the inner life of persons is a stream of consciousness.

This official theory maintains that in addition to ordinary perception, a person may possess a special kind of perception in different occasions, which is called by the theory as inner perception or introspection. Through this kind of perception a person can look into his own mind and can see what is going on in his own mind. A person not only can see or scrutinize an extended thing through his eyes or hear something and discriminate the notes of a bell through his ears but he can see the inner life of his not through any bodily sense organ but through reflection and introspection. And it is commonly supposed that this kind of self-

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10. Ibid : P - 15.

observation is free from illusion, confusion or doubt. The reports of one's own mind regarding the occurring of his mental processes is more reliable than that of the report based on sense experience. Thus sense perception can give us mistaken or confused knowledge but introspection and consciousness cannot do so. Hence the best way to know the working processes of one's own mind is introspection. This theory further maintains that there is no direct way to know the inner life of others. That is, it is not possible to know directly the events that are happening in another's mind as we can know our own. It is from the behaviour of others that we can make analogy with our own, and then we infer the occurrences of another's mind. The direct awareness of the workings of mind is possible by the person himself. But Ryle maintains that the official theory fails to prove the existence of other minds than one's own. Because, according to him, analogical argument is very weak. Ryle says that even if the official theory believes that the existence of other minds are like one's own, it cannot rightly claim to discover that the other minds possess individual characteristics. Thus Ryle says, "Absolute solitude is on this showing the ineluctable destiny of the soul. Only our bodies can meet"<sup>11</sup>.

This is how Ryle analyses the official theory which he calls 'Descartes' Myth'. This analysis is often called by Ryle as "the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine"<sup>12</sup>. Ryle's

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11. Ibid : P - 16.

12. Ibid : P - 17.

main aim is to prove the above theory as totally false. He says that the entire theory is false in principle. It is not the fact that this theory suffers from different kinds of particular mistakes combined together but from one big mistake which is named by Ryle as a 'Category Mistake'. This is a special kind of mistake according to him. This mistake arises when the mental life is assumed to belong to one category when it really belongs to another category. The philosopher's myth is therefore called by Ryle as 'dogma'. Thus Ryle's aim is to prove the falsity of the myth. But he anticipates that his effort of doing so may be taken by the critics as denying the mental life of human beings. He says that his aim is just to rectify the mental-conduct concepts which is falsely described by the official theory.

The concept of 'category mistake' is enumerated by Ryle in a very funny way by giving a series of examples. A foreigner when for the first time visits Oxford or Cambridge to see the university and he is shown all the colleges, libraries, playgrounds, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. But after seeing all these he assumes that he has not seen the university. He admits that he has seen all these shown but asks whereabouts of the university. He forgets that "the university is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organised. When they are seen and when their co-ordination is understood, the university has been seen"<sup>13</sup>. It is his innocent but mistaken assumption that

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13. Ibid : P - 18.

like the "Chirst Church, the Bodleian Library, the Ashmolean Museum ..... the university stood for an extra member of the class of which these other units are members"<sup>14</sup>. He mistakenly believes that the University is like other institution and thus allocates it to the category to which other institutions belong.

Ryle tries to make the point of category mistake more clear by citing examples of the march past of a division witnessing by a child', 'a foreigner witnessing his first game of cricket', and 'the student of political science asking questions ' about the relation between the Church of England, the Home Office and the British Constitution'. It is not necessary to discuss all the examples in details. Ryle says that the "category mistakes are those made by people who are perfectly competent to apply concepts, at least in the situations with which they are familiar, but are still liable in their abstract thinking to allocate those concepts to logical types to which they donot belong"<sup>15</sup>.

Ryle says that his "destructive purpose" is to show that the source of double life theory is a family of category mistakes. The official theory tries to prove that the ghost of a person is somehow embodied in a machine. Ryle says that a person's thinking, feeling and purposive doing is impossible to describe in the idioms of physics, chemistry and physiology alone and so they must be described in a

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14. Ibid : P - 18.

15. Ibid : P - 19.

different way. He says that like the human body, the human mind is complex organised unit though these two differ in stuff and structure. He says, "As the human body, like any other parcel of matter, is a field of causes and effects, so the mind must be another field of causes and effects, though not (Heaven be praised) mechanical causes and effects"<sup>16</sup>.

This category mistake arises because according to the official theory mind and body are different sorts of things. Mental and bodily processes are different sorts of causes and effects. It is like the foreigner's visiting the university who thinks the university to be an extra building like what he has seen. This theory maintains that within the common frame-work of the categories of 'thing', 'stuff', 'process', 'state', 'change', 'attribute', 'cause' and 'effect' there is differences between physical states and mental states. According to Ryle, this theory is a para-mechanical hypothesis.

Ryle says that this official theory suffers from a major theoretical difficulty from the very beginning in explaining the problem of influence of mind upon bodies and vice-versa. Now questions arise "How can a mental process, such as, willing, cause spatial movements like the movements of the tongue ? How can a physical change in the optic nerve have among its effects a mind's perception of a flash of light"<sup>17</sup>? Thus these complex questions compel Descartes to mould his theory of mind logically. Ryle calls this mould as

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16. Ibid : P - 20.

17. Ibid : P - 21.

self-same mould. In order to describe the nature of mind Descartes says that it is opposite to body. Ryle writes, "The workings of minds had to be described by the mere negatives of the specific descriptions given to bodies ; they are not in space, they are not motions, they are not modifications of matter, they are not accessible to public observation. Minds are not bits of clockwork, they are just bits of not-clockwork"<sup>18</sup>.

Ryle denies the fact that minds are merely ghosts put into the machines of bodies rather he believes that minds are themselves ghost-machines. He admits to treat the human body as engine but at the same time warns us to treat it as an ordinary engine. Because some of the workings of this body-engine is governed by another engine which resides within this body-engine and this is a very special sort of engine. This interior governor-engine is not able to be seen or heard. Again, it has neither shape nor weight. This very particular engine cannot be broken into parts and it is not possible to know the laws which it obeys. Thus how the bodily engine is governed by it is totally unknown.

Again, the official theory believes that minds and bodies belong to the same category. It is the assumption of many theorists that minds are obviously governed by the rigid non-mechanical laws because bodies are governed by rigid mechanical laws. They further believe that like the physical world the mental world must be a deterministic system. But

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18. Ibid : P - 21.

