CHAPTER I

ONTOLOGICAL INADEQUACY OF DUALIST INTERPRETATION OF MIND

Religious conviction rather than philosophical justification is the single major factor for the acceptance of some form of dualism or other. There are however many other factors that either influence or are used as justification for dualism. The distinction between the thinking and the non-thinking is observed both from the external behaviour and from internal reflection. The conviction that there is something more to a human being than mere body or matter; and that this something more is mental, as opposed to being bodily or physical, is the doctrine of dualism.

This Platonic dualism restated and reviewed by Descartes in seventeenth century, occupied an important place in the discussions and debates of scientists, psychologists and philosophers.

The ascription of mental states, feelings and thoughts to another person, normally depends on one's own experiences (when one is put in a particular situation), and to support that the evidence is sought from the external behavioural patterns, although it still remains doubtful whether the particular behavioural pattern is a sign for a particular mental (inner) state. In other words, the very fact that these mental states of others are not accessible, leads to speculations about its nature and forces one to go for the division of a person into two components, the gross physical body and the mind responsible for thinking and other inner elusive mental states.

This two component view seems to be going against the
Contemporary scientific view, according to which every human behaviour in principle can be explained without referring to any non-physical entity. A man is subject to physical, chemical, and other bio-chemical laws as are other things in the world. His behaviour therefore, is causally determined and one need not postulate a 'free-will' to account for actions.

Recent advances in neuro-physiological research has influenced the philosophy of mind, making the problem more complicated and leading people to take various confused positions.

Every person has got a highly complicated mental life through visual, auditory and various other experiences. But when one considers the researches done in neuro-physiological fields, one finds that the counterpart for the highly complicated mental life is the highly complex brain structure with billion interconnections. The questions that then arise are: (a) Are mental states, brain states? (b) How could mere matter produce consciousness which is qualitatively different from matter?

After reflection one is naturally led to think of an essential entity, as soul or mind, which is entirely different from the physical body. Socrates, Plato, Descartes were all for dualism -- considered soul as something 'Divine' and 'immortal', 'indissoluble', 'intelligible' in contrast with body as mortal, dissoluble and so on. Descartes maintained that, soul and body have got opposite characteristics and are opposed to each other.

The problem about the existence of mind cannot be settled as other problems like whether unicorns exist? or mermaids exist? -- in these cases we decide after direct observation of the things.
concerned. Mind (whether one's own or that of another) is not directly observable like other physical objects. It is like an 'eye' with the help of which one can see but whose existence can be known only through mirror images, sense of touch, etc. In the same way Cartesian mind enables a person to know and be conscious of other things other than itself. But this does not solve the problem about existence of mind. In spite of difficulties dualism was a popular and attractive view. Following in brief are the arguments for dualism:

(1) Mental properties and physical properties are very distinct from each other and so they cannot be had by the same thing. So physical properties by extension are had by the body while mental ones by the mind.

(2) Material objects lack the 'feeling' and 'thinking' aspect. Human beings can feel and think. Hence human beings are more than material stuff.

(3) "A merely material being could not appreciate the marriage of Figaro, fall in love, believe in God, ... we evidently can appreciate Figaro, fall in love, believe in God, ... so again it follows that we are not mere chunks of physical stuff but something besides."

Thus based on similar assumptions Descartes maintained that a human being is a composite of a mind and a body. In his sixth meditations Descartes writes:

"I have a body which is adversely affected when I feel pain, which has need of food and drinks, when I suffer hunger or thirst, etc. nor can I doubt that there is some truth in all this. The truth that my hunger, my pain, my pleasure are observed in a special
and peculiar way, as mine. Not as it were from outside, however I may sometimes observe certain parts of my body, for these feelings are felt as modifications of my own consciousness, of myself. The mind is not 'in' the body, as a pilot in a ship, but I am very closely conjoined to, and, so to speak, commingled with, my body. So that I form a unity with it. Otherwise I should not feel pain when my body is hurt but I who am a thinking thing, would perceive the hurt purely intellectually as a sailor would perceive damage in his ship. And when my body wants food and drink, I should precisely understand this and should not have those confused feelings of hunger and thirst. For assuredly, these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain, etc. are nothing but confused modes of self-consciousness which arise from the union and so to say, blending of mind and body.2

One may observe a curious feature of the composite nature of human being. That is, although the mind and body are two distinct entities, a sort of inter-connection, unity and inter-mingling of the two entities, is asserted.

