



Research Paper

## Mind and mental terminologies- the myths in Gilbert Ryle's 'The Concept of Mind'.

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### Abstract-

Gilbert Ryle was considered as one of the greatest stylists of English literature. He was a writer of rare elegance. Ryle gives us a fabulous taste of the concept of mind. The power and depth of 'The Concept of Mind' is unparalleled to any philosophical writing at that time. Ryle was a brilliant critics of Descartes mind-body dualism. He refuted all popular traditional flourish concepts of mind which he called as 'myths' associated with mind in his extraordinarily writings. The materialists deny the existence of mind, consider it as the flow of consciousness of the body. But many philosophers recognized mind and its activities as independent entity separate from the physical body. Some thinkers therefore accept equally the mind and the body as independent entity. Though it is not an easy task to discard the whole concept associated with 'mind' of which we called as mental activities, but Ryle make a different approach in his interpretation of his own concept of mind as he left no scope to reduce mind and mental activities to a tight compartment of bodily processes. He is busy in exploring the myths associated and prevalent with the concept of mind and thereby try to determine the logical geography of mind. Is it true that the brain (part of the body) thinks, recollect, imagine rather try to coined it as 'Mind' and mental activities which Ryle called as unfortunate linguistic expression? The paper is an attempt to critically analyze Ryle's concept of mind.

**Keywords** – Ryle, mind, body, myth, category mistake, logical geography

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### I. Introduction

'The Concept of Mind'(1949) is the masterpiece in the field of study of the Mind. Ryle started with brilliant criticism of Rene Descartes's famous mind-body dualism. In the first chapter entitled 'Descartes Myth' of his book 'The Concept of Mind', Ryle attacked the popular official cartesian doctrine of the concept of mind. According to Ryle it was called as official doctrine because the philosophers, psychologist, religious teachers and even the laymen considered it as the most acceptable theory. Ryle challenged this official doctrine and try to explore that everything associated with this doctrine is nothing but popular myth. Ryle pointed out that the traditional concept of mind is a widely circulated wrong concept of mind followed generation after generation by the people. The official theory mainly derived from Descartes which holds that human being has a body and a mind with doubtful exception in idiots and infants. The body and the mind bind together and after death the mind as self or soul continues to exist.

Ryle consideration is something different from the prevalent official doctrine of mind. Ryle first attempt to make a distinction in between mind and the body. Secondly, he shows that the interaction in between mind and body is impossible. According to him the human beings definitely has a bodily life without any doubt. Human bodies exist in space, govern by mechanical laws and observed by the other bodily beings. Human bodily life bears public affair like all the bodily holders of animal and plants of the world. On the other hand, Ryle mentioned that the mind is not in space and not the subject of any mechanical laws. The working of the body is observable by others but the working of the mind is not observable by other observers. The career of the mind is private, not public like the bodily life. So, here Ryle at the very beginning made a clear distinction in between the physical bodily life and the so-called mental life.

According to Ryle this split of inner or internal and outer or external life of human being is quite normal. But Ryle criticize this antithesis of the outer and inner life that is conceived as a metaphor. But how

'mind' which is not in space can be described as being spatially inside the body or anything else? According to him, this view can be encountered if the mind is detached from the body. But then how it can generate mental responses to the stimuli received by the body? There is yet no satisfactory answer of such type of objection raised by Ryle if mind is detached from the body.

But on that ground, it is not an easy to refute the whole concept of mind and reduce 'mind' in term of bodily activities. The Indian Cārvāka materialistic philosophers has made straight effort to reduce 'mind' as flow of the consciousness of the bodily activities. For them there is no separate entity which we called as 'mind'. In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy it has been observed that that human mind can travel from the lower stage to the higher mind, overmind and ultimately culminate up to supermind level. 'Mind' and mental terminologies has already dominated in the field of knowledge, so it is not a easy task to uproot the whole concept of mind. It is a difficult task to challenge the traditional concept of mind. Thinkers often talks about the power of subconscious mind that can change the life of human beings.

