



## Undergraduate assignment feedback form (to be completed by marker)

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| Student Name: Jack Prentice-Millar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                 |
| Module title:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Student number: |
| For completion by marker:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                 |
| <p>Comments: In this essay the detail of Descartes' arguments is missing for your presentation. In fact, there is no real argument presented. Rather, you have presented a series of facts about Descartes' view, with an assessment that consists of a quotation &amp; a description of Ryle's behaviourism. With regards to the latter, try to direct and develop a discussion that enables you to evaluate Cartesian Dualism - i.e. think about the objections you want to make; assess those objections, then - and only then - come to a conclusion with regards to the plausibility of Cartesian Dualism.</p> <p>Further, there are significant omissions in terms of the referencing, and it is not clear that the primary text has been utilised &amp; understood. That said, the essay displays some knowledge &amp;</p> |                 |
| Marker's signature: <i>[Signature]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Date: 12/11/20  |
| Provisional mark: 51                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                 |
| NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                 |

understanding of some of the issues at stake.

and body are separate entities in order to be able to believe in an immortal soul, the fact that Descartes dedicated his work to the Faculty of Sacred Theology of Paris highlights the complicated relationship between theology and philosophy during the time of the enlightenment.

Disconnection such as this, and other phenomena are known as Cartesian dualism; a problem which inspires some of the most difficult and interesting questions to answer such as: How do we define the mind? Is the mind consciousness? How reliable is the mind? How do the mind and body interact? What is their dependants on one another? Where does consciousness or mind reside? If humans have minds do other creatures? If they are separate which do we attribute the most worth? Where does the mind go when the body dies? This essay will focus on the problem that if the mind and body are separate how do they interact?

Cartesian dualism as briefly introduced earlier in this essay, is a concept designed by Rene Descartes in ( ), in which he puts forward the idea that the mind and body are separate entities, that they are different in that the physical form is tangible physical and non thinking but the mind is immaterial and does not take up room in space or extend physically. Rene was deeply concerned with the reliability of perception, for example, the analogy of the painter in the first meditation, how could he be sure what could be truth and not merely an illusion. This line of questioning eventually led him to one of his most famous conclusions. "I think, therefore I am." A sentence that encapsulates the notion that the only trustworthy known is that one is questioning and therefore must be to do so. Descartes and his body of work was of course influenced by the religion and politics of his day as I mentioned earlier in this essay. He eventually ties up his argument with his belief that god exists and would not allow him to be deceived because god is not cruel, he does this in the third meditations and the latter three. His work though convincing in its writing and the fact that it supported the cultural and social narrative of the day had a few obvious weaknesses, namely the 'Mind-Body Problem'. If Descartes was correct in supposing that the mind and body are separate than that raises the question of how do they interact, where does the mind or consciousness reside, and can one exist without the other? Let us explore this further.

The next point to explore is that of 'why should we consider that the mind and body are separate?'

Once a person, human has self-awareness and the ability to self-reflect only then is it possible to conceptualise oneself as a thinking, feeling, acting, being but this is something we develop throughout our development from infants to adults – explain & expand, give an example (NB you can make up your own examples!!). If you are used to spending time with young children, you will likely have experienced their capacity to ask questions. Children are inquisitive but lack the relative self-awareness and rationality that we attribute to adults therefore we have age limits for voting, driving and sexual consent. My point is that although children ask many questions it is unlikely that they ask themselves who is asking the questions until the later stages of childhood. One theory is that children become self-aware in relation to the external world this passage explains how "A simple observation can convince everyone how ego-consciousness develops and becomes strong in a child. Suppose he knocks his head against the corner of a table. If you observe closely you will find that the feeling of "I" is intensified after such a thing happens. In other words, the child becomes aware of himself, is brought nearer to a knowledge of self. Of course, it need not always amount to an actual injury or scratch. Even when the child puts his hand on something there is an impact on a small scale that makes him aware of himself. You will have to conclude that a child would never develop ego-consciousness if resistance from the world outside did not make him aware of himself. The fact that there is a world external to himself makes possible the unfolding of ego-consciousness."

the consciousness of the "I." [...] An entity that contacts nothing can have no knowledge of itself, not, at least, in the world in which we live!"<sup>4</sup>

So if the ego-consciousness mentioned above can only mature in relation to its experiences, then it follows that the mental state is build from our material state therefore they cannot be separate.

One of the strongest arguments against Cartesian Dualism was Gilbert Ryle in his work The Concept of Mind (1949)<sup>5</sup>. Mental terms according to Ryle are best suited for describing how we behave or our predisposition to do so, this view is most often call Philosophical Behaviourism. He disagreed with Descartes thinking that humans are made up of both material and mental materials. He believed that the categorical division of the two was a serious mistake and that the linguistics create problems in thinking about the problem he describes it as a 'Categorical Error'. Ryle argued that physical and mental terms where of no comparison and that if we fail to use the right language it would limit our understanding of the functions. He uses the analogy of the University to explain that the mind cannot be separate from the body much in the same way that a university is not a separate building from the rest of the facilities that make up a university. This argument does a lot to undermine Descartes position on the matter but Ryle's behaviourism as a theory of defining the mind leaves a lot to be desired, as he suggested that we are essentially how we behave and did very little to explain the inner workings of the mind, fore instance what if I draw my attention inwards to reflect, feel or indeed exercise my imagination.

It is my assessment that Cartesian Dualism isn't a plausible theory and my reason for this conclusion is that the Ontological argument that lies at the basis of his work is simply unproven and although humanity is better equipped with sciences and technology to explore this problem. I agree with Ryle that Descartes was guilty of a categorical error but I disagree with behaviourism on the grounds that there isn't a satisfactory solution to problems of inner thought. And I believe like many such as Steiner the material world impacts on the development of the idea of the conscious self. It is my conclusion that the mind is no more separate from our body, as our body is separate from the environment it inhabits. Breaking things down into categories can be useful but limiting, I believe to better understand the nature of man and relationship between apparently separate things such as mind and body. We must think in terms of whole systems and try to focus on connections and dependencies as opposed to focusing on the differences and independent functions.

#### References:

Rene Descartes (1968) Discourse on Method and the Meditations, Penguin Books Limited.

Rene Descartes (1641) 'Letter of Dedication', in Rene Descartes (ed.) Meditations on First Philosophy . : pp.4.

Rene Descartes (1641) 'Second Meditation' in Rene Descartes (ed.) Meditations on First Philosophy

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Steiner – GA 140 – Life Between Death and Rebirth: III: Man's Journey Through the Planetary Spheres and the Significance of a Knowledge of Christ – Hanover, November 18, 1912

<sup>5</sup>Ryle, Gilbert (1949) The Concept of Mind. Available at <https://www.phil.uu.nl/~joel/3027/GilbertRyleDescartesMyth.pdf>

Re-word  
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author

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But how does this objection stand  
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the essay - if  
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used to reject  
Cartesian Dualism.

Rudolf Steiner – GA 140 – Life Between Death and Rebirth: III: Man's Journey Through the Planetary Spheres and the Significance of a Knowledge of Christ – Hanover, November 18, 1912

Ryle, Gilbert (1949) The Concept of Mind. Available at  
<https://www.phil.uu.nl/~joel/3027/GilbertRyleDescartesMyth.pdf>

Bibliography: — Needs to include all the  
referenced works

Rene Descartes (1968) Discourse on the Method and Meditations, Penguin Books Limited.

Rene Descartes (1641) Meditations on First Philosophy.

Rudolf Steiner (1912) Life Between Death and Rebirth: III: Man's Journey Through the Planetary Spheres and the Significance of a Knowledge of Christ.

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