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Volume Introduction: Gilbert Ryle on Propositions, Propositional Attitudes, and Theoretical Knowledge

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In the introduction to the special volume, *Gilbert Ryle: Intelligence, Practice and Skill*, Julia Tanney introduces the contributions of Michael Kremer, Stina Bäckström and Martin Gustafsson, and Will Small, each of which indicates concern about the appropriation of Ryle's distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that in seminal work in contemporary epistemology. Expressing agreement with the authors that something has gone awry in these borrowings from Ryle, Tanney takes this criticism to a deeper level. She argues that the very notion of content-bearing, causally-efficacious mental states, let alone representational states of knowledge-that or knowledge-how, embodies the very presuppositions that Ryle calls into question in his rejection of classical theories of meaning and his related warning of the type-errors involved in conflating rational and mechanistic explanation. That these mental posits are presupposed, unchallenged, in today's debates make his arguments against intellectualism particularly difficult to discern.

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Introduction

This special issue of the *Journal of the History of Analytic Philosophy* features critical discussions of recent work in epistemology that engage with the writings of Gilbert Ryle. The particular focus of concern is with Ryle's distinction between "knowledge-how" and "knowledge-that" and his regress arguments against the intellectualist. Alarmed that Ryle is often accused of an "anti-intellectualism" which reduces to mechanical habit, each paper offers suggestions as to how one might find material for a middle ground between intellectualism and anti-intellectualism (thus understood) in Ryle's discussion of dispositions, capacities, abilities and tendencies and in his distinction between habit and repetition on the one hand and skill and learning on the other. Important themes from Ryle's work emerge and the authors offer their insights, by and large within a spirit of cooperation with the burgeoning epistemological literature on "knowledge-how".

Their correctives come as much-needed relief, for at the centre of arguments in epistemology to which these papers allude are those that explore whether knowledge-how is propositional knowledge, whether Ryle takes knowing how to be a distinctive kind of non-propositional state, and whether a reasonable intellectualist might hold that the action is guided by propositional knowledge in such a way that this does amount to some sort of prior theoretical operation. These explorations occur against a background in which Ryle is interpreted as advancing behaviourist views, denying the existence of mental states, clinging to a verificationist theory of meaning, or espousing a form of anti-realism about dispositions, and whose targets in his discussion of intellectualism, if they can be discerned at all, are directed toward a "straw man". The context, thus, is one in which some of the very assumptions that Ryle was so keen to dismantle are so entrenched that his arguments are practically impossible to fathom.

To bring this home, however, will involve examining the topics of concern within the context of Ryle's rejection of traditional theories of meaning whose key tenets are implicitly accepted in discussions in analytic philosophy of mind and epistemology today. Thus, after introducing the critical articles that make up this special volume, I shall mark out a particular trail through his body of work which allows us to grasp the radicalness of his views in philosophical logic, how these affect the logical implications or saying-power of expressions using, for example, the verb "know", and, finally, what disturbed him about the rationalism embodied in, among other topics, the philosophy of language, mind, maths, and morals. As we shall see, a *fil conducteur* throughout this tour concerns the notion of a proposition and, correspondingly, that of a propositional attitude understood as a particular type of mental state. Much of the difficulty of assimilating Ryle into contemporary epistemology and philosophy of mind is due to the fact that these philosophical notions, highly problematic from Ryle's point of view, are simply taken for granted in today's discussions.

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Michael Kremer sets the context of current debates in epistemology by quoting a key passage in which Ryle complains that philosophers have not done justice to the familiar distinction between knowing that something is the case and knowing how to

do things. They focus on the discovery of truths or facts, while either ignoring "the discovery of ways and methods of doing things" or by attempting to reduce ways of gleaning knowledge to the discovery of facts. In assuming that intelligence "equates to the contemplation of propositions and is exhausted in this contemplation" they face a vicious regress. For, as Kremer says, summarising the argument, "intelligent acts must be backed by intelligent internal acts of considering regulative propositions, which in turn must be backed by further intelligent internal acts of considering meta-regulative propositions, and so on, *ad infinitum*."