Ryle says that if both minds and bodies are governed by the deterministic laws, then the modification of mind and body is not possible. Similarly, the concepts of responsibility, choice, merit and demerit are inapplicable to the minds because there is no chance for its modification. Ryle says that we can construct a conjunctive proposition between two terms belonging to the same category but it is absurd to conjoin two terms belonging to different categories. He cites examples by saying that "a purchaser may say that he bought a left-hand glove and a right-hand glove, but not that he bought a left-hand glove, a right-hand glove and a pair of gloves. 'She came home in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair' is a well known joke based on the absurdity of conjoining terms of different types"<sup>19</sup>.

Ryle further says that like the conjunctive propositions, the disjunctive propositions are equally absurd. "She came home either in a flood of tears or else in a sedan-chair"<sup>20</sup>. In Ryle's view the official theory makes such type of conjunctions. This theory believes the existence of both minds and bodies and admits the occurrence of both physical and mental processes. But Ryle says that such type of conjunctions are absurd. But by this he does not deny the occurrences of mental processes. He says that the two phrases, viz., 'there occurs mental process' and 'there occurs physical process' donot mean the same sort of thing

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19. Ibid : P - 23.

20. Ibid : P - 23.

and thus it is meaningless either to conjoin or to disjoin these two phrases. Hence Ryle writes,

"It is perfectly proper to say, in one logical tone of voice, that there exist~~s~~ minds, and to say, in another logical tone of voice, that there exist~~s~~ bodies. But these expressions do not indicate two different species of existence, for 'existence' is not a generic word like 'coloured' or 'sexed'. They indicate two different senses of 'exist', somewhat as 'rising' has different sense in 'the tide is rising', 'hopes are rising', and 'the average age of death is rising'"<sup>21</sup>.

In analysing the mental conduct concept Ryle's main intention is to prove that the official theory wrongly refers to something as private entity when there is nothing of such type. Thus he proves that the Cartesian dualism is a futile doctrine and thus this theory is eliminated by him from the field of the philosophy of mind. The supposition of existence of two colateral worlds, of inner and outer, of private and public, of physical and psychical is strongly criticised by him and thus he rectifies the logical geography about the functions of the mind. The official theory maintains that the mind performs many activities but the primary activity of mind is to theorize. This theorizing activity is performed by most people silently because it is a private and internal operation of the mind. This theory, which is called by Ryle as the 'intellectual legend', further maintains that an action is said to be intelligent if and only if the agent of this action is thinking of action when he is performing the

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21. Ibid : P - 24.

action. He should think in such a manner that if he were not thinking while he is doing an act, he cannot do the act well.

"To do something thinking what one is doing is, according to this legend, always to do two things ; namely, to consider certain appropriate propositions, or prescriptions, and to put into practice what these propositions or prescriptions enjoin. It is to do a bit of theory and then to do a bit of practice"<sup>22</sup>.

But Ryle argues that this double operation of considering and executing a performance as intelligent is false. He cites many actions, such as, 'skillful', 'cunning' and 'humorous' operations where such rules of official theory is not formulated. These mental operations are not occult occasions or ghostly happenings, they are rather dispositions or complex of dispositions. Thus in order to explain mental operations there is no need to admit any occult entity. Again, he asks that an agent possesses thousands of maxims within him but what makes him to decide the one, among the thousand maxims, appropriate for particular act rather than others ? Thus Ryle says that this theory is absurd and it involves the fallacy of 'regress ad infinitum'. He writes, "If, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle"<sup>23</sup>. Thus, he says, "When I do

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22. Ibid : P - 30.

23. Ibid : P - 31.

something intelligently, i.e., thinking what I am doing, I am doing one thing and not two. My performance has a special procedure or manner, not special antecedents"<sup>24</sup>.

Professor Ryle reduces mind to a set of dispositions, behaviour and acts of habits. He says that to have the knowledge of something is the product of practice. It is through practice that we become able to apply rules in different occasions. When we say that some one is skilled in doing something we understand that he acquired this skill after continuous practices. But Ryle never says that this skill is acquired only through habits. He makes a distinction between habitual actions and intelligent capacities. When a boy intends to learn the game of chess, he should have to learn the rules of the game. And receiving a continuous theoretical instruction he becomes aware of the rules and can apply them when he plays the game. This kind of knowledge is acquired through habit. But there are other actions or performances which are not habitual but are reflective of intelligent capacities. In this connection he cites the example of a mountaineer who climbs over the ice-covered rock not with blind habit but with some degree of intelligences. Thus Ryle says that habit can be built up by drill or practice but intelligent is acquired through training. In his own language, "It is of the essence of merely habitual practices that one performance is a replica of its predecessors. It is of the essence of intelligent practices

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24. Ibid : P - 32.

that one performance is modified by its predecessors"<sup>25</sup>.

Describing the place of mind some theorists say that 'the mind is in its own place'. But Ryle refutes such conception and says that the place of mind cannot be described metaphorically. There are some places, such as, the platform, the judge's bench, the lorry driver's seat etc., where people perform their actions either intelligently or stupidly. But mind cannot be placed in a particular place. He says, "Mind is not the name of another person, working or frolicking behind an impenetrable screen ; it is not the name of another place where work is done or games are played ; and it is not the name of another tool with which work is done, or another appliance with which games are played"<sup>26</sup>.

The official theory believes that mind has three parts, viz., thinking, feeling and willing and the function of one part cannot be reduced to another. It believes volition or will as a special act of mind. It is through this volition that mind actualises its ideas or plans. Thus this theory believes the existence of two separate entities like mental and physical and there is no identity in their occurrences. This theory asserts mental act of volition as cause and bodily act as effects of such volition. Ryle rejects this theory on the ground that "it is just an inevitable extension of the myth of the ghost in the machine"<sup>27</sup>. He further shows

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25. Ibid : P - 42.

26. Ibid : P - 50.

27. Ibid : P - 62.

that this volitional theory leads to the fallacy of 'regress ad infinitum'.

Ryle also argues against the official theory of emotion which describes it as a sort of individual private experience and as such it is internal. It says that emotions are the turbulences in the stream of consciousness. They cannot be publicly observed. Ryle says that emotion is used to designate three or four different kinds of things. These are called by him 'inclinations', 'moods', 'agetations' and 'feelings'. Among these the first three are not acts or states. They are rather inclination. Thus as they are acts so they cannot be publicly or privately observed. But he believes that feelings are occurrences of different forms. He maintains that 'vanity' and 'indolence' are dispositional properties because these words are used to signify more or less lasting trails of a person's character. He tries to make understand the matter by citing examples " 'Whenever situations of certain sorts have arisen, he has always or usually tried to make himself prominent' or 'whenever he was faced by an option between doing something difficult and not doing it, he shirked doing the difficult thing'"<sup>28</sup>.