**Objectives** - This attempt of this paper to examine Ryle's standpoint of human mind. Firstly, we can assume that Ryle's intension is to discard the well flourished concept of mind. Secondly, his intension is to establish 'mind' not as a separate entity from the human 'body' and thirdly his chief intension is only to discard the famous Cartesian mind-body dualism.

**Methodology** - the method of this paper is analytic and descriptive. Both primary and secondary sources are used to find out the objective of this paper.

## II. Discussion

Ryle is not satisfied with the interpretation of the mind related to the body as advocated by Descartes and his followers. Ryle tried to exposed the pitfalls of the official doctrine (Descartes mind-body dualism) and termed it as 'the dogma of the ghost in the machine'. Thus, Ryle certainly compared mind as the ghost resides in the body(machine). His intension is to eliminate this dogma as generally conceived by the people. He considered this official doctrine not only a false one but it is false in its principle. He considered this type of mistake as serious one and termed it as 'category-mistake'. This dogma is a philosopher's myth which is the known as 'Descartes myth'. Ryle has given three illustrations to know what 'category mistake' really mean in context of the mind and the body. The first fine example is the concept of the 'University'. A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time and saw a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields, museums, science department and administrative offices. The foreigner then asks where is the University? The foreigner may think that the university is another collateral institution like the colleges, laboratories, departments etc., but unable to find it out. This is his 'category mistake' where he allocated the University in the same category to the other institutions belong to it. The same mistake occurs when we consider mind with the body under the same category. It is a mistake of the allotment of a separate entity called as 'mind' parallel with the body.

The second example that Ryle offered to show the absurdity of the official doctrine is the concept of 'division'. A child watching a march past of a division. One is pointing out the march past to the child of the battalions, batteries, squadrons, etc., The child than asked when the division is going to appear. The child may suppose that the division is a counterpart of the units already seen, partly similar to them or unlike them. The child would be shown his mistake by being told that by watching the battalions, batteries and squadrons marching past he has been watching the division marching past. The march past is not a parade of battalions, batteries, squadrons and a division; it is a parade of battalions, batteries, squadrons of a division. Here also category mistake arises.

The third example of category mistake given by Ryle associated with the concept of 'team spirit'. A foreigner watching his first game of cricket learns what are the functions of the bowlers, the batsmen, the fielders, the umpires and the scorers. He has seen the bowling, the batting and the wicket kipping but not seen who exercise the essential element of team-spirit. Here the person is looking for a wrong type of thing. 'Team spirit' is a cricket operation supplementary, not like the catching, bowling, bating, fielding in a cricket game etc. So, again it is an example of category mistake.

Ryle wants to show 'Category mistake' by these three examples that people did not know how to wield the concepts of 'University', 'division' and 'team -spirit' just like people unable to wield the concept of 'mind' which thought to be associated with the body. Ryle pointed out that many competent persons are the victims of such type of category mistakes. The mind itself is a concept, not in the rank of any collateral bodies. The mind is an unfortunate linguistic expression as we traditionally coined it. According to Ryle these types of category mistakes leads to a 'double life theory'. It leads to accept that a person is a ghost in the mysterious machine (like human bodies). Ryle argued that a person thinking, feeling and purposive doing cannot be described solely in the idioms of physics, chemistry and physiology, so they must be described in the counterpart idioms. Ryle strongly pointed out that as the human body is a complex organized unit, so the human mind must be another complex organized unit- a different sort of structure. Again, Ryle pointed out that a human body has the causes and effects in relation to matter, the human mind must have another field of causes

and effects, which is not essentially operated by mechanical laws. Ryle says as, "As the human body is a complex organized unit, so the human mind must be another complex organized unit, through one made a different sort of stuff and with a different sort of structure. Or again, as the human body, like any other parcel of matter, in the 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" (P 20, *The Concept of Mind*). What really Ryle wants to point out that though we want to search a different field for non-spatial, non-mechanical 'mind', we fail to discover it just like the university, division, team spirit etc.