Kremer's approach to the topic of intellectualism and the distinction between "knowledge-how" and "knowledge-that" is distinctive and unique, for instead of considering the topic a-temporally, or in the light of today's concerns, he turns to the preoccupations of those in an array of disciplines who were likely to have influenced Ryle at the time he was writing. In "Ryle's 'Intellectualist Legend' in Historical Context" he takes on the challenge, posed by at least one of the early reviewers of *The Concept of Mind* and still alive in the epistemological literature today, that Ryle's opponent "intellectualist" was a straw man. Kremer sets out to show whose views were in the target range with a detailed examination of the decades-long debate between intellectualism and anti-intellectualism that spanned the disciplines of psychology, economics, political science, and sociology, as well as philosophy while Ryle was writing, with special emphasis on the way this dialectic played out between the two World Wars. It is a common assumption today that since Ryle argued vociferously against intellectualism, which he dubbed "the prevailing doctrine of the time", he could safely be called an "anti-intellectualist". Kremer warns us against this assumption.

Using what he calls "indirect evidence" from books Ryle owned and comments he made in margins, Kremer argues that

Ryle would have been well aware of particular disputes across a variety of disciplines. He suggests that philosophers such as G. F. Stout and Ryle's own colleague Susan Stebbing represent the intellectualist; the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, the political scientist Wallas, and the social scientist McDougall speak out in favour of the anti-intellectualist. But the latter group, who tended to emphasise instinct, emotion, subjective feelings, impulses, volitions, non-rational, and simple automatic behaviour are not espousing a position congenial to Ryle, who, Kremer argues, would have had no truck with it either. Both, he claims, over-intellectualise the intellect. Kremer argues that Ryle is trying to steer a middle ground between intellectualism and (what has become known as) "anti-intellectualism". Ryle's discussion of "knowledge-how", instead, emphasises the important aspect of human rationality as a capacity for reasonableness, or the capacity to get things right, that does not depend on prior deliberation or theoretical reasoning.

In "Skill, Drill, and Intelligent Performance: Ryle and Intellectualism", Stina Bäckström and Martin Gustafsson also diagnose a misunderstanding in those who view Ryle as an "anti-intellectualist" in the sense Kremer identifies above. Urging that we reexamine what it means to *think about what we are doing* so that it does not fall foul either of the regress or collapse the notion of *being guided by instruction*, they draw attention to the type-distinction Ryle makes between intelligent action which involves skill and learning on the one hand and mechanical habit, consisting of mere repetition and drill, on the other. This category distinction, they argue, can best be understood as a difference in *form* in which understanding, variability, learning, being open to—and (I would add) adjusting one's performance in the light of—criticism, using one's judgment in novel situations, becoming a self-critic, and so on, play an essential role. The introduction of such factors does not involve a causal claim to the effect that every skilful performance must have resulted

from learning and training in which such activities occurred. It is rather to say that the characterisation of a performance as skilful opens up a logical space in which questions about criticism, correction, and talk about one's own judgment, past efforts, and attempts to get it right are appropriate. This contrasts with how such issues are inappropriate, irrelevant, or evince a misunderstanding if we were to pose them when the performance is a matter of mere habit or the training mere drill.

By way of analogy, the authors consider Ryle's discussion of dispositional concepts and his example of a bird flying south. To characterise the bird as *migrating* opens up the logical space—one embodied in the biological concept of migration—to advance a more pregnant, or "thicker" explanation in response to the question "Why is the bird flying south?" than one which would nominate a prior event to answer a straightforward causal question. Similarly, the difference in logical space that is opened up by introducing characteristically mental concepts, such as *thinking*, will be neglected if one insists on taking the verb to name an occurrence. Of course, we might add, there is such a thing as deliberating ahead of time, of putting down the tennis racket in order to picture or describe in one's mind the moves to be made. But this kind of exercise, which may indeed be part of learning, far from being a necessary concomitant of performance we may characterise as thoughtful, will hardly be likely to help the player during a match. Instead, the required notion of thinking needs to be understood much more broadly, such that criticism and correction—indeed, the very question, "why did you do it like that?"—is relevant. This question would still be in the picture even if, on occasion, the answer "it was a mistake" admits that a particular move was aberrant.

Bäckström and Gustafsson argue that this way of understanding what Ryle was doing in giving his "dispositional analysis" of mental concepts belies the claim that Ryle was a reductive behaviourist, as certain philosophers continue to insist. Ryle's aim was to preserve the distinction between intelligent action and, say, mechanical habit or mere repetition, but to do so in a way that avoids the regress threatening the intellectualist construal of intelligence.