No doubt, the attractive dualist version satisfies the common man, but turns out to be highly problematic when confronted by questions such as: What precisely is meant by a non-physical entity? Where is it located in the body? What is its nature? What is its relation with body? When exactly is it (mind) evolved in the evolution process? All the above questions remain unanswered.

Each argument given above in support of dualism is objectionable. The plausibility of Cartesian dualism goes on diminishing because of modern advances in neuro-physiology.3 Secondly, the Cartesian 'non-corporeality dogma' makes the thesis unattractive. Hesitation to accept the thesis is because of the claim that activities like thinking or doubting requires no brain. Therefore, it assumes strictly that all human
activities are divided into two categories: mental and physical. But the problem arises with regards to the psycho-physical processes or phenomena like 'sensation' and 'imagination'. As these cannot be accommodated in neither of the groups (neither mental nor physical group), as these are not purely mental, nor purely physical.

Even after granting that physical and mental properties are distinct from each other, there is no reason why both the types of properties cannot be had by the same thing.

With regards to 'sensation' and 'imagination', one can go for a three-component picture with equally impressive contrasts between physical, intellectual and sensory properties.

Descartes did see this problem and this may be conjectured from the way he states it, in the second Meditation. Having established his existence he inquires into the nature of 'I': "But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling ..., and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions".

The above quotation shows that Descartes is not treating 'sensation' and 'imagination' as extra-mental processes. But at the same time the reference to these words as mental is very thin and restricted. It seems that the first six words in the list are of a type where the last two (sensation and imagination) cannot be put, showing a faint distinction between the two groups of words.

However, Descartes clarifies the distinction in an interview to Frans Burman, in April 1648:
"When external objects act on my senses, they print on them an idea, or rather a figure of themselves. And when the mind attends to these images imprinted on the gland (i.e. on the pineal gland) in this way it is said to have sense-perception, (sentire). When, on the other hand, the images on the gland are imprinted not by external objects but by the mind itself, which fashions and shapes them in the absence of external objects, then we have imagination. The difference between sense-perception and imagination is really just this, that in sense-perception the images are imprinted on the brain by external objects which are actually present, while in the case of imagination the images are imprinted by the mind without any external objects, and with the windows shut as it were.5

This clarification suggests that for both the types of activities (sensation and imagination) - a physiological activity is required. Descartes also notes that the process of imagination is unlike that of pure intellect. Thus sensation and imagination "are not the transparently clear cognitive faculties of a thinking being; they have an inherently confused, indefinable, subjective quality - a quality which betrays the fact that what is involved is not the pure mental activity of an incorporeal mind, but the activity of a hybrid unit, a human being ".

Descartes therefore, may be said to be creating a third category or component, as sensation and imagination cannot be properly fitted into his dualistic theory. The reason may be that they cannot be assigned either to the category of mind (res cogitans) or to the category of the body (res extensa). Therefore John Cottingham called it 'Cartesian trialism'. A person can be looked as a compound of three: (1) body, (2) intellect and (3) a centre for sensation.

Referring to the second argument for dualism, while
interpreting the phrase "merely material things", if it was used to refer to sticks and stones -- then one can agree that they cannot think and feel. But the argument points out something else. That is human beings are not merely material beings but something else. And this something else is the non-material aspect of our life. But one cannot pass from 'merely material being' to some non-material being. For, a scientist will say that we are highly complex material beings.

The third argument in no way supports dualism. A merely material being cannot appreciate Figaro. But equally it is not clear how non-physical things have aesthetic responses. It is not decided by some detailed investigation that aesthetic experiences can be explained if located in a Cartesian mind alone.

Still a dualist can come with a strong version of above argument saying that things made of material stuff only cannot give out complex behavioural responses, which happens in case of a human being. Therefore, human beings have something additional, that is non-physical component. Once again it can be objected that simply on this basis one cannot conclude about the non-physical self, as we have not understood the 'how' and 'why' of a person's behaviour till today. On the contrary the researches in biological sciences and artificial intelligence, try to explain more and more complex behaviour with reference to physical systems.

Another argument for dualism is that, "people sometimes have experiences in which they perceive themselves from a point outside their bodies". This type of experiences suggest that there is a 'perceiver' distinct from what is 'perceived'. What is
'perceived' is the body. But the same body cannot be the 'perceiver', from a point outside the body, since it cannot leave itself.

To this type of 'out of body experiences' it may be objected that it is quite possible that it is an illusion or hallucination. Moreover it happens to be a subjective experience, where no criteria of verification can be applied.