Ryle also mentioned about the origin of the category -mistake. He pointed out that the mental conduct words are not to be interpreted to signify the occurrence of mechanical processes, they much be construed to signify the occurrence of non-mechanical processes. He highlighted that the mechanical laws explain movement in space, there should be other laws that explain the non-spatial working of the mind. Ryle again asserts, "Mind are things, but different sorts of things from bodies, mental process are causes and effects, but different sorts of cause and effects from bodily movements" (P 20, *The Concept of Mind*). We have to understand that the mechanism that operate the bodies is different from the mechanism of the operation of the minds. If we consider 'things', 'stuff', 'state', 'process', 'change', 'cause' and 'effect' in the same category of the physical and mental movement then such 'category mistake' occurred. There should be a good distinction in between physical and mental movements, it should not be in the common framework. A mental act cannot be compared and mixed up with a physical act. So, here in the first chapter of the book Ryle consideration is clearly different from the official view as he traces the area where the non-mechanical, non-spatial 'mind' can be analyzed distinct from the body. But the question remains as how the interaction in between mind and the body is possible – still not properly answered.

Ryle also draw our attention by pointing out the notorious crux of theoretical difficulty in explaining how mind can influence and be influenced by the bodies. He questioned that how can a mental process such as 'willing' cause spatial movement of the tongue. Ryle denied Descartes position where mind is pressed with the bodily activities. Ryle point out that the working of the mind is different from the working of the body. As the body follows mechanical laws but what law the mind follows is still unknown. According to him the working of mind had to be described by the mere negatives of the specific descriptions given to bodies, Mind is not in space, not in motions, minds is not the modifications of matter, minds are not accessible to the public observation. Thus, Ryle arrived to a crucial point that Mind is not bits of clockwork, it is just bits of not-clockwork.

Ryle opposed the official doctrine of mind that holds that mind is a ghost harnessed in the machines(bodies). Ryle consider that mind themselves just like spectral machines. According to him, mind is interior governor engine of very special sort besides the human body as a mechanical engine. Mind is invisible, inaudible and has no size and weight. Ryle also asserts that what kinds of law it obeys cannot be ascertained and also nothing is known how it governs the bodily engine.

Ryle pointed out another pitfall of the dogma of the 'ghost in the machine' as hold by the official doctrine. He argues that it is quite ridiculous and a categorical mistake to cojoin mental processes with the physical processes. Ryle gives an example to know the mistake when we conjunct two term like 'She came home in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair'. This is really an illegitimate conjunction in between the two term that make the sentence absurd one. The same is applicable if we treat the physical activities cojoined with the mental activities.

Ryle wish that his argument will certainly dissolve the hallowed contrast between matter and mind. He pointed out that due to our supposition of holding 'mind' and 'matter' under the same logical type we thought the opposition in between the two. It is also the categorical mistake from the part of the idealists to make a reduction of the material world to mental states and processes as well the realist's reduction of the mental states and processes to physical states and processes.

From the above discussion it can be said that Ryle does not admit any such things what is called as mind. As he says, a 'solecism' or a blunder mistake to speak of the mind as our mind knowing this or choosing that. He pointed out that the correct thing is to say that a person knows or chooses. Some actions of human exhibit qualities of intellect and of character. The fact that a person knows or chooses is generally classified as a 'mental fact' about the person, but it is the exercise of the brain of the person that know and choice. So, it is a bodily fact not a mental fact. Ryle regards it 'an unfortunate linguistic expression' that people then say that there are 'mental acts' or 'mental processes' comparable to 'physical acts' and 'physical processes' which is not true.