Will Small, in "Ryle on the Explanatory Role of Knowledge How", registers a complaint—in tandem with the other authors—that today's focus on "whether or not knowledge how is propositional knowledge" tends to obscure Ryle's real concern, namely "how human behaviour comes to be invested with those 'qualities of mind' that are the markers of intelligence". This can only be appreciated, he suggests, if we look at the central chapters of *The Concept of Mind* as a unity, and not simply, as epistemologists tend to do, at Ryle's explicit discussions of knowing-how and knowing-that. We will see that Ryle's primary goal, according to Small, is to show what difficulties attend the idea that explanation of action, whether in terms of motive, intention, voluntariness, or reason, is to be cashed out by an explanation of a bodily movement produced by an inner, "mental" cause. Just as voluntary, intentional, and rational action are not mere movements derivatively promoted in virtue of having been caused by inner mental states, events, or processes that we call "volitions", "intentions" and "reasons", respectively, nor is intelligent action mere behaviour that has culminated from inner intellectual operations. According to Small, Ryle's goal is to reject *causalism*, thus described, and instead to offer "a dispositional alternative—without, however, lapsing into a merely mechanical, or animal, or sub-rational or non-rational dispositional explanation of the relevant aspects of human action."

Small expresses alarm at the double suggestion that Ryle takes knowing-how to be a distinctive kind of non-propositional state and that, in order to reveal Ryle's true aims, the argument against the intellectualist should be reformulated in such a way as to make room for a "reasonable intellectualist". A reasonable intellectualist would be one who holds that action is "guided by

propositional knowledge" in such a way that it does not involve prior theoretical operations. Small's argument against this move (which he also attributes to Ellen Fridland) involves exploiting a particular ambiguity in what is involved in "being guided by propositional knowledge". Suppose it is true, he says, that as Ginet puts it, "I exercise (manifest) my knowledge *that* one can get the door open by turning the knob and pushing it (as well as my knowledge *that* there is a door there) by performing that operation quite automatically . . . without formulating (in my mind or out loud) that proposition or any other relevant proposition" (Ginet 1975, 7). Then, says Small on Ryle's behalf, such an individual is likely to know that there are many ways of opening the door. Some of these would not and some would count as intelligent. Even on the assumption that he made an intelligent selection from this stock of knowledge, his execution of it can still be assessed as intelligent or not.

If practical knowledge amounts to "propositional knowledge of special kinds of facts known under a practical mode of presentation" we are nonetheless owed a story about the assumed intelligence of the marshalling of this propositional knowledge. (Not to mention, it seems to me, a story about the assumed intelligence with which we respond to this mode of presentation.) When the opponent responds, as he must, that theoretical operations peter out eventually and automatic responses take over, Small accuses him of not meeting his own goals of giving us an account of how these automatic responses can be part of an account that renders the various aspects of a skilled movement intelligent.

In a discussion that has by now become urgent, Small wonders what it could possibly mean to construe propositional knowledge as inner mental states "guiding" behaviour. Small acknowledges that philosophy of action is rife with the image of an agent and/or her mental states "guiding" her bodily movements but notes that as far as he is aware, nobody has been able to navigate between the two following unacceptable alternatives. If the "guidance" is something that happens *to* the agent, it does not amount to "his" guidance. If guidance itself involves a series of actions (as he suggests above) then a regress threatens. It is thus no accident, he says, that Ryle's "unreasonable" intellectualism targets a phenomenon in which it at least makes sense to talk of being guided by one's apprehension of truths.

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In what follows I shall attempt to weave together some of the themes treated in the discussions above within the context of Ryle's views in philosophical logic and the role of philosophy, and the way these are manifested in his discussion of mental concepts. Understanding his arguments involves appreciating his departure from a tradition that drives much philosophical discussion today. His early concern to understand how philosophy could steer a path between excessive postulation of transcendent entities on the one hand, and (what he called) the "subjectivist, idea-psychology" of Locke, Hume, Mill, on the other, reemerge in philosophy of language and mind with the notions of propositions and propositional attitudes—and in the many and various disciplines that borrow this form of discourse. For the widespread belief that mental verbs such as "wants" or "believes" pick out inner states of an individual and are the vehicles of content also straddles uncomfortably the excessive postulation of transcendent entities—under the guise of semantic or propositional "content"—and the theory of ideas that has been imported with very little change by those who take this content to be a matter of internal representations. Indeed, the puzzling juxtaposition of rational guidance and law-governed processes that Small detects in philosophy of action is already thoroughly entrenched in the accepted canon—within which today's epistemological debate is framed—that mental verbs such as "be-

lieves", "thinks", "wants", and so on pick out inner, causally efficacious, representational states.