In our ordinary language we ascribe both physical and mental properties to a person. In the naturalistic view, a person is a complex physical organism. For example, for a naturalist 'Jack' and 'Jack's body' will mean the same thing. But these two phrases cannot be interchanged and when one tries to do the exercise, they result into different things as in the statement 'I admire Jack' and 'I admire Jack's body'. This shows that they cannot be interchanged.

Interchanging and inter substitution is possible only when the two expressions refer to the same thing, such that they stand or fall together. A designator, is an expression which refers to an individual person or a thing. If two designators refer to the same property then they are co-referential --- meaning they stand or fall together, and they can be interchanged without affecting the truth aspect of the expression. On this basis the dualist can insist that since the above two expressions are different 'Jack' and 'Jack's body' are not the same thing.

But to this an anti-dualist can answer by saying that 'Jack' and 'Jack's body' - both the expressions refer to the same thing. The expression 'I admire Jack's body' is used conventionally to
stress the particular aspect of his personality, that is, bodily aspect which is not different from Jack. Many other aspects can also be admired in general. The important point is, it not only denotes Jack, but also focuses our attention on a particular aspect of his personality.

One cannot establish dualism merely on the basis of usage of expressions and words. It is true that our everyday way of talking presupposes a dualistic theory. However, it does not prove that dualism is true.

Yet another argument for dualism can come from the survival of one's self in disembodied form after the bodily death of a person. One can imagine the destruction of one's body but the soul surviving. But one cannot imagine the continual existence of one's body when it has been destroyed. This shows the difference between one's 'self' and one's body. This distinction may be taken as supporting dualism. But the argument may be seen to untenable, as the naturalists can object to it, maintaining the view that the organic destruction is the total destruction of a person.

Descartes being influenced by the certainty of logical and mathematical statements, tries to get same type of statements in philosophy. He adopts a systematic method of doubt whereby he starts doubting the things around. Knowledge given to us by our sense-organs, cannot be certain, says Descartes. Further he doubts his body and meets no contradiction there. In all the above cases of doubt there is a 'doubter' involved --one who doubts. Ultimately he tries to doubt his mind. But doubting being a mental activity, reaches the conclusion -- that doubting itself
proves the existence of 'mind', 'self', -- 'I', which is different from body. Descartes concludes then, -- he thinks, therefore he exists. His arguments can be stated in the following manner:

"(a) I can feign that my body does not exist.
(b) I cannot feign that I myself do not exist.

Hence,
(c) I myself am entirely distinct from my body."

Descartes' argument turns out to be logically invalid, as its premises are true and the conclusion false. In the first premise he says that, just as it is possible to doubt other beliefs, it is possible to doubt the existence of his body also. Descartes feels that, doubting other beliefs is possible, as there is no self contradiction involved in it. In the same way doubting the existence of his body is possible. In this sense Descartes can keep aside his belief in bodily existence. That is, in the realm of ideas mind can be separated from body. But in reality, even after granting that mind and body are two distinct entities they cannot exist apart from each other.

Descartes' argument can be shown as invalid, with reference to Leibniz's law. The law states "......... two co-referential designators can be swaped one for the other without affecting the truth of what is said except when they occur after a psychological verb like 'expects', 'believes', 'wants', etc. In other words the fact that two particular designators 'a' and 'b' cannot be interchanged salva veritate after a psychological verb is quite compatible with the truth of 'a actually is b' ".
Psychological verb functions to show or refers to a particular person's mental world. This can be clarified by the following:

(d) Jack expects the milkman to call today,
(e) Jack does not expect his wife's lover to call today,

hence

(f) The milkman is not Jack's wife's lover°.

In this example the psychological verb 'expects' does not refer to a particular man and hence functions differently to show what Jack thinks about the things. If in Jack's mental world the 'milkman' and his 'wife's lover' designate two different concepts, then the two designators cannot be interchanged freely.

In case of Descartes' argument, the two designators 'myself' and 'my body' pick out different things. Since he uses the psychological verb 'I can feign', which refers to a particular mental state of his, it cannot be inferred that the two designators cannot be interchanged, and that they are two different things. As in the earlier case the milkman in fact can be his wife's lover.

The argument is against the conception of 'Mind' as a genuine entity. We find many objects in the world which no one would treat as genuine. Consider the word 'sake'. When we do things 'for the sake of' somebody we are not treating 'sake' as different from that somebody, or we do not ask such questions as, 'Can that somebody exist without a sake? or how many sakes a person has got? These are senseless questions. Unlike the above account, the question 'how many?' can be applied sensibly to
genuine entities. Moreover those entities which persist through
time, it is also equally sensible to ask, 'is it the same entity
again or merely an exact copy of it?'

