



see comment
in body of essay, too.

Undergraduate assignment feedback form (to be completed by marker)

Student Name: <u>Liam Shaw</u>	
Module title:	Student number: <u>1301634</u>
For completion by marker:	
Comments: Overall, this essay displays knowledge & understanding of the topic, & presents Ryle's theory in a fairly - albeit oversimplified - manner. You use your own examples, & relate to an assessment of behaviourism. There is a discussion of Ryle's views regarding what he calls 'a category mistake'; but there is some lack of understanding with regards to what Ryle is attempting to do in relation to the mind-body problem. There are lapses in referencing throughout. Remember to reference properly. And draw on secondary sources, too.*	
Marker's signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>4/11/20</u>
Provisional mark: <u>56</u>	
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

* Glad to see that you've taken on board my comments on your first draft. This draft is much improved.

Can Behaviourism Explain the Relation Between Body and Mind?

By David Shaw (1301634)

Introduction

Ref ✓ In this essay I am going to be exploring whether Philosophical Behaviourism can explain the relation between body and mind, Behaviourism being a theory in the Philosophy of Mind, along with Functionalism and Identity Theory, which are two of the other leading theories in the philosophy of mind today. Behaviourists say that mental and physical terms should never be compared with each other as they claim that there is no 'actual' mind, whether it be immaterial or physical, or for Ryle, there is no distinction between 'outer' and 'inner', as Ryle claims, that there really is no secret, hidden 'inner' world, or mind, and that all the ways in which we speak about our 'mind' are usually just making use of verbs which describe our behaviour. For example, if I am in pain and I wince, a Philosophical Behaviourist, such as Ryle, would say that our behaviour, the wincing, is all there really is, and everything else is just talk of 'mental' states and the 'mind' but all we are really talking about is our behaviour, and that there really is no, hidden from the public, 'inner', occult workings of any mind. So they propose that all mental states should be defined in terms of observable behaviour. And that 'The belief that there is a polar opposition between Mind and Matter is the belief that they are terms of the same logical type.'¹ Behaviourists, including Ryle, claim that the way we speak about 'minds' today has come from an age-old mistake, which everyone seems to think came *only* from Descartes' philosophy of Dualism, which, very briefly, says there must be an immaterial mind as well as a physical body and that our physical body is governed by mechanical laws, whilst our mind is governed by 'another set' of mechanical laws. It was thought that there must be 'another set' of mechanical laws for the mind as Descartes, and many other philosophers, and laymen, thought that the physical realm would have different laws in nature to the immaterial realm. But Behaviourists think it would be much more productive, and accurate, to speak as if there is no such thing as an immaterial, hidden mind and any talk of the mind, or mental states, for example, I am in pain, can be explained away by the organism's behaviour. And to think there is some secret, hidden, immaterial

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¹ Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*. Middlesex: Penguin Books LTD. P.23.

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mind would be to make a 'category mistake' as Ryle puts it. As Ryle claims there is no mind, only behaviour and how we categorise that behaviour, and there are not two separate categories, one for when we are speaking of the mind, and one for when we are speaking about the body, as they are one and the same thing, and the mind is not over and above the body as many people seem to assume as 'Mental events and properties are not separate events over and above bodily events and properties, any more than a university is a separate item existing alongside the libraries, laboratories, administration, students, and so on.'² They are not two separate existing realms, or categories, 'and to say that someone is in a mental state is, for Ryle, to say how he is disposed to behave and react in certain circumstances, not a statement about private, inaccessible occurrences going on in the subjective theatre of the mind.'³

Behaviourists claim that we can study the behaviour of any person and be more fruitful, and accurate, with our theories of mind than when assuming there is a hidden mind and trying to study someone from that angle, which would include a lot of mental concepts which you may never be able to empirically prove of a person, whereas, behaviour will speak for itself. As stated above, Ryle claims that there are no hidden, occult workings of a mind and when we think we are speaking of a mind, what we are really doing is using verbs to describe that person's behaviour. For example, if I say 'i am in pain' and it makes me wince, the Behaviourist will say that 'i am' is just you speaking of your body, not mind, and your wincing is all there really is in existence that can be said about that individual. So one can come to the same conclusion about the person, that he is in pain, from only observing their behaviour, but I disagree with Behaviourism here and think that it is shallow and one-dimensional as it does not take into account things like people's moods and feelings, or their qualia. Behaviourism will only take into account what can be measured and observed.

wrong word

Known problems with Behaviourism include inner Qualia, which is what it is like to have an experience of, for example, pain, or hunger. As it seems to any human that there is a lot more to being in, or feeling, pain, or any other feelings like sadness, than what the Behaviourist thinks, which is, that it is just a way people behave in certain circumstances or it is just a pre-disposition of

Do these exist?