Ryle's express aim in philosophy was to undo the tangles and knots in which philosophers, in particular, become caught when they start to consider expressions involving abstractions. It is at this point that we tend to become misled by grammatical *prima facies* or worse: we tend to import "moribund" doctrines of meaning in our attempt to display the logic or (as I shall call it) the saying-power of these expressions. We should thus recognise that Ryle's many examples of the function of sentences containing verbs and adverbs we classify as "mental" are not part of the construction of a theory of belief, knowledge, or intelligence. Nor, by parity of reasoning, should he be expected to be offering an account of skill, habit, capacities, or dispositions rather than just noting some of the similarities and differences between them, including points at which they merge. They are reminders of just a few of the core and well-established roles of live sentences to which these expressions contribute. But these reminders have a particular purpose: they are intended to function as correctives or rebuttals to any putative theory or account of the meaning of these expressions that would deprive them of their power to play these central roles. To put the point even more forcefully, the evidence is not (merely) that because he declared his dissatisfaction with "isms" in philosophy, or declared that the philosopher's role was one of clarification, we are misguided in attributing to him positive theories. It is rather that his view of how verbs, adjectives, adverbs, noun phrases, and so on, contribute to the sense or what-is-said in live sentences *forbids* the construction of such accounts. To understand the radicalness of this view from today's perspective, some background is in order.[1]

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[1]What follows is a synthesis of my published work in which the topics broached here are developed in more detail. The reader will find in these articles full references to Ryle's work from which my description of his pro-

Philosophical Logic

Ryle saw himself as among a group of philosophers, including Husserl, Meinong, Frege, Moore, and Russell, who were revolting against the "idea-psychology" of Hume and Mill, demanding the emancipation of logic from psychology. A certain view of meaning, tracing back to Plato's theory of Forms, seemed to provide these philosophers with an escape-route from subjectivist theories of thinking. In spite of the fact that their actual wrestlings with conceptual difficulties involved no direct intuitings of super-observational objects, existing outside space and time, Husserl nonetheless talked of intuiting essences, Moore of inspecting concepts, and Russell of acquaintanceship of universals. It was supposed to be these objects of a higher-order, with pride of place given to the propositions with which we became directly acquainted, that we grasp in thought and judgement.

The problem is that the view of meaning implied by these metaphors fails from the start. According to Ryle, Russell, when writing *The Principles of Mathematics*, came to see what the later Plato had realised in *Parmenides*. Some words and phrases do not function as "mentioning expressions" at all, so they do not designate or stand for objects, let alone Platonic essences or universals. Nor, we might add, do they designate properties, relations, events, processes or states of affairs. This holds not only for formal, "syncategorematic", expressions such as "some", "all", "if", "not", etc. but also—crucially—for any statement that is to be elucidated—or as I shall put it, whose saying power may be exhibited—by these logical concepts. Consider live verbs. The contribution to the meaning of the sentence made by the word "knows" in "John knows the date of Easter" is neither captured by a list which conjoins John, knowledge, and a particular fact, nor, in speaking intelligibly about knowledge are we speaking

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gramme has developed. A sample includes Tanney (2009a,b,c, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017).

of a mental process (or state) that is distinct from but connected to another state of affairs which is known. To repeat: the saying power of such sentences is not revealed by supposing that (for example) the live verb "knows" contributes to the meaning of the complete sentence by referring to some entity in (much) the same way as "John" designates my husband. Nor, by parity of reasoning, can the saying-power of "John knows that I will be making dinner tomorrow" be captured by a list which conjoins John, Knowledge, and that which (whatever it is) is alleged to be mentioned in the noun-clause that complements the verb.

Like the logical constants, live verbs and (and their noun phrase complements) are also *auxiliary* to complete sayings. So, too, incidentally are proper names. Except in certain circumstances, though indeed they serve to designate, they *say* nothing by themselves, and thus Russell's doctrine of incomplete symbols was mistaken in thinking that proper names of any sort (including logically proper names) should set the standard for completeness in the first place. The naming of something, as Ryle and later Wittgenstein both insisted, is preliminary to sayings. These logical constants, live verbs, and complements are nonetheless significant, so it remains to be seen how they contribute sense to the sayings as wholes.