Ryle explains all the mental phenomena in terms of processes and dispositions. He says that such dispositional words as 'know', 'believe', 'aspire', 'clever' and 'humorous'

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28. Ibid : P - 83.

"signify abilities, tendencies or pronenesses to do, not things of one unique kind but things of lots of different kinds"<sup>29</sup>.

The official theory believes that other than the physical world there exists a world of mind. This theory also believes that as we can ascertain the happenings of the events in space through sense perception, so the happenings of the mind is also ascertained through perception but of different and refined sort. For this purpose the bodily organs are not required. Only through introspection such kind of knowledge is possible. In the case of knowing the happenings of the external world, there is a possibility of mistakes but in knowing one's own mind there is little chance of error. Thus apprehensions of operations of one's own mind is superior than that of the apprehension of external world. "A mind has a two-fold Privileged Access to its own doings, which makes its self-knowledge superior in quality, as well as prior in genesis, to its grasp of other things. I may doubt the evidence of my senses but not the deliverances of consciousness or introspection"<sup>30</sup>. This theory is strongly accepted by philosophers, psychologists and even by layman. This theory also believes that a man can have the knowledge of his own mental states and processes directly through consciousness or introspection which is not possible in knowing other minds directly but by inferences from his

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29. Ibid : P - 114.

30. Ibid : P - 148.

bodily activities. But this description about self-knowledge through introspection or consciousness is titled by Ryle as 'myths', 'consciousness' and 'introspection' used by the official theories are called by Ryle as 'logical muddles'. But this does not mean that Ryle negates the possibility of self-knowledge. He admits it but in a different way. He believes that the method of self-knowledge and that of the knowledge of the other minds are same.

The terms 'conscious' and 'consciousness' have different meanings and are used in different ways. But since Descartes, philosophers have used the word 'consciousness' to denote the operations of behaviour and conduct. Descartes equates 'consciousness' with the light of mechanical world. Such type of notion is found in the Protestant's thinking. The Protestant believed that man possessed God-given light of conscience with the help of which they can distinguish sins from virtues and for this act the aid of confessors and scholars is not needed. Long after John Locke also maintained the possibility of inner perception which he called 'reflection'. But this theory of consciousness is called by Ryle as 'the myth of consciousness'.

Ryle points out that there are certain states of mind which cannot be known by introspection. When we try to scrutinize these states in a cool mind, we fail to remain in these states and when we are in these states we fail to remain cool. The states of panic or fury, a convulsion, the enjoyment of a joke are among these states of mind. He says that these states of mind can be examined only in



retrospection. He further says that if some states of mind can be known by retrospection then all the states of mind can be known by the same method. For Ryle, self-knowledge has no Privileged Access, but on the other hand we can have the knowledge of ourselves as well as of others only through the conduct of everyday activities - sociable and unsociable behaviours.

Ryle says that by a 'person's mind' he does not mean the existence of any incidents of special status, but of different ways in which the different incidents of his life are ordered. He says, "Assertions about a person's mind are therefore assertions of special sorts-about that person"<sup>31</sup>. Thus he says that it is not proper to ask the question about the relation between a person and his mind or the relations between a person's body and his mind. It is as much improper as asking about the relation between the House of Commons and the British Constitution. Ryle says that the activities of knowing or choosing is not done by some one's mind but by the person himself though these actions can be classified as mental facts. Similarly, he says that instead of saying that my eyes seeing this or my nose smelling that we say I see this or I smell that. But in these activities my eyes and nose have contributions because these are organs of sense. But he denies to treat 'mind' as an organ of sense like the eyes or the nose. Ryle says that it is logically improper to make conjunctions, disjunctions and cause-effect relation about mind and body.

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31. Ibid : P - 161.

Regarding the concept of 'I', Ryle says that it is the 'systematic' elusive and mystifying concept. Because the more we try to know what 'I' stands for the less we succeed. There are questions from different quarters as to what constitutes self and what is meant by the words 'I' and 'you' ? They feel that though the words 'I' and 'you' are not public surnames, they must "be the names of some extra individuals hidden away behind or inside the persons who are known abroad by their ordinary surnames and Christian names"<sup>32</sup>. But Ryle, with certainty, says that 'I' and 'you' are not either regular or irregular proper names or even names at all. As the word 'to-day' have no meaning except for a day only, so the word 'I' and 'you' do not have any meaning apart from references to the utterer and the person addressed. He says that the pronouns like 'he' and 'they' or sometimes 'we' are indirect index words while the pronouns 'I' and 'you' are direct index words to some extent. He says, the word 'I' is not an extra name for an extra being, it indicates, when I say or write it, the same individual who can also be addressed by the proper name 'Gilbert Ryle'. 'I' is not an alias for 'Gilbert Ryle'; it indicates the person whom 'Gilbert Ryle' names, when Gilbert Ryle uses 'I'"<sup>33</sup>.

So far we have discussed what mind is not according to Ryle. But before closing this chapter we should have to say what mind is according to him, And it will be helpful to

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32. Ibid : P - 179.

33. Ibid : P - 180.

present this in his own words. He 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 person's 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"<sup>34</sup>.

Moreover, he says that mind is composed of sensations, feelings and images which are the stuff of mind. Thus from Ryle's analysis of mind we find that there is a close presemblance between his view and B. Russell and D. Hume's view of mind.

Ryle says that to talk about 'mind' or 'consciousness' as some counterpart of human behaviour or as some world behind or beyond the activities is a mistake. The meaningful referent of the concept of 'mind' is a description of how people behave. Again, he explodes this myth by the method of ordinary language analysis. "Intelligence" is a mental world. We do not significantly use - 'intelligent' as an adjective of stones that are fully material and governed by mechanical laws. Now, recognising that words like 'intelligence' which express mental concepts do not name entities that obey mechanical laws, philosophers have been led to conclude, Ryle suggests, that they must name entities which obey non-mechanical, spiritual laws. In fact, however, it is a category mistake to suppose that they name some entities. The functions of the word 'intelligence' is to describe a

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34. Ibid : P - 190.

specific kind of human behaviour and the functions of the word 'stupidity' is to describe another specific kind of human behaviour verifiable by sense perception. These words expressing mental concepts do not name occult, private entities that are spiritual.

Hence, from the above analysis we find that in explaining the nature of mind Ryle accepts the fundamental notions of the behaviouristic psychology and thus his theory is called the theory of Logical Behaviourism. He explains mind in terms of behaviour, skills, tendencies, propensities, dispositions, inclinations. He even says that the higher operations of mind are the higher order abilities which are developed by proper education in society and by the learning method of trial and error. He declines to talk of mind in a para-mechanical language because he does not believe that there is something occult, mysterious or other-worldly where mind exists.