Ryle's chief attempt is to end the myth of two-world view; i.e., the differentiation in between the physical and the mental world. Ryle did not believe that the mind is a separate 'ghost' inside our body. For him the mind is shown through what we do and how we do. Ryle has adopted the behaviorists approach to determine the logical geography of mind. His ideas revolutionize the area of mentation. The traditional supposition of the concept of mind is refuted by Ryle. He considered that due to the influence of the well -established wrong concept of mind people often make a mistake by thinking that mind is something different from the body. It is

not true. Ryle point out that the mind and the body work together as one entity. Whatever we think about can be observed in our acts. Thus, Ryle is not accepting the two worlds theory or double life theory what we call as 'physical world' and a 'mental world'. The idea that mind is something that exists apart from the body is an incorrect theory. Mind should not be considered as ghost in the machine.

Ryle considered that the mind is not an entity that could be located inside our body (as Descartes located it in the pineal gland of the body). The mind is actually the way we behave and act. What goes in our mind is demonstrated by our thoughts, feelings and actions. According to him talking about the mind is just talking about what we do or react to the stimuli. Ryle focus on how people really act and suggest to avoid to seek the invisible and undefined mind. Ryle pointed out that if the mind is separated from the body, it produces no sense for us. Ryle ideas helps people to think differently about what the 'mind' really is and how irrationally mental terminologies are used incorrectly.

'The Concept of Mind' presents a critical examination of the traditional view known as 'official doctrine' of the nature of mind and its relation to the body. He wants to change the whole tradition view of the mind as conceived by the people. He challenges the dualistic perspective famously proposed by Descartes. Ryle point is that Descartes view is misleading and create confusion about mental concepts. He accused that Descartes concept creates mind-body problem and this problem is a kind of 'category mistake'. Ryle points out that the pictures of the mind that grasp by the people are incoherent. He analyzed about the mental acts of willing, knowing, emotion, imagination and the intellect.

Ryle pointed out that as the body is composed of solids, fluids and electrical forces and obey deterministic mechanical laws. The body has valves, lever, pumps are solid entities that operate to effect bodily movements. But how a non-material, invisible and non-mechanical with equal standard with the body can be described. There are no such things as immaterial lever, valves and pumps. Thus, the operation of the body is totally different from the body. Again, How the mind governs and instruct the body if it never follow any deterministic laws. Thus, imposing mind as the governor of the body is itself an absurd notion. It is to commit another categorical mistake when try to describe mind as the operator of the body. It is just like apply the concepts of mechanical forces and laws to a domain where there is no grip of it. Thinkers and philosophers are the victims of this category mistake who does not know what how to categorize the mental functions.

Ryle point is clear that mind is not the 'things' comparable with the body. People unfortunately used vocabulary to describe some bodily activities as the activity of the mind. Therefore, Ryle tried to draw the logical geography of the mental functioning like the bodily functioning. His description of the 'logical geography' of mental concepts is a reminder of how we employ these concepts when we are not doing philosophy. Ryle mentioned that since any such employment is extremely complex.

Ryle's attempt to show that in what way we effort to interpret there is no such thing such as 'mind'. 'Mind' itself is an unfortunate linguistic expression. The fault derived both from people's failure to distinguish different types of statements and from supposing that what is characteristic of words in one kind of sentence is also characteristic of words in other kinds of sentences. Ryle is attempting to identify our minds with our overt acts and utterances. He gives so many examples to demonstrate his position. There is no doubt that Ryle wants to analyze person in terms of stimulus and response. His aim is to show that there is a conceptual connection between our overt behaviour and utterances and our mentalistic vocabulary and nothing else.

According to Ryle when we talk about a person's mind, we are talking about a person's abilities to perform certain kinds of tasks. Here the words refer to mental states such as 'know' and 'believe' actually refer to a person's dispositions to behave in certain ways. It is often assumed that knowing -how to do something is a matter of knowing certain facts or principles. Ryle refute this point. He said that a Chess-player must run over all the relevant rules and tactical maxims of the game before he can make correct and skillful moves. So, it is fallacious to infer that there must be some ghostly process that precedes activity where one consults an inner set of rules for action.