² Cottingham J. (2008) *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*, 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing P. 251.

³ Ibid. p. 251

How might Ryle respond?

Consider - Dispositions to behave

okay, but develop the argument

that person to behave that way when in a certain environment or around certain 'external' stimuli. So, if we take away people's mental states and then say, as the Behaviourists do, that one person's sadness, for example, is just a pattern of behaviour and no more, then we take away the experiential quality from that person, the qualia. But what if that person was in the same room all day with no changing stimuli, and throughout the day she went from feeling quite content and relaxed and then changed at some point to feeling sad and then later on she went back again to feeling relaxed and content. And say this is not a common occurrence for that person. So, if at no point during the day did the environment change and there was no new or different stimuli around the person throughout the whole day, then how can someone's mood have changed so much, or how can someone's mood have changed at all, when nothing in their environment has changed, if there are no private, 'inner' workings of a human. Or you could use the example of someone who sits in a chair for hours trying to solve a mental maths problem, when, again, nothing changes in their environment. Surely for someone to have changed how they feel, for the Behaviourist, something in the environment must have changed, but in these two scenarios it has not. So, I think, if you tried to explain to someone, from a Behaviourist position, what exactly happened during that whole day, of the person sitting in the chair, the Behaviourist would have almost nothing to say about the person or what kind of day they might have had which seems like a large flaw in the theory of Behaviourism. Whereas, in either of the above two scenarios, for Descartes Dualism, for instance, there seems to be no problem between the theory and either of the two scenarios.

Explain
clearly
needed
here

Another reason to doubt Behaviourism is the problem of circularity, which is when you try to define a word, for example, but then you end up using that very same word you are trying to define in the definition. This is the same as when you try to analyse someone's mental states but what you are trying to analyse ends up in the analysis. It is very hard to analyse mental states without the use of mental states in analysing other mental states. So, how someone reacts in one set of circumstances does not depend on just one mental state, but on how the one mental state interacts with other mental states, for example, if you were afraid of spiders, one way you might behave would be to run away. But maybe that same day you felt suicidal, then you might behave in a very different way than you usually would if the other mental state, the feeling suicidal, was not present in your being. So, Behaviourism seems inadequate here to explain the relation between body and mind.

Relate to
behaviour
see Pitman's
article &
reference

This could lend support for behaviourism, could it not?

One well-known problem for the Behaviourist is that people seem to have unlimited, instant access to their own 'minds', and we might have quite a good idea of our own 'minds' abilities, but when it comes to other minds, it seems that all we have to go off of is their behaviour, if we are assuming that telepathy does not exist. So how can we, as some philosophers would argue, 'know' something of our own minds, and at the same time we know that we can never really 'know' of another's mind. It is like we intuitively know others have minds like ours, which they might, but we automatically know we can never really know them compared with how we can know our own.

Ryle - wants to dissolve, not solve mind/body problem

Two of the major problems in the topic of Philosophy of Mind that Behaviourists can, I think, nicely explain away, if their theory is correct, is how the immaterial mind and the physical body interact with one another and how can an immaterial mind, or any other immaterial thing, have an influence on the physical world, or vice versa? And the Behaviourist answer to these questions is that there is no immaterial world, which is a point that Behaviourists share with the Physicalists, or immaterial minds or anything immaterial that exists. So, there is no immaterial mind to influence the physical body and there is no immaterial world, or mind, which can cause an effect in the physical world. There is only the physical world that exists, and how that physical body behaves in the world, so long-standing problems in philosophy about 'interaction' of two separate worlds is no problem for the Behaviourist as they claim that there are not two separate worlds.

In this essay I hope to have shown that Behaviourism is not, on the whole, a theory which is adequate to explain, sufficiently, the relation between body and mind, although there are a few good points in the theory which can explain away certain problems in philosophy, it still cannot, I think, cover the whole spectrum of a human being.

Bibliography:

Cottingham, J. (2008) Western Philosophy: An Anthology, 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ryle, G. (1949) The Concept of Mind. Middlessex: Penguin Books LTD.