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CHAPTER V

Critical Appreciation of  
Gilbert Ryle's Concept of Mind

## CHAPTER - V

### Critical Appreciation of Gilbert Ryle

In the foregoing chapter we have given the viewpoints of Gilbert Ryle on Descartes' theory and an exposition of Ryle's own theory on the nature of mind. From these analyses we have seen that Descartes is a dualist out and out as he believes in the existence of two separate and independent substances - mind and body - and at the same time he showed the interaction between them. But above all he emphasised the priority of mind than that of body. It is from his writings we see that he proved the existence of self first by the method of doubt and subsequently he proved the existence of the external world from the veracity of God. Thus Descartes has allowed maximum role of mind. But when we study Ryle's concept of mind we find that he has given less importance and minimum functions to mind.

Ryle strongly criticised Descartes' concept of mind and body as two substances and showed that this theory suffers from the category mistake. He has nicely depicted the category mistake committed by Descartes by citing different examples. He called Descartes' dualism as the 'dogma of the ghost in the machine'.

It is true that Ryle's criticisms of cartesian dualism is not absolutely new and unique. Long before him, this theory was also criticised and refuted by many eminent philosophers like Malebranche, Arnauld, Berkeley, Hegel, William James, B. Russell and others. Almost all the critics of this theory

realised that Descartes was mostly influenced by the religion of his time and thus his dualism is an outcome of the theological influence of that period. But though different thinkers are united in refuting Cartesian dualism, their approach to the problem are different. Ryle's critique of cartesianism is also unique. In this chapter we shall try to reflect how much Ryle's criticisms to the cartesian dualism is consistent and how much significant his own theory about the nature of mind is.

In his dualism Descartes believes that the two independent substances - mind and body - interact upon each other, Sometimes bodies influence mind and vice-versa. But Ryle refuted this version of Descartes on the ground that he says nothing about the way in which mind and body influence each other. He says, "But the actual transactions between the episodes of the private history and those of the public history remains mysterious, since by definition they can belong to neither series"<sup>1</sup>. This point of Ryle seems to be correct. Because if there really be interaction between mind and body, it is necessary to describe the form through which this influence takes place or the means of communication between the two should be inspected. How does the body receive the message of the mind ? and, how does the mind receive instruction of the body ? Answers to these questions are not possible. Thus H. D. Lewis, a cartesian supporter, also agrees with Ryle on this point and says, "If there are these

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1. G. Ryle : The Concept of Mind, P - 14.

'transactions' between mind and body, it should be possible to say something about them and indicate how we came to know them. The conclusion we are expected then to draw is that the influence of distinct mental processes on physical ones, and vice-versa, is a wholly fictitious one"<sup>2</sup>.

But inspite of his support to Ryle's view, Lewis does not spare him from criticising. He says that if some one is persistent in criticising the theory and seeks to know how mind and body influence each other then there will arise another question, how these transactions in turn can have an impact on the mind and the body ? And if the answer were a satisfactory one then still a further question would arise about the transactions which made the impact possible. And in this way there will be a series of questions and ultimately it will lead to the infinitum. Thus Lewis says, "The 'transactions' remain mysterious because they are non-existent, we say nothing about them and are baffled if we try, because there are none"<sup>3</sup>.

Though it is impossible to discern the specific location from which the interaction takes place, Descartes made his effort to do so and he says that the point of contact between the mind and the body is the 'pineal gland' which is situated between the two main parts of the brain. But this suggestion of Descartes is not satisfactory and has been criticised from time to time till today.

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2. H. D. Lewis : The Elusive Mind, P - 26.

3. Ibid : P - 26.

Lewis says that in order to explain interaction between mind and body if some one assumes that this connection is a priori then the problem will become more complicated. And Descartes perhaps assumed in this way. It is Descartes' opinion that God can make any relation if he likes. But his introduction of God in this context is not satisfactory. But in order to save Descartes from this obvious difficulty Lewis says, "There is not in any case, any need for us to follow Descartes at all points in order to accept the substance of his interactionist theory. If Ryle were just finding with an incidental feature of Descartes' general position, that would be one thing. But the impression he conveys, and seems plainly to want to convey, is that the dualist cartesian position as such is open to fatal objection because it essentially requires the postulation of the alleged mysterious transactions. We can cope quite well with the point by just noting that there need be no such transactions"<sup>4</sup>.

Gilbert Ryle starts his book The Concept of Mind with "Descartes' Myth" and calls this an official doctrine and claims that this doctrine "hails chiefly from Descartes"<sup>5</sup>. But this claim of Ryle is doubted by H.D. Lewis and says that in the history of philosophy we find a very similar position among different philosophers. The views of Plato, Augustine and oriental thought are very similar with that of Descartes and his followers. Again, the views of the thinkers of recent centuries, like Berkeley and Kant, even Leibniz to some

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4. Ibid : P - 27.

5. G. Ryle : The Concept of Mind, P - 13.

extent, are common with that of Descartes though they have not borrowed their theory from him but innovated something independently. Thus it can be said that this official theory is not peculiar in modern times alone but also found in ancient times. Hence Ryle's claim seems to be unjustified to Lewis. But we should say that Lewis' claim of unjustifiability of Ryle's theory is itself unjustified. Because in his initial lines of the book The Concept of Mind Ryle starts by saying "There is a doctrine about the nature and place of minds which is so prevalent among theorists and even among laymen that it deserves to be described as the official theory"<sup>6</sup>. He further writes "It would not be true to say that the official theory derives solely from Descartes' theories or even from a more widespread anxiety about the implications of seventeenth century mechanics ..... Descartes was reformulating already prevalent theological doctrine of the soul in the new syntax of Galileo"<sup>7</sup>. Thus from the above it is clear that Ryle not only victimised Descartes as the profounder of official theory but he refers to other philosophers and even laymen though he says that this theory chiefly hails from Descartes.

In his article "Descartes' Myth" Ryle writes that Descartes holds, "With the doubtful exceptions of idiots and infants in arms every human being has both a body and a mind"<sup>8</sup>. If Descartes or any dualist supporter distinguishes an idiot

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6. Ibid : P - 13.

7. Ibid : P - 24.

8. Ibid : P - 13.

or an infant and an intellectual person on the basis of not-having and having mind respectively then it is a great injustice. Because like the most sophisticated person or reflective person the idiot or the infant also possesses mind, may be of limited capacities, distinct from his bodily movements. It cannot be said directly that one person has while another does not have mind. Because every living person possesses intelligence to some extent. Intelligence of idiots or infants may not be so high as that of the sophisticated person but they certainly possess some degree of intelligence.