Ryle comments that people often misinterpret what is understood by mind. The statement like 'my mind is its own place' is not true as the mind is not in a special place nor even in a metaphorical place. Ryle point out that a chessboard, scholar's desk, a football ground, a platform has its own place but that is not the same applicable to mind. Ryle states, " 'Mind' is not the name of another person, working and 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 games are played." ( P 50, The Concept of Mind). Ryle also explores the myth related to volitions. The long indisputable axiom is that the mind has three parts, namely thought, feelings and the will and the mind functions in three different modes-the cognitive mode, the emotional mode and the conative mode. Ryle argued that there is no faculty or immaterial organ corresponding to the description of will and volition. Ryle discarded the autonomy of the mind in volition. To say that the bodily act of pulling the trigger of a gun was the effect of a mental act of pull the trigger of the gun is quite absurd. It is like to assume that the mental states and processes enjoying one sort of existence and the bodily states and processes enjoying another. The correct way to say that a person chooses to pull the trigger

of the gun and enjoying it, Again, Ryle mentioned the myth associated with emotion and motive. Emotion is expressed in person's behaviour, so essentially a bodily act rather than a mental act. He argues that we understand a person motive not through some hidden mental process, but by observing their behaviour. Mental dispositions are revealed through actions and reactions, not by looking for non-physical substance. Ryle also accused that mental concept like consciousness, introspection, the self and the concept of 'I' are misinterpreted by the scholars. Ryle consider that a person's higher order acts may be directed upon his or her own lower order acts, as in self-criticism. This, according to Ryle, is what people ordinarily mean by "self-consciousness." There is nothing here to support the view that one looks into one's own mind and discovers its workings. What we called 'introspection' is in fact 'retrospection'. Ryle tried to explore the myth associated with sensation. The prevalent notion is that there is an owner of sensation, feeling and images that belongs to person's mind. Ryle also point out that sensation does not stand for any ingredient in perceptions, but for a kind of perception. He points out that people do not talk about the sensations of hearing, smelling, taste in a 'neat' way but refer it to the things which they observe. This referential process makes sensation to the confusing status of neither observable nor unobservable. So, sensation as mental act is not acceptable.

Ryle pointed out that when we use the pronoun 'I' it does not essentially indicate to a separate entity which we called as our mind. We can say that 'I know that I am free. But 'I' is an index word. 'I' means 'me', 'myself', 'my body' are used in different senses in different sorts of contexts'. Ryle argues that self-knowledge is like the knowledge of others, is derived through observing one's own behaviour.

Ryle also reveals the myth associated with imagination. It is well adopted notion that people view private picture in the private box or theater of their minds. Ryle point out that the word 'imagination' does not entail any such fanciful assumption. He points out that to imagine is just like the activity of to lie, to play, to write a story, or to invent a machine – a normal activity that involve the process of thinking. There is no need to suppose that the word 'imagine' is some internal and private operation of mind. Ryle also explore the myth that the intellect is a private thinker and an internal lecturer. According to him the intellect is not the hidden faculty of the mind as commonly supposed. Ryle point out that we should not confuse the grammar of production with the grammar of intellect. It is the effort of a person that produce a book or a theory, a part of the exercise of the brain, not of the hidden performance of any agent of the mind. Confusing the grammar of intellect with the grammar of production, and working out an erroneous analogy, people wrongly tend to regard intellect as a hidden faculty of mind. Ryle's analyses disrepute the prevailing notion.

Ryle also try to fix a new area for the psychologists. Generally, psychologists engaged themselves to read and examine the other minds and offer treatment to any psychological disorder. But with the collapse of the two-world view as strongly argued by Ryle, now psychology ceased to have an indefinable aim and is more like a medicine a 'fortuitous federation of inquiries and techniques.' The wrong sort of promise, he feels, is being made when people are told that psychology will disclose causes of human actions that are hidden from such observers as economists, historians, anthropologists, and novelists.

