

REVIEWS :

A Short Commentary on The Concept of Mind ; by
ARCHANA ROY : (Naya Prokash, Calcutta, 1973, Pp. 116,
Price Rs. 15.00)

Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949) has evoked as much interest and polemics in various fields of Analytical Philosophy (cf. Philosophical Psychology and Epistemology) and has wielded as much influence on his contemporaries as was done by Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903). Numerous books and articles have since then discussed or criticised the problems raised by Ryle. His 'exploding' of the 'Cartesian myth' and his mapping operations of the continent of the mind have either been hailed as a fruitful approach towards analysing what mind is or have been decried as abortive or misguided.

The appearance of Dr. (Mrs.) Roy's book on this widely discussed subject is yet another proof of the tremendous enthusiasm with which philosophers have been—since the very dawn of philosophy—alive to the problems relating to the faculty which constitutes the very *raison d'être* of philosophical activity.

The book under review is, as admitted by the author herself (*Introduction*, P. xiii), a review on Ryle's celebrated work. She modestly observes that it is 'a somewhat naive and simplified account of chapters with commonsense criticisms as strike the mind (of the author) in the process of exposition.' Thus, it is to be seen mainly as an exposition or review of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* but mingled with points of criticism which, from time to time, have occurred to her. As she repeats towards the end of the book (P. 103), her task 'till the end remains expository, although it goes without saying that exposition has invariably brought about critical comments.'

Dr. Roy has tried to deal with all the ten chapters of Ryle's work in her eight chapters by conjoining together the treatment of Will and Emotion (Ryle's Ch.s III and IV) in her Ch. VI and that of Imagination and Intellect (Ryle's Ch.s. VIII and IX) in her Ch. VII. The order of the chapters has been partly changed to suit her rearrangement. Ryle's treatment of Behaviourism (Ch. X) has been discussed in her *Conclusion* (Ch. VIII) which also gives a lucid summary of the main theses which Ryle has propounded.

The book presents almost all the important points from Ryle's work either by paraphrasing or by quoting *verbatim* his statements, discussions and criticisms. Similarly, in her criticism of Ryle she has made a selective survey of significant writings on these problems which have appeared between 1950-57 and has drawn from them her main attacks on Ryle. She has copiously used the discussions chiefly by well known authors like Hampshire, Campbell, Ewing and Garnett either by paraphrasing or by transcribing them.

Dr. Roy claims to have sympathy for ' moderate dualism ' which is the main reason behind her taking cudgels against Ryle (p. xiii.). But in defence of her main purpose she has not been able to say anything significant beyond what Ewing and others have already said. Moreover, on this point she seems to end up with some confusions concerning Ryle's position. She says:

" If prof. Ryle were repudiating presupposition of two realities, mind and body, he would have faced less difficulties. For the notion of substance as an underlying reality of the world of experience is what cannot be accounted for either scientifically or otherwise... But Prof. Ryle does not seem to rest content with the refutation of Descartes' dualism, or, even if he does, he thinks that by denying the independent reality of two substances, he is logically led to deny

the reality of two species of experience. He rejected the dualistic doctrine and thereby tried to reject the reality of two qualitatively distinct experiences, the mental and the physical. The rejection of the latter however does not follow from the rejection of the former. . . . ” (Pp. 108–9)

Dr. Roy appears to hold that Ryle did not only attempt to do away with mind-body dualism but also sought to obliterate the distinction between the mental and the physical experiences. While she unhesitatingly approves of the former (contrary to her avowed purpose), she criticises Ryle for having done the latter. Without repeating the entire position and the line of argument which Ryle has maintained, I may only quote a few lines from *The Concept of Mind* : “ I am not denying that there occur mental processes But I am saying that the phrase ‘ there occur mental processes ’ does not mean the same sort of thing as ‘ there occur physical processes ’, and therefore, that it makes no sense to conjoin or disjoin the two.” (P. 23) Thus what he denied was the assumption that Mind and Matter (at whatever level they are understood) belong to the same category and, so, ‘ conjunctive propositions embodying them ’ could not be constructed without falling into category-mistake. He held 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.’ (p. 23) Ryle’s intention is the mapping of the entire region by showing the well marked out topography of various areas. These different areas may have nevertheless certain similarities and affinities and yet may remain quite distinct from the point of view in question. The failure to understand this commits our author to draw an unsympathetic conclusion concerning Ryle’s analyses. She observes :