It had been common ground, Ryle reminds us, of different theories about the nature of concepts that by "concept" we refer to the meaning a word or phrase irrespective of the language in which the word occurs. We do not, however, convey what is signified by a live verb, adjective, or adverb and so on, by talking of the concepts *knows*, *thoughtful*, or *intentionally*. We find it more natural to use the corresponding abstract noun, which, in turn, promotes the tendency to suppose that in investigating knowledge, thought, or intention we are perceiving or intuiting essences of the abstract objects thereby designated. But if we reject the idea that this exercise could in principle accommodate what is said in complete sentences, what becomes of conceptual

analysis? As philosophers, what are we doing if not inspecting these transcendent objects?

We should interject here that the philosophers who practice conceptual analysis today would suggest that it would be more in keeping with their practice to insist that the notion of object-inspection has a tendency to mislead. They take their cue instead from both Plato's Socrates and Moore whose actual practice of conducting their enquires involved inspecting the use of expressions in order to discern definitions or rules that govern their correct employment. Nonetheless, the supposition was and still persists that these words stand for or "express" a concept, from which pre-established, stable, timeless and communication- and other circumstance-independent meaning rules can be extracted. The proposition or truth-or-falsehood they combine to form is what we grasp in thought and judgment.

Ryle credits Wittgenstein with turning this notion on its head, in suggesting that sense or meaning applies in the first instance to complete (live) sentences. I credit Ryle with making the consequences of this game-changer explicit. Concepts are to be construed, *neither* as abstract objects *nor* as a timeless, independent compendium of rules that set conditions on the employment of the cognate expressions (verbs, etc.) which "express" them. It is the other way around: to talk about "the concept of knowledge" or "the concept(s) of mind" is a short-hand way of alluding to the saying-power of live sentences in which cognate verbs, such as "knows", or adverbs, such as "intelligently", etc., figure. To use Ryle's metaphor: the analogy of the meaning of a sentence and the meaning of its parts is not that of a molecule and the atoms of which it is composed any more than a human face is a molecule of which its profile, complexion and expression are atoms. Yet, just as we can discern the profile, complexion, and expression of different human faces in respect of these abstractible features, so can we discern the contribution word-meanings make to the

sense of a sentence by the abstractible differences and similarities they make to the live sentences in which they play a role.

An elucidation of a concept then, involves looking at the discernible similarities and differences its cognate expressions (verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, noun phrases) make to the complete sayings in which they figure. The *differences,* here, are important, since a given word will, like complex expressions and grammatical constructions, in different sorts of context, express ideas of an indefinite range of differing logical types and, therefore, with different logical powers. In these different contexts, that is, the same word or expression will contribute differently to what is said, as revealed in: the implications licensed, permitted, and forbidden; the compatibility or incompatibility with other related sayings or doings; its being evidence or grounds for or against other sayings; the manner required to be criticised and assessed, including, but by no means limited to, tests for truth or falsehood; the scale of liability to which the speaker is held accountable when in error and the number of ways she can go wrong; and so forth and so on. These ever-changing differences in the logical ties—the elasticities of significance—of natural language expressions, even those that are core and well-established, constitute an additional obstacle to attempts to provide analytic definitions, a general account or theory, or the idea that the abstract noun such as "knowledge" (for example) functions to designate something that we grasp in thought.

Indeed, even the professional implements of philosophers—the concepts of *proposition, concept, relation, application, aboutness, identity,* and *disposition* tend to lead philosophers into trouble of different kinds, as do those of *quality, substance, state, number, logical construction*, and even *category*. Philosophers' talk about categories, for Ryle, involves assertions about what sorts of combinations of certain factors with others would and would not produce absurdities. Only expressions (and not things) can be accused of absurdity, so it follows that category-propositions are semantic

propositions. They should be seen, not as introducing metaphysical or natural mysteries, but as short-hand ways of stating, for example, that the abstractible factors of propositions—the concepts in question—can only be substituted for others that would perform the same jobs. Given this understanding of the philosopher's concept of category, it would be pure myth, Ryle says, to imagine there is a finite number of categories, any more than there is a complete table of the varieties of grammatical constructions of English sentences. The ramifications of this for formal logic's contribution to philosophical investigation is remarkable. For although the symbols in a given code symbolism in formal logic may be adequate to display type-differences in some particular matter of concern, we can never say that they are adequate for the symbolisation of all possible differences in form.