Thus when applied to the claim of a Cartesian mind the
questions would be, 'how many minds are associated with one
body?' 'is the mind that is associated with the body remain the
same throughout or is it replaced by similar other mind or
minds?'

As per the dualist view, it is one mind in one body. It can
be objected that, nothing stops to suppose more than one mind in
one body. Moreover a dualist does not prove his claim 'one-mind-
in-one body' theory to be true. It is quite possible that many
minds think and function in a parallel way in a body. As strawson
puts it: "Suppose I were in debate with a Cartesian philosopher,
say professor X. If I were to suggest that when the man,
professor X, speaks, there are a thousand souls simultaneously
thinking the thoughts his words express, having qualitatively
indistinguishable experiences such as he, the man, would
currently claim, how would he persuade me that there was only one
such soul? (How would each indignant soul, once the doubt has
entered, persuade itself of its Uniqueness?)".

Since it goes undecided whether 'one-mind story' or 'many-
minds story' is a true story --- one can still ask --- since
minds are non-spatial entities, how one mind can be distinguished
from the other 'as they are qualitatively identical?'

Similar objection can be raised against 'soul'. If different
souls are made of soul-stuff --- different from the physical
stuff --- the numbers which are non-physical will have to be
treated as made up of non-physical stuff. The question remains, what is that soul-stuff in this world and how one soul-stuff can be distinguished from another, 'as they are qualitatively identical'.

Descartes' dualism distinguishes mind from matter and treats humans as mind endowed and animals as automata. The question is: why animals should not have minds? They have desire for food and sex and some animals in their behaviour do exhibit their mental faculty.

Locke, for example, found no qualitative distinction between humans and animals:

"...... in all the visible corporeal world we see no chasms or gaps. All quite down from us the descent is by easy steps and a continued series of things, that in each remove differ very little one from the other...... There are some brutes that seem to have as much knowledge and reason as some that are called men; and the animal and vegetable kingdoms are so nearly joined that, if you will take the lowest of one and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them; and so on, till we come to the lowest and most in organical parts of matter, we shall find everywhere that the several species are linked together and differ but in almost insensible degrees".12

It is a scientific fact that from simple more complex forms have evolved. Dualism as a theory is threatened when a number of questions go unanswered. If evolution is true, then there are no gaps in between and in between the two extremes (say animals on one hand and human beings on the other), the chain is filled by various other species of organisms. This makes the dualist position difficult to defend as one cannot say at which stage, the mind evolves. Further, one cannot say that Chimpanzees have

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no mind, and suddenly in case of man there is mind. Such a sharp demarcation at any level of evolutionary process is ruled out and therefore a dualist cannot account for his claim that humans alone have minds.

Again a dualist cannot hold that there are no gaps in the case of physical entities but in case of evolution of non-physical entity like mind there is a 'sudden jump'.

On the other hand if a dualist accepts evolution in both the realms, the physical as well as immaterial, then proto-organisms will have to be allowed minds probably in their component of organic molecules, atoms and atomic particles and so on. This would create further difficulties for dualists.

The third argument is against the relation between mind and body --- interactionism --- as maintained by Cartesian dualists. Mind and body interact with each other. In other words, mental events give rise to or cause physical events and physical events cause mental events. For a naturalist or an anti-dualist this would mean a kind of physical transaction, for mind and mental events are considered as brains events. There is no difficulty in understanding the causal relation between the same type of events. But in the case of dualist account where mind is immaterial and body, material - the two distinct entities (one observable, the other abstract) it is difficult to say how and where these entities interact.

Descartes did try to locate the interaction in the pineal gland, leading to occasionalism. This only shows that even Descartes agreed that the seat of the mind is in brain. Today in the light of researches done in neuro-physiological field and the
attempts made by psychologists to understand mind and mental events, we inquire whether mind is the functioning of the brain.

A dualist is unsuccessful in explaining the 'how' of the interaction as he fails to explain the linking mechanism. In other words, how the last link in the causal chain in case of a mental event leading to a physical one, causes or gives rise to the first link in that physical event.

In explaining the causal chain or sequence in mental-physical events, the last link cannot be explained. In physics -- in case of fundamental elementary particles at the rock-bottom level of causal analysis, no further explanation can be given. The dualist can argue here that if this can be allowed in physics then why it should not be allowed in case of the mind causing bodily events and that of the body giving rise to mental events. Since here too, the rock-bottom basic causal relations cannot be explained.