“ In fact, to reflect upon our various mental operations we need not presuppose any Cartesian self-illuminating consciousness. Yet this is what Ryle seems to

have assumed unwarrantedly in his exposition of various mental-conduct concepts and constrained sometimes to the point of absurdity to establish their logical equivalents as open-hypothetical statements regarding behaviour." (p. 110)

In a similar vein, our author expresses lack of sympathy in understanding Ryle's programme when she remarks that "it is self-contradictory to remark that the book propounds a new theory of mind without adding any new information" (p. ix). It must be amply clear that Ryle was not claiming to provide 'new facts' because it should be reasonably expected that our acquaintance with this phenomenon is old enough to leave any scope for new information. What we may expect from a philosopher is a new interpretation which may more consistently and logically correlate already known facts.

In her criticism of Ryle's treatment of the mind-body dualism and in her vocal dissatisfaction with Rylean 'explosion' of Descartes' myth, she almost comes to adopt a solipsistic position. In an interesting manner she says :

"When Prof. Ryle observes that the hallowed contrast between Mind and Body shall be dissipated, his observation is supported by the belief that body or material objects have a reality of their own. Yet even in ascertaining the reality of body or matter, we must ascertain it through experiences which are essentially mental. . . Whether they exist in themselves or not we do not know, all that we know is that even to exist in themselves they must stand in relation to consciousness. . . ." (P. 9)

It is similar to a position which long ago Moore so convincingly tried to refute in his article 'The Refutation of Idealism' (1903).

Borrowing mainly from Hampshire's review of *The Concept of Mind* (*Mind*, 1950), Dr. Roy holds Ryle advocating logical positivists' view that the meaning of a statement is equivalent to its verification (pp. 15, 114 etc.). Likewise, she cites and endorses Spilsbury's observation (*Mind*, 1953) that 'the logical problems raised by Prof. Ryle's analysis are mainly due to the failure to understand the difference between the meaning of a statement and the evidence for its truth or falsity.' (P. 41) Such criticisms are not justified since they emanate from certain misunderstandings. Ryle's method of analysis and his suppositions show that in dealing with mental epithets or dispositional/occurrent concepts, he is dealing with a set of concepts in the context of which it will be more fruitful to ask, with Wittgenstein, what their uses or functions rather than their meanings are (also Ryle's article 'Use, Usage and Meaning', *PAS*, 1961). In case of these concepts, the question concerning their justification or evidence can only be answered by clarifying their functions and performances. They are concepts like 'fragile' whose 'meaning' can not be explained without resorting to some statements which are observable. The question or evidence does not necessarily arise here unless it is *per force* raised. The fact, nevertheless, remains that the 'meaning' of such concept and their 'verification' or 'evidence' converge because due to their functional or performative nature similar answers will have to be offered whenever either is demanded.

Another point on which Dr. Roy is very much insistent is her support for the 'privileged-access'—a point which she defends in the light of what Hampshire and Ewing have to say. She is ready to accept both infinite regress and, hence, dualism without effectively meeting Ryle's objections. She, however, agrees with Ryle that 'our knowledge of ourselves is never certain, and that there are no specific instances where self-knowledge would prove to be infallible.' Yet, she goes on to differ from him because 'there are cases where the

individual concerned knows for certain his own states and operations'. So she concludes: "It is difficult to see how if in some cases at least, we depend upon the individual to report about himself, we can avoid the privileged access of individuals to their own mental states and operation." (P. 46) It may be noted that the statements quoted above do not go together very happily. Nonetheless, the dilemma which the author feels facing may be resolved if she considers the Rylean solution that sometimes we know better of ourselves on account of circumstantial advantages and the greater bulk of information which we have about ourselves than we have of others or others have of ourselves. This fact alone does not necessitate any privileged access. So is her half-hearted defence of introspection which she partly reduces to retrospection (P. 49). Similarly, her impression that Ryle did not properly differentiate between capacities and tendencies (P. 34) is belied by what has been said in *The Concept of Mind* (pp. 126-29). It is however, possible that our author does not think that these distinctions are significant.

To conclude, it must be said that the author has commendably paraphrased almost all that Ryle has to say and she has also assimilated almost all the relevant points of criticism and comment scattered over various books and articles published between 1950-57. A 'selected bibliography' has also been appended which, besides Ryle's works, includes twentytwo books and articles. The bibliography could have been made more upto-date and some significant omissions be rectified.

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