G. Ryle maintains that Descartes opinion about the nature of mind and body is that bodies are publicly observable as we can perceive other physical objects. But the operations of minds are wholly private because these are not found in space and are beyond the control of mechanical laws.

It is held by the Cartesian theory that someones mind can have the knowledge of the happenings of his own mind directly. And the knowledge of one's own states and processes are superior than that of the knowledge of the external world. If someone tries to acquire the knowledge of the happenings of the external world, he must have a mistake-proof apprehension. Thus he says that the self-knowledge attained through this non-sensuous inner perception and constant awareness is supposed to be free from error.

But Ryle strongly criticises this official theory and holds that this theory of consciousness and introspection are logical muddles. He admits the fact that the knowledge of otherselves is possible but not in the same way as the

official theory holds. He rather holds that this knowledge is attained by observing their overt behaviour. By this overt behaviour he does not mean only the present behaviour of the person observed but all the behaviours which happend in the past, is happening at present and will happen in his entire life.

Now, there may arise a possible question that how from the observation of overt behaviour one can jump to the conclusion that there exists other minds Ryle replies,

"The ascertainment of a person's mental capacities and propensities is an inductive process, an induction to law-like propositions from observed actions and reactions. Having ascertained these long-term qualities, we explain a particular action or reaction by applying the result of such an induction to the new specimen, ....."<sup>9</sup>.

According to Descartes, nobody can observe or understand the happenings of another's mind. It is only the person himself who can understand the workings of his own mind. According to Ryle, Descartes believes in this way ;

"One limitation has always been conceded to the mind's power of finding mental states and operations, namely that while I can have direct knowledge of my own states and operations, I cannot have it of yours. I am conscious of all my own feelings, volitions, emotions, and thinkings, and I introspectively scrutinize some of them. But I cannot introspectively observe, or be conscious of, the working of

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9. Ibid : P - 164.

your mind"<sup>10</sup>.

Thus from these writings of Ryle it appears that there is an obvious lapse of Cartesianism into Solipsism. And any theory cannot be established until and unless it is free from the touch of solipsism. We cannot accept the theory that we cannot know the other minds. Because in our everyday life we do communicate with others and have fellowship with others. Our lives would become impossible if we had no knowledge about other persons - his thoughts, feeling etc.

But when we study Ryle's own theory about the knowledge of other minds we find that he is absolutely free from the touch of solipsism. He clearly writes that there is a parity between self-knowledge and that of the knowledge of other minds. Thus he writes, "The sorts of things that I can find out about myself are the same as the sorts of things that I can find out about other people, and the methods of finding them out are much the same". Ryle further added that in our practical life in some respects to have the knowledge of other minds is easier than having self-knowledge though in other respects it is very difficult. But, according to him, in principle the method of both the knowledge, i.e., the self-knowledge and the knowledge of other minds, are same. He writes, "But in principle, as distinct from practice, John doe's ways of finding out about John Doe are the same as John Doe's ways of finding out the about Richard Roe. To drop the hope of Privileged Access is also to drop the fear of epistemological isolationism ; we

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10. Ibid : PP - 148 - 149.

we lose the bitters with the sweets of solipsism"<sup>11</sup>.

In order to explain the method of knowing other minds he says, "I learn that a certain pupil of mine is lazy, ambitious, and witty by following his work, noticing his excuses, listening to his conversation, and comparing his performances with those of others"<sup>12</sup>. He continues, "To discover how conceited or patriotic you are, I must still observe your conduct, remarks, demeanour, and tones of voice, but I cannot subject you to examination-tests or experiments which you recognise as such"<sup>13</sup>.

Thus from the above analysis we can say that Ryle's own theory about the knowledge of other minds is somewhat satisfactory and acceptable than that of Descartes though it has its own defects. This theory at least admits the possibility of knowing other minds.

Ryle says about Descartes that he was very much adhered to the mechanistic notions and thus described the nature of the mind as just the opposite to the body. He says that the description which can be applied to bodies cannot be applied to the mind. Bodies are found in space, they are subject to motion and modification of matter. They are observable by other persons. But mind cannot be described in such way. It is something occult and thus are beyond public observation.

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11. Ibid : PP - 149 - 150.

12. Ibid : P - 162.

13. Ibid : P - 164.

H.D. Lewis agrees with Descartes on this point and appreciated that this is a nice explanation given by Ryle about the nature of mind and body on behalf of Descartes. But Lewis asks Ryle by saying that if he is not satisfied with this description then what more description he expects from Descartes. If some one is a dualist he will have to describe that mind and body as radically different from each other, as presented above. If there were really two ultimate things like mind and body, then there is no alternative way to describe their relation without pointing out their contrast. Thus what the theory means and what Descartes says are the same. So there is no scope to accuse Descartes to be over influenced by the mechanical laws.

G. Ryle strongly criticises the concept of mind as occult entity. He maintains that when he characterises mental predicates to people he does not mean that there are untestable inferences of occult ghost which cannot be seen but are something publicly observable. It is true that we see the performances of persons or hear their words, we go beyond our vision or hearing but it does not imply that there is occult causes but the powers and propensities of actions. From this it is clear that Ryle does not believe the existence of any private entity as Descartes believes.

Ryle's statement that "everyone already knew how to apply mental-conduct concept"<sup>14</sup> is not clearly understandable at first glance but can be understood from his later statement.

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14. Ibid : P - 22.

By this he means some one being intelligent or prudent or virtuous or stupid or coward etc. Thus he says that people are called intelligent or are said to have intelligence if they solve puzzles more quickly than others. He maintains that Descartes fails to give a straight-forward criteria for distinguishing intelligent from non-intelligent. And thus Ryle writes ;

"He realised that the problem was not one of mechanics and assumed that it must therefore be one of some counterpart to mechanics"<sup>15</sup>.

It is true that Ryle's theory of mind have many defects as he could not explain higher processes of mind like creative thinking, integral vision of things and artistic imagination because he confined the sphere of mind to abilities and behaviour. The integration of human personality is very much essential for evolving higher processes of mind. Creativity and integration give meaning and significance in human life. But Ryle fails to include these in his theory of mind. Furthermore, Ryle explained his theory of mind only from the standpoint of behaviouristic and empirical consideration. In his theory he does not consider 'dream' which plays an important role in manifesting greater insight of human mind.