Even after granting this to the dualist, more confusions are created --- puzzles and problems for which a dualist has no answer. In the case of 'mind to body' causality, it is a conscious decision of the person causing a neural-upshot in the brain. One decides to wiggle his right index finger --- the appropriate neural upshot --- leading to the desired movement. This a dualist will consider as a basic causal relation which cannot be explained further. If again, he decides to wiggle his second finger --- a neural upshot --- leading to once again the desired movement. This again is a case of basic causality. For the third time, he decides to make movements of all his fingers
vigorously --- a neural event leading to the desired movements taking place. This again is a case of basic causality. If we go on like this it will lead to multiplicity of connections between decisions and neural events --- all of which will be basic causal relations --- not systematised and none of which can be further explained. Unlike physics there are laws governing each decision which can be explained.

A dualist as he maintains that physical events have immaterial causes goes against the scientific principle that this world is 'causally closed'. Neural events in the brain are responsible for all our behaviour. In turn, those neural events, for dualists, are caused by mind, or immaterial events.

This contention of dualists that, the 'mental' causes and the 'physical' goes clean against the fundamental principle of the physical sciences, namely that the causes of physical changes are other entirely physical events. Bio-Chemical and electrical charges are to be explained in bio-chemical and electrical terms; the governing laws allow no room for extraneous immaterial causal influences.

The closure principle neither can be demonstrated nor can be refuted by experimentation. If no explanation can be offered for a physical event that takes place now, with the current physical theory, or current scientific laws, then it does not mean that it is uncaused, neither we can say that it is because of some immaterial event. Science and scientific knowledge is dynamic, they allow for changes when the new theories are accepted and replace the old ones.

The un-ending research with regard to the human brain, from
the biological and chemical point of view has shown that purely physical explanations are possible for neural occurrences.

The closure principle rests on two ideas:

(1) First, that macro-phenomena such as the behaviour of human cells are the causal results of micro-phenomena (ultimately the behaviour of the atoms which constitute the cells).

(2) Second, that the physical laws governing at least low-energy micro-phenomena at atomic level are now very well known, and leave no room at all, for the possibility of immaterial causal influences.

A dualist either has to deny the 'closure principle' or say that whatever the micro-biologists are doing is wrong. In other words, he has to reject the central scientific principles.

The closure principle does not allow for any immaterial event to be the cause of a physical event. Holding on to the closure principle, one can ask, what about the physical causes leading to immaterial effects? Only one way causal relation is claimed from bodies to minds. Epi-phenomenalism, as it is called, where physical events can cause mental events but not vice-versa is deemed as an alternative. Mental is the 'shadow' of the physical and therefore plays no role in whatever way, in understanding the events in the world. In one's own case one will affirm that, I have got a mind, but from this single instance we cannot generalise that others have minds. It is no better a theory than Cartesian dualism.

Attempts are made to solve the mind-body problem at
different levels by taking a particular perspective. The inadequacy of Cartesian dualism to provide a satisfactory solution to mind-body problem, serves as a background, as a basis, with reference to which each perspective is developed. The main two approaches in a very broad sense are: (1) The reduction of mind to physical, brain-processes or to the functioning of brain and (2) falling back on dualism by accepting 'mind' --- but not in the sense of Cartesian entity. The physical-mental identity theory, Wittgenstein's complex of mental concepts, Ryle's dispositional behaviourism, the functionalist theory based on Aristotelian framework and Rorty's eliminative reductionism --- can all be grouped under reductionist approach in a very broad sense.

There are many non-reductionist interpretations of mind in the recent mind-body debates. In fact, the neo-scholastic philosophy is the classic example of defense of dualism. In the discussion that follow, the concern is with thinkers falling within and reacting to analytic tradition. Donald Davidson and Saul Kripke deserve attention in the present context.

NOTES


3. John Cottigham explains Cartesian 'non-corporeality dogma' as a problematic aspect of dualism and says that "by insisting on the essential non-corporeality of the mind, Cartesian dualism is committed to a thesis which modern advances in neuro-physiology have made less and less plausible." ("Cartesian Trialism", Mind, Vo.XCIV, No.374,
4. Ibid., p.219.


6. Ibid., p.219.


8. Ibid., p.38.

9. Ibid., p.43.

10. Ibid., p.42.


14. Ibid., p.59