Now, this would seem to deprive philosophy of its subject matter and—it must be said—in an important way, it does. There are no transcendent objects to study, no fixed, context-free rules that determine the application conditions for concepts, indeed no way of classifying the logical power of these words in advance or independently of studying the way they contribute to the saying-power of complete expressions in the contexts in which their (ever changing) elasticities will be revealed. If philosophical elucidation no longer amounts to the inspection of expressions through the slots of a logician's stencil or through the prisms of a scholastic classification system, what is a philosopher to do? Ryle's response: She can attempt to dissolve puzzles and apparent contradictions that arise when, for example, she mistakes the superficial grammatical form of an expression as revelatory of its logical power. This includes, as we have seen expressions that belong to her own professional toolkit.

As Wittgenstein's express aim in philosophy is to "show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle", Ryle's is to submit to "philosophical destruction tests" our initial attempts to abstract, generalise,

and theorise about the ideas, or distinguishable factors, we identify in our expressions. It is also a destruction-test that is applied to philosophers' theories—which deliberately recommend that we operate with an idea as if it belongs to a particular category and thus results in paradoxes or absurdities. Ryle's *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, which he uses as his "flail and winnowing fan," by and large serve to show that these recommendations which force the expressions of natural language into the too few formal dockets that logicians have to offer fail to account for their saying-power. Indeed, Ryle is at his most impatient with philosophers who ignore what he deemed advances in philosophical logic; not only of those ignorant, in particular, of the insight that the logical form of an expression does not follow its grammatical form, but of those who accept too rigidly the formal apparatus of logicians for understanding and elucidating philosophically important expressions.

This view of the logic of natural language and its implication for philosophical enquiry was fully developed by the time Ryle decided to put his destruction-tests into action by concentrating on central concepts of the mind.

The Concept of Mind

Ryle's explicit target in *The Concept of Mind* is what he calls the "official doctrine" of which intellectualism, with its rationalist leanings, is but one aspect. We are familiar with this Cartesian doctrine today, for the well-known philosophical puzzles it engenders—ontological, epistemological, and semantic—are among those we study in courses in the philosophy of mind and are collected under the broad heading of "The Mind-Body Problem". Today's preoccupation of finding a place for the mind in a world that is fundamentally physical, or of accommodating the mental within a principled physicalist scheme, and of doing so without losing what we value, or find special, in

our nature as creatures of minds, is a modern incarnation of the official doctrine. Its presuppositions give rise to concerns about mental-physical causation, self-knowledge, the problem of other minds, and the puzzle of how a necessarily private language, such as a language of thought, could provide the material for communication.

Though it is widely acknowledged that Ryle's arguments were instrumental in combatting the view that the mind and body are different kinds of things or substances, it needs a great deal of insistence to convince philosophers today that they affect *any* view that trespasses the logical type differences between the roles that mental and physical predicates contribute to the statements in which they figure. This very wide net yields an extraordinarily large haul.

Even at the time of Ryle's writing, the differences between the mental and the physical were not only portrayed as differences of thing or stuff, but also of attribute, state, process, change, cause and effect. Not only were minds thought to be things, but different sorts of things from bodies, so were mental processes thought to be causes and effects but different sorts of causes and effects from bodily movements. A rejection of this para-mechanical hypothesis would not only affect quaint views about the will. Nor would it merely threaten causal theories of action. For the hypothesis is embodied in the very idea that mental predicates serve to name or mention—that is pick out or refer to—content-bearing, causally-efficacious internal states.

Let us set aside here the well-known problems of the explanatory power of the mental and mental causation and concentrate on the type-trespasses that threaten when we try to make sense of the notion that the saying power that mental verbs, such as "believes" or "knows", contributes to the live sentences in which they figure can be captured by assuming them to pick out inner—and thus "occult", at least to observers if not to the subject herself—mental states, events, or processes. (We will hold off until the next section the problems—prefigured in the

discussion above—with the suggestion that these are "vehicles of propositional or semantic content".)