In his book The Concept of Mind Ryle maintains that "a person's mind is not to talk of a repository ..... it is to talk of person's abilities, liabilities and inclinations to do and undergo certain sorts of things....."<sup>16</sup>.

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15. Ibid : P - 23.

16. Ibid : P - 190.

But a question arises how all these abilities are organised into a meaningful one. A meaningful experience should not be only the sum-total of abilities or sense experiences rather it is higher modes of experience. If it is said by Ryle that the bits of experiences are themselves essentially conscious then he is wrong. Because it is found through analysis that experiences themselves are not conscious but they are the objects of consciousness. Consciousness is the very foundation of experiences and all other forms of experiences are nothing but the lower experiences of consciousness.

Thus considering all these observations of Ryle's theory of mind critics have pointed out that he is not successful in analysing the mind as there are certain prejudices in his theory and it does not give full justice to all realms of mental life. The causes of mistake of his theory is clearly depicted by J.P. Sukla in his book The Nature of Mind. He writes, "Ryle's mistake lies in the fact that in his analysis he stopped at dispositions and did not go ahead. He is so much prejudiced against the dualistic philosophy of mind and influenced by behaviourism that in his zeal he forgets many truths of experiences and makes hasty generalisations"<sup>17</sup>. But inspite of this criticism Sukla admits the importance of Ryle's theory. Appreciating Ryle's theory he says "Ryle's concept of mind has considerable importance because it sought to classify many issues, but, on its positive side it failed to formulate a satisfactory theory of mind in the light of the

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17. J.P. Sukla : The Nature of Mind, P - 115.

whole experience"<sup>18</sup>.

In conclusion we should say in favour of G. Ryle that his theory occupies an important place in the history of philosophy of mind despite the fact that it was severely criticised by his opponents. His concept of mind has introduced a new line of thinking in the world of philosophy. This theory tries to remove the difficulties faced by the dualist thinkers, particularly of Descartes although he is not fully successful in his positive contribution. All the subsequent philosophers in modern period, like P.F. Strawson, A.J. Ayer, L. Wittgenstein have rejected the dualistic concept of mind and are inclined to Ryle's theory. Moreover, Ryle's analysis of the self-knowledge and the knowledge of other minds are also well discussed in modern period.

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18. Ibid : P - 116.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

## CHAPTER - VI

### Conclusion

From the study of the different opinions on the nature of mind it is found that the problem is not peculiar to modern philosophy but it was also thought over by the primitive man, though their thinking was not systematic and solutions were not scientific. But when we enter into the ancient Greek philosophy we find a systematic analysis of the problem in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle among others. Plato sharply distinguishes mind and body into two separate and distinct realms. He further believes that mind or soul is immortal and it resides in the eternal world after the destruction of body. In his view the embodied existence of soul is its imprisonment and disembodied existence is the true essence of the soul. Such type of analysis is also found in the thought of a section of early Greek thinkers like the Pythagoreans and others.

Aristotle, also has his own theory of soul. He equates soul and body with 'form' and 'matter' respectively and says that with the destruction of the body the soul perishes. But in Aristotle's philosophy we observe that he distinguishes between mind and soul and places the mind in a higher status. In his view though the soul is destroyed with the destruction of the body, the mind remains immortal. This admission of immortality of the rational soul or mind may be seen as a Platonic bias in Aristotle. But in a thorough observation one finds that the analyses of the nature and status of mind in

the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle are oppose to each other.

This Platonic germ we find in the philosophy of Descartes in a more systematic way. Like Plato, Descartes sharply distinguishes between mind and body as two opposite entities although subsequently he allowed an interaction between these two. He also believes that individual souls are created and recreated by God in an infinite series of moments. But the new thing which Descartes contributes in his philosophy is the location of self. No other thinkers before or after Descartes discerns the accurate location of the soul from where it guides the body. He says that the actual location of the soul is the pineal gland. Though his view is not free from criticism yet it is true that it raises a new question among the subsequent thinkers, that is, whether the soul can at all be localised.

Thus in the history of philosophy we find that there are mainly two traditions in the problem of mind, one is Platonic and another is Aristotelian. It is true to some extent that all the subsequent thinkers either belong to the Platonic group or to the Aristotelian.

When we come to the philosophy of Gilbert Ryle we find that he vigorously criticises the dualistic theory of mind, particularly of Descartes and shows that this theory commits the fallacy of 'category mistake'. Thus after proving Cartesian dualism as futile, Ryle establishes his own view on the nature of mind. He clearly maintains that by mind he means the abilities of persons, his liabilities and inclinations to do. It is the way in which a person behaves

that is the sign of mind according to him. This view of Ryle is found to be similar to that of behaviourism.

We proposed in our introductory chapter that we should discuss the views of other modern thinkers like those of B. Russell, L. Wittgenstein, P.F. Strawson and A.J. Ayer. Question may arise as to why did we select these four philosophers only from among a host of others? It is because the teachings of these philosophers have been playing a dominant role in the modern philosophical world, particularly in the field of mind. Moreover, their views have some affinities with the view of G. Ryle. Hence, we shall try here to compare the views of these philosophers with that of Ryle and to point out their similarities.

In his famous book The Analysis of Mind B. Russell rejects the view that consciousness is the essence of mind. He further rejects the idealist view that mind is the reality and matter is the creation of the imagination of our mind, as well as the materialist view that matter is the reality and mind is the property of matter.

In his course of analysis he considers the different ways of being conscious. He says that perception, memory, belief are the examples of states of consciousness. Besides these he says that desire, pleasure and pain are also ordinarily called mental. Thus among the different ways of being conscious there is one thing common - the reference to the object. In all these mental activities there is an objective reference which is distinct from consciousness.

Russell agrees with William James in holding the view that consciousness is not an entity. Like Holt, Russell states that sensations are 'neutral' as they abide by both physical law and psychological law. But those entities which are governed by either of the laws mentioned above are not neutral but they are called either purely material or purely mental.

It has been recognised since Kant that mental phenomena can be divided into three groups, viz., knowledge, desire and feeling. But Russell disagrees with these thinkers on this particular point. According to him, "Sensations (including images) supply all the 'stuff' of the mind, and that everything else can be analysed into groups of sensations related in various ways, or characteristics of sensations or of groups of sensations"<sup>1</sup>. Thus from the above version it appears that Russell's theory of mind is purely sensationalistic and empirical. This point of Russell is very much similar with that of G. Ryle. The common supposition that there is a distinction between mind and matter is denied by Russell. He says, "the stuff of which physical objects are composed is brought into relation with the stuff of which part, at least, of our mental life is composed"<sup>2</sup>.

