



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

Student Name: Daisy	
Module title:	Student number:
For completion by marker:	
Comments: In this essay there are quite a few inaccuracies in terms of how the material is presented, revealing conceptual confusions and/or misunderstandings. A closer reading of Descartes <u>Meditations</u> 2 and 6, & of Ryle's work could enable you to overcome these inaccuracies. There is an attempt at assessing Ryle's theory, but this leads to a contradiction in the presentation, as well as a lack of clarity (partly because the detail of Ryle's arguments is missing from your discussion). That said, you do show some knowledge & understanding of the topic, & there is an attempt at utilising secondary sources. Close attention to grammar & structure is needed throughout.	
Marker's signature: [Signature]	Date: 6/11/20
Provisional mark: 48	
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

Daisy Gr = grammar.

What do you mean here?

Can behaviourism explain the relation between body and mind?

than...

I chose this question for my essay as I find it to be a more challenging question. This is because the only way to determine whether philosophical behaviourism can explain the relation between body and mind is entirely subjective. However, before I begin I need to first explain what behaviourists argue and what the problem of the body and mind is. It is also important to add that I am only going to be discussing philosophical behaviourists and not psychological, therefore meaning as I use the term "behaviourists" I have already clarified that it only relates to the philosophical stand points. The main thoughts that come from behaviourists is that the mind and mental terms cannot be described or compared to physical things, when we think of mental things as physical we make what is called a category mistake which I will look at in further detail in this essay when I address the thought of philosopher Gilbert Ryle. The problem of the body and mind is quite self-explanatory, it aims to address the debate on the relation of the consciousness mind and the physical brain and body¹.

Gr.

'inner'

Gilbert Ryle is the first behaviourist that I looked at. Ryle used the concept of the 'ghost in the machine' in his work in 1949 to criticise philosopher René Descartes. Descartes believed that the concept of the mind is not a physical entity and exists along-side the body but is separate from the physical brain. "The idiom *ghost in the machine* is a metaphor, which is a comparison that is made figuratively"². In the same time period as Descartes other philosophers started exploring the idea of materialism however, Descartes himself was a dualist which is one of the biggest things that Ryle criticises in his work. Ryle and behaviourism is a materialist or physicalist approach. It is the idea that our thoughts or mentality is shown through our physical behaviour and therefore the mind and the body are one, my interpretation of Ryle's theory is that our natural responses to stimuli is our mind and we display this through our behaviour which is an output; making our mind have a physical response. Although I do agree with Ryle to a certain extent that we do have physical mannerisms which we display in response to our thoughts, it is not always shown to other people. This is because of two main points. The first is emotions; for the majority of the time it is easy to see on a person's face or how they are behaving whether they are sad, happy, angry or any other emotion however this is not always the case. Sometimes people may have a mental illness such as depression but do not show any symptoms, they may be making a conscious decision to behave differently as not to worry anyone; meaning their mind and thoughts are not then shown through their physical. However, Ryle does also have a correspondence for this as he does claim that "mental properties are ascribed not according to the possession of some private processes that cannot be observed. Rather, to talk of someone having a certain mental state is to talk about how she is disposed to behave in certain circumstances"³. This means that although they are not showing in the behaviour how they truly feel, their mind has made the decision to display something which people can determine as the way in which they are expected to behave. My second and more prominent issue with Ryle's behaviourism is that in order for it to be accurate we must have a value consensus within society which dictates how everyone must respond to stimuli. I, myself,

Incorrect

Are you addressing criticisms here? clearer signposting needed

¹ https://www.closetotruth.com/series/what-the-mind-body-problem?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIppl - uja7AIVjevtCh3t6glrEAAYASAAEgJAHfD_BwE (last accessed 29/10/2020)

² <https://grammarist.com/idiom/ghost-in-the-machine/> (last accessed 28/10/2020)

³ Cottingham, 2008, p.251 (last accessed 30/10/2020)

Ryle

full ref. needed

Ryle's point about dispositions needed here

hold very subjective views on the way in which people think and work which is why I find Ryle's theory difficult to get my head around. Everyone is individual and so the way in which they behave is also individual; for example someone who is highly autistic will not have the same reaction as someone who is not. This is a very basic example yet outlines the issues I found easily. If two people in the same scenario with the same stimuli how can we determine through their behaviour what they are experiencing? I believe that Ryle's theory simply only allows us to understand that people behave; it does not tell us why or how they have had these responses and so therefore is quite a weak theory. Which is why I believe that behaviourism cannot explain the relation between the body and the mind, or at least not in the way that it is intended to; at best the further you look into Ryle's work the more it lends itself to the thought of dualist philosophers. Depending of course on whether you favour a more subjective stance or not, much like I do.

Gr.

what do you mean here in relation to the Q?