Ryle point out that for the explanation of competent mental behaviour does not require a psychologist ,it is apparent to ordinary good sense. Where the psychologists can offer their service is in explaining why people's competencies often fail. Ryle mentioned as "The question why the farmer will not sell his pigs at certain prices is not a psychological but an economic question; but the question why he will not sell his pigs at any price to a customer with a certain look in his eye might be a psychological question." (P 307, The Concept of Mind)

Ryle supported the methodological program of the behaviourists for overthrowing the two-world myth and for conducting repeated observation and experiment of the mental facts. According to Ryle, the rise of the biological sciences and the fact that the Newtonian system is no longer the sole paradigm of natural science that make it unnecessary for scientists to consider a man as a machine. Ryle mentioned as "He might, after all, be a sort of animal, namely, a higher mammal. There has yet to be ventured the hazardous leap to the hypothesis that perhaps he is a man"(P 310, The Concept of Mind). Ryle also shows his careful interest on erroneous description of mental vocabulary in the entire book.

### **III. Findings**

Ryle in his exploration of the concept mind tried to give a new dimension of the concept associated with what people ordinarily called as mind. His chief intention is to show how people wrongly used mental terminologies and analyze the functioning of the mind. He thought that 'mind' is a linguistic problem in interpretation. Of course, Ryle never wish that man should be treat as machine, solely govern by mechanical laws neither a ghost-ridden machine. His effort is to expose the 'myths' associated with mind and mental concepts. He was not totally satisfied with the well-established flourish concept of mind. Ryle accused that what we coined as mental activities are not mental activities, but the activities associated with our body. The separation in between mental and bodily activities was strongly opposed by Ryle. Ryle affirm that thinking, feeling, sensation, intellect, imagination, recollection are the bodily activities of the brain, but our unfortunately

linguistic expression termed it as mental activities due to the influence of pre-establish notion of the mind. Ryle's position is very clear as his analysis wants to search the logical geography of mind parallel to the geographical position of the body. Ryle pointed out that he is not succeed to determine the location of the non-mechanical and non-spatial mind but he succeeded to show that mental concepts are essentially tied up with the philosophy of language through where even the philosophers misinterpret mental concepts. Ryle's intention is to show that the word 'mind' has magical influence on the thinkers for which bodily activities are unfortunately considered as 'mental activities.' Ryle boldly argues against the formulation of mental activities, reject 'dual life' theory of mind and body. He pointed out that mind (if anything such exist) and body work together in a tight compartment. There is no mental functioning, whatever there is only the functioning of the body as instructed by the brain.so, at first his intension is to discard mind-body dualism of Descartes, second intension is to explore the myths associated and prevails in mental terminologies and lastly his exploration reveals no logical grammar for charting the mind and thereby lead to discard the notion of mind.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Ryle's analysis compelled us to believe that there are sufficient mental vocabularies and terminologies for the mental acts and processes without any such entity as mind. From the above discussion and findings, it can be said that Ryle first intention is to end the widely circulated and popular myth associated with mind. For that he made a systematic approach firstly by attacking on Descartes mind-body dualism. He at first busy to show the inadequacy and pitfall of Descartes principle of mind-body dualism. He rightly pointed out that it the body that response to the stimuli, not a sperate entity that we called as mind. Ryle attempt is not to discard the mental processes and mental activities but to interpret these activities as bodily activities rather than the activity of the mind. The dual classification of 'mental' and 'physical' is not accepted by Ryle. Ryle wants to prove that mental processes are not set apart from bodily activities, it is our language that misinterpret and isolate mental from the physical. His explanation is master example to show that how the philosophy of language is tied up with the philosophy of mind together. His entire attempt is to find out the physical characters when people speaks about mind and mental activities. Ryle claims that his work charting the logical geography of many concepts that speaks with the human mind. Ryle of course denied that he was reducing mind to behaviour, and asserting that in charting the logical geography of the mental concepts was considered a philosophically neutral behaviour. To some extend his claim can be considered as true but his approaches in the whole book is to find out a framework where readers will hesitate to use the word 'mind' as independent entity.

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