From the above declaration of Russell it is clear that he was a critic of dualism although in his early period he himself was a dualist. In discarding dualistic position he says that dualism of mind and matter is metaphysically invalid. In the world of our experience we find certain sorts of dualism which are not ultimately real.

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1. B. Russell : The Analysis of Mind, P - 69.

2. Ibid : P - 108.

Thus rejecting dualistic theory Russell says that it is sensation which is the common element of mental and physical world. Russell does not contradict with the people who believe that sensation alone builds up our mental life. But he only adds images with sensation as a component of mental life. He writes, "all psychic phenomena are built up out of sensations and images alone"<sup>3</sup>.

There is a conception that mind is a mere 'logical construction'. But such a conception is rejected by Russell. He maintains that mind is constructed logically out of our habits. He writes, "out of habits the peculiarities of what we call 'mind' can be constructed ; a mind is a track of sets of compresent events in a region of space-time where there is matter which is peculiarly liable to form habits"<sup>4</sup>.

In rejecting the dualism Russell says that mind and body are not two distinct entities. Similarly he says that as the subject matter of physics and psychology is essentially the same so they are not substantially different from each other. He writes, "Physics and psychology are not distinguished by their material. Mind and matter alike are logical construction ; the particulars out of which they are constructed, or from which they are inferred have various relations, some of which are studied by physics, other by psychology. Broadly speaking physics group particulars by their active places, psychology by their passive places"<sup>5</sup>.

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3. Ibid : P - 279.

4. Quoted from Prof. J.H. Muirhead's (ed.) : Contemporary British Philosophy, Vol. I. P-382.

5. B. Russell : The Analysis of Mind, P - 307.

If Russell's philosophy is thoroughly observed it is found that his philosophy is very much influenced by G.E. Moore. As he himself admits, "On fundamental questions of philosophy, my position, in all its chief features, is derived from Mr. G.E. Moore"<sup>6</sup>.

In analysing the concept of mind we find that Russell's conception is very much similar to that of Hume. That he was influenced by Hume is clear from his own writings which appear as mere paraphrases of Hume's writings. It is almost like Hume, he writes, "When we try to look into ourselves, we always seem to come upon some particular thought or feeling and not upon the 'I' which has the thought or feelings"<sup>7</sup>. Similarly in An Outline of Philosophy Russell defines "'mind' as the group of mental events which form part of the history of a certain living body"<sup>8</sup>.

Hence after considering the above discussion it appears that Russell's intention is to dematerialise the mind and to abolish the dualism of mind and body. Thus from this and other writings of Russell it is clear that there is much similarity between his own views and that of G. Ryle.

L. Wittgenstein, a linguistic philosopher also opposes the dualism of Descartes. In direct opposition to Descartes he maintains that mind is a continuation of language and the world. He states that mind is a part of the world. It is the media of thinking and acting in the world and language. Thus

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6. B. Russell : Principles of Mathematics, preface, P - XVIII.

7. B. Russell : Problems of Philosophy, P - 78.

8. B. Russell : An Outline of Philosophy, PP - 297 - 298.

R.C. Pradhan says, "Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico Philosophicus is the turning point of the new revolution that attempted to make a clean break with the Cartesian way of thinking that accorded primacy to thought and the thinking self"<sup>9</sup>. Wittgenstein reduces the Cartesian 'cogito' or self into a psychological self and says that as it is a part of the world, this self cannot represent the world in any way either from within the world or from outside it. He says that instead of representing the world by the Cartesian cogito it is necessary to represent the Cartesian self itself as it is a part of the world. He further criticises the Cartesian conception of self as substance. He says that to be a substance it must be unchangeable and simple something. But Cartesian self being a psychological one cannot be called substance. Thus he says that the question of mind-body relation or distinction does not arise because both are parts of the world. Hence from this rejection of the relation or distinction between mind and body of Wittgenstein, though on different grounds, reminds us G. Ryle's rejection of dualism. Moreover, like G. Ryle, Wittgenstein strongly rejects the Cartesian thesis that mind belongs to inner world and its activities are thinking. Cartesian philosophers say that as thought resides in the inner world of mind so it exists prior to an independent of language. They believe that the mind is subjective and invisible as distinct from body. Such view is rejected by Wittgenstein. He says that such an idea arises

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9. Quoted from Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Special Number, Vol. XXIII, NO. 1-2, Jan-Apr, 1996, P - 126.

because of the misunderstanding of language. According to Wittgenstein, there is nothing in the mind which is called 'mental states' and so it cannot be described in the way a room can be. Hence, for him, mind stands not for mental entities but for mental activities.

It is like G. Ryle that Wittgenstein admits the possibility of knowing other person's pain as one can know his own. Thus regarding the privacy of sensation he says, "In one way this is wrong, and in another non-sense. If we are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it ?), then other people very often know when I am in pain"<sup>10</sup>. He further says "I can be as certain of some else's sensation as of any fact"<sup>11</sup>.

Hence Wittgenstein firmly says that the way to know other person being in pain is his behaviour and his words, and the circumstances. As he says "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria"<sup>12</sup>.

From the above analysis we find that Wittgenstein nowhere in his theory admits mind as a private entity as Cartesian philosophers believe. Other points of his philosophy are also dissimilar with that of Cartesian. But his philosophy is more familiar with that of G. Ryle.

When we come down to recent philosophy we find that P.F. Strawson have presented a new theory which is called by him as person theory. In his person theory he strongly rejects

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10. L. Wittgenstein : Philosophical Investigation (Trns. by G.E.M. Anscombe) Sec - 246.

11. Ibid : P - 224.

12. Ibid : Sec - 580.

the Cartesian dualisms. Unlike Descartes he maintains that both mental and physical are attributes of person. He says that all the physical attributes like height, weight etc., and all the mental attributes like thinking, feeling and willing are neither the attributes of two different subjects jointly nor any one of them. These are attributes of person.

Descartes version that the immaterial, unextended, non-physical mind is the subject of consciousness is vehemently criticised by Strawson. He maintains that to admit the concept of a subject of consciousness is to admit the existence of other subjects of consciousness than himself. And the admission of the existence of other subjects of consciousness paves the way for distinguishing or identifying among themselves. But if it is true that, as Descartes holds, the subject of consciousness is immaterial and non-physical then the question of distinguishing one subject from another does not arise. And without distinguishing one subject from another, the conception of the existence of other subject is unjust, and consequently it is not possible to have the concept of a subject of consciousness. In this way Strawson proves the meaninglessness of the Cartesian concept of immaterial mind as the subject of consciousness.