Before I begin to explain the Category mistake of René Descartes I need to explain what the metaphor is used to describe. The Ghost and the machine is used to show the idea of the mind (the ghost) running the body (the machine) as a separate entity. Ryle refers to the ghost and the machine as a category mistake; he explains what he means by the category mistake with the use of an analogy of someone visiting Oxford university. This analogy goes as follows; a man visits the university campus and is shown around, he sees the library, the sports facilities and much more however he still asks "But where is the university". His category mistake is that he is viewing the university as a separate entity to the buildings and facilities which make it up. This is what Ryle says Descartes does but with the body and the mind, Descartes category mistake was that he is viewing the mind as a separate entity to the body. One clear issue with Ryle dichotomising the mind and the body is that it denies the existence of a person's qualia. Very similar to the issue I proposed previously as Ryle's theory demises any kind of individuality that we have. It also raises the issue of how his theory diminishes the importance of our emotions; the way we feel is a very personal and deep thing. The idea that a feeling of happiness can be lowered to a simple smile or laugh or a feeling of grief can be lowered to whether you cry at a funeral or not is demeaning to people. There are more to emotions than what we see in a physical manner, and Ryle's thoughts on behaviourism is completely blind side to this. Again, I feel as though the metaphor of the ghost and the machine holds more gratification of truth and holds a stronger formula to explaining the relationship between the mind and the body than behaviourism does, as behaviourism lends itself too much to diminishing a personal sense of the self which makes it harder to find a bond between the mind and the body.

incorrect.

One way in which we can respond to the issues that I have raised in favour of behaviourism is that it does not specifically deny the existence of a personal qualia. "Ryle's behaviourism associates a kind of state of mind with an abstract function which maps kinds of situation on to kinds of behaviour. Such a function constitutes a way of behaving. Saying that someone is actually in that state of mind is to say that they are disposed to behave according to that function"⁴. He does not make a claim that if a person does not behave in a way then they do not feel said emotion; we also know that a person can feel emotion in different parts of their body. When we face a heart break, we may not show it with crying but we may show it by

⁴ <https://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-philosophie-2003-1-page-37.htm#:~:text=Ryle's%20behaviourism%20associates%20a%20kind,behave%20according%20to%20that%20function> (last accessed 30/10/2020)

full ref. needed.

who is the author here?

holding onto our chest. This is because when we feel an emotion it can and does effect our physical body, our feelings of happiness are caused by chemicals balances of serotonin and dopamine, our feelings of fear or jealousy can be felt in our stomach and feelings of grief or sadness can be felt in our chest. Although we may not show our emotions through our behaviour, Gilbert Ryle does not deny that this means that we do not feel them but also science does not deny that without us displaying a physical response does not mean that there has not been a physical response. Therefore showing that there is a possibility that behaviourism could help to explain the relation between the mind and the body.

In conclusion, I feel as though behaviourism does not help to explain the relationship between the mind and the body. This is because although it does not deny the existence of a personal qualia, it also is not in favour of this. My opinion of behaviourism is that it does not contain enough information to respond to the objection if this theory. I also feel that the theory is not inclusive for all people, as I mentioned people with mental health issues or even learning difficulties may not respond in the same way as others. I feel as though the need for a value consensus on responses to stimuli is also too necessary for behaviourism to have a strong foundation and unfortunately this is something that is not possible. We also have to look at people who are not capable of certain emotions; such a diagnosed sociopaths. There are many studies which suggest sociopaths being able to "trick" law enforcements while under questioning as their thought processes are able to be stopped and can display no physical evidence which can suggest that they committed a crime. With all of the loop holes to behaviourism I do not believe that it can explain the relationship between the mind and the body.

Ryle - seeks to
dissolve not solve
mind-body problem.



Discuss above in
relation to
essay Q.

References

1. Closertotruth.com. 2020. *What Is The Mind-Body Problem? | Closer To Truth*. [online] Available at: <https://www.closertotruth.com/series/what-the-mind-body-problem?gclid=EAlaQobChMIppL_-uja7AlVjevtCh3t6glrEAAYASAAEgJAhfD_BwE> [Accessed 29 October 2020].
2. Plato.stanford.edu. 2020. *Category Mistakes (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)*. [online] Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/category-mistakes/>> [Accessed 29 October 2020].
3. Ryle, G., 2009. *The Concept Of Mind*. London: Routledge. [Accessed 28 October 2020].
4. Plato.stanford.edu. 2020. *Category Mistakes (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)*. [online] Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/category-mistakes/>> [Accessed 29 October 2020].
5. Cottingham's introduction to 'The Myth of the 'Ghost in the Machine': Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*' (extracts from Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*), p.251, in Cottingham (ed.), *Western Philosophy: an anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). [last accessed 30/10/2020].
6. 2020. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-philosophie-2003-1-page-37.htm#:~:text=Ryle's%20behaviourism%20associates%20a%20kind,behave%20according%20to%20that%20function.>> [Accessed 30 October 2020].
7. *Western Philosophy: an anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). [Last accessed 30/10/2020].