How does this view gel with the saying power of attributions of knowledge? When you, the reader of this introduction, are told that So-and-So knows French you are handed a ticket with which you can make a number of moves. This ticket will also serve as a justification for your having made these "journeys". There are indefinitely many and therefore innumerable inferences and predictions, for example, that the ticket licenses, together with indefinitely many and therefore innumerable exceptions that might render the ticket invalid for particular transactions. That is because they are dependent on the particular inflections of "knows French" as this expression is used on the occasion and on the particular circumstances pertaining to the one to whom the knowledge is attributed. You learn the former, by and large, as you master English and you come to understand the general and particular circumstances that might permit or defeat these dealings. I can point you in the direction of what you have learned by reminding you of the kind of permissions and limits you might anticipate: for example, that John (my husband), when reading *Le Monde,* would understand what it says unless it happens to be an article about monetary policy, that John would be able to translate into English articles written there, including the articles on monetary policy, but would not be able to draw the inferences or make the predictions for the latter topics as he might for those on politics. Emmanuel Macron, by contrast, would be expected to elaborate those articles on monetary policy but might not (for all I know) be able to translate them into Russian. Crediting a child, or indeed, a dog, with knowing French will involve rather different sets of standards. Solutré, for example, manifests his understanding of "Viens ici!" when he comes to me on this command and of "Au lit!" by going upstairs to bed. But his knowledge of French is rather limited, as one would expect of a largely untrained dog.

The verbs of knowledge will manifest their elasticities as they are called into service for the many jobs they are given: one cannot expect that their contribution to what is said remain fixed independently of the circumstances or the context.

Let us consider another example. When I overhear John say to the dog, "I know you know I'm about to go to the tip" he hands me a ticket to infer, first, that he, my husband, is indeed preparing to go to the *déchetterie municipale*, and that Solutré has exercised some sort of recognitional capacity which, as it turns out, was triggered by John's collection of empty wine bottles. The ticket would also serve to render intelligible Solutré's sudden excitement, barking, and attempt to fetch his lead. If John had said instead "Solutré thinks I'm going to the tip" as a response, perhaps, to my question why the dog has become excited all of a sudden, John leaves open the question whether Solutré is correct. Obviously, the saying power or logical ties of my claim—to a friend, say, who thinks John might have misunderstood my intentions—that "John knows that I am about to go to the tip" will differ in various ways. We cannot expect or render intelligible any concomitant excitement on John's part (at least not without additional information) or attempts to fetch a lead. We can, however, make sense of John's look of amusement, his putting various rubbish bags in the car, and so forth and so on.

Further, a more general attempt at a reminder of the saying power of "So-and-so knows French" or "So-and-so knows that such-and-such" will, like the elucidation of any cognitive or affective mental verb, necessarily embody subjunctive conditionals (what *would* happen *if*) and other subordinate clauses introduced with expressions such as "not", "in order to", "unless", "when", "any", "at the same time as", "most", either . . . or' and "in order not to". Ryle's frequent italicisation of these "introducers" serves to emphasise that the job performed by verbs of cognition, for example, require not just some simple auxiliary

nouns, adjectives, or verbs, but a host of syntactically variegated clauses that make reduction to *mere* episodes or happenings (for example, in terms of physical behaviour) impossible.

The very notion, then, that "knows", "believes", "surmises", and "thinks" function to pick out cognitive states, or that "wants", "desires", "intends", or "wills" pick out affective ones—indeed, that the role of these verbs is to name states, properties, events or processes, let alone *whose relation of identity* with states of the physical, biological, neurological organism is an open question, is sufficient to call foul. Worse, the thought that they function to pick out a sort of state which hovers uncomfortably between the two in having both logical and causal properties—the idea that they function to pick out "representations" understood as causally-efficacious, content-bearing states—is to introduce a "theoretical posit" that amounts to a very reification of the category mistake in question. It is *already* to have disastrously misunderstood the role that mental verbs such as "believes", "thinks", "knows", and "wants" contribute to the sentences in which they figure. The puzzles about self-knowledge, knowledge of other minds, mental causation, and necessarily private languages arise from Cartesian-inspired views about the relation between the mind and body and these are exacerbated, not resolved, by theories including physicalism and functionalism which accept these patently false presuppositions about how mental expressions function.

Several warnings about how this short discussion may be apt to be misinterpreted are perhaps in order. First, anxiety, depression, and pain are examples of "mental states" and doing arithmetic and telling jokes are examples of "mental processes" in a perfectly ordinary (and non-problematic) sense of the terms. To borrow Wittgenstein's metaphor, describing them thus helps to show the logical or grammatical post at which we station these expressions and may be helpful in averting misunderstanding. To assert that Ryle denied the existence of mental states or pro-

cesses without further clarification would threaten to confuse his rejection of assumptions in philosophical logic with his rejection of a commonplace. Second, the sentence "Solutré knows that John is going to the tip" is one which embodies a mental verb