Cartesian view that an immaterial ego is the subject of consciousness is treated by Strawson as the view of solipsist. A solipsist maintains that his experiences are owned by his ego only and apart from himself there is no other one to use the word 'I'. But Strawson maintains that if some one uses the word 'I' meaningfully, he must at the same time

accept the fact that there is a community of the users of the word 'I' which is called by him other persons. This point of Strawson to treat the Cartesian position as solipsist is very much similar to that of G. Ryle. He maintains that the expression 'in pain' is applied in the case of me and other persons in equal sense because there is no separate meaning of this expression in dictionaries but only in the minds of philosophers. But unlike Ryle, Strawson maintains that the method of verification of 'in pain' is different in the case of me and others. But inspite of unlikeness, there are some likeness in views between Strawson and Ryle. Both of them believed in the existence of other minds and as such both of them are free from an obvious touch of solipsism. Again, they were not only satisfied in merely affirming the existence of other minds but believe in the possibility of knowing other minds.

Strawson maintains that there is a subject of consciousness and this subject of consciousness is neither the concept of immaterial ego nor the concept of body. It is rather the concept of an entity which possesses both physical and mental attributes. This underlying entity is called by Strawson as 'person'. Such a concept of person is unanalysable in terms of a union of mind and body. Because the existence of mind and body pre-supposes the existence of entity which have these properties and such an entity is person. Thus he rejects the primary existence of mind as a subject of pure consciousness but says that it can exist secondarily. In his own words ; "The concept of pure individual consciousness -

the pure ego - is a concept that cannot exist; or at least, cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of person can be explained or analysed. It can exist only, if at all, as a secondary, non-primitive concept, which itself is to be explained, analysed, in terms of the concept of a person"<sup>13</sup>.

From this analysis it is clear that Strawson's view about mind is very much similar with G. Ryle's. In both of Ryle and Strawson we find the minimum functions and secondary importance of mind while Descartes emphasises the maximum importance on mind.

According to Strawson, there are mainly two kinds of predicates, viz., P-predicates and M-predicates. Of these P-predicates are ascribable only to ourselves but M-predicates are ascribable both to ourselves as well as material objects. The states of consciousness, thoughts, sensations, feelings are some of the examples of P-predicates and the physical characteristics, such as, height, colour, weight etc., are examples of M-predicates. He says that person is an entity to which both P-predicates and M-predicates are equally ascribable. In answering an obvious question that how states of consciousness are ascribed in the case of oneself Strawson says that we primarily speak of others. But this in turn begets another question how can it be ascribed to others? In reply to this question Strawson writes, "One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe

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13. P.F. Strawson : Individuals, PP - 102 - 103.

them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them only as subject of experience, possessors of states of consciousness"<sup>14</sup>.

Strawson says that when some one tries to ascribe P-predicates to others he does so on the basis of observation of behaviour of the person. But he maintains that from the observation of person's behaviour we should not think that the person possesses P-predicates. Behaviour criteria are not the sign of one's possessing P-predicates. It is rather, he says that, to ascribe P-predicates, the behaviour criteria are logically adequate. But Strawson maintains that when we ascribe P-predicates to ourselves there is no need of any observation of bodily behaviour. Thus here Strawson's theory differs from physicalist theories which hold that we refer physical condition or behaviour even when we ascribe P-predicates to ourselves.

A.J. Ayer appreciates Strawson's analysis of the concept of person and hopes that this theory would be able to remove some of the difficulties faced by the traditional thinkers on the mind-body problem. But Ayer criticises Strawson's rejection of both physicalism and analogical argument. He says, "Not that the evidence entails the conclusion, for in that case we should not stop short of physicalism; if a statement about a person's experiences is to follow logically from a statement about physical events, it

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14. Ibid : P - 100.

also must be construed as a statement about physical events"<sup>15</sup>.

Unlike Strawson, Ayer maintains that one has experiences of himself and from this he ascribes experiences to other and this is done through analogical argument. Thus he says that one can have the knowledge of himself as having both a body and a mind, and from this he can believe that others also possess both a mind and a body. But such a view of Ayer is denied by Strawson. Strawson maintains that it is circular to think that one believes the existence of other person on the basis of the premise that one knows himself to be a person. But Ayer denies such an argument. He says that the concept of person is a general concept and so there is no limitation of its application to the number of individuals. Thus he writes, "But if I can know that I am a conscious subject without knowing that there are any others, there need be no circularity in an argument which proceeds from the premise that I have experiences and arrives at the conclusion that others have them also"<sup>16</sup>.

Ayer rejects the notion that one person differs from another due to having different souls or spiritual substances. He says, "The reason why I have not considered it is that I donot find it intelligible. I donot see by what criterion it could possibly be decided whether any such spiritual substances existed"<sup>17</sup>.

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15. A.J. Ayer : The Concept of a Person and other Essays, P-95.

16. Ibid : P - 105.

17. A.J. Ayer : The Problems of Knowledge, P - 184.

According to Ayer, the self is not a substance though it is believed by many people. Because substantial self cannot be verified by observation. To overcome the difficulty of knowing it in observation some one may suggest that self as a substance is revealed in self-consciousness. But Ayer holds that such a view is not correct. The reason he gives behind such refutation is that "For all that is involved in self-consciousness is the ability of a self to remember to some of its earlier states. And to say that a self A is able to remember some of its earlier states is to say merely that some of the sense experiences which constitute A contain memory images which correspond to sense contents which have previously occurred in the sense history of A"<sup>18</sup>.

Thus Ayer holds that self as a substance is totally unverifiable because it does not reveal in self-consciousness even and consequently nowhere at all. From this it appears that Ayer's rejection of self as a substance has similarity with that of G. Ryle though their grounds of rejection are different.

All these discussion throughout this small work lead us to conclude that dualism, although has an undeniable importance in the history of the philosophy of mind, cannot be accepted as a sound theory. Reaction against dualism and the tendency to go for monism which is very common among the post-Cartesian philosophers may be pointed out as a strong support to our view. However the monism we speak of here is not of the same kind as that of Berkeley or the materialist. Here we are

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18. A.J. Ayer : Language Truth and Logic, P - 166.

concerned with Rylean behaviourism or a Strawsonian personism. Mind, to be sure, cannot be allowed a status equal to that of body. However mind has its own place as different category in Rylean language or it has a secondary importance in Strawsonian language. The traditional problem of mind-body relation, therefore, needs to be solved not in the way in which Descartes attempted, but in a way in which our modern philosophers Ryle, Strawson and Ayer have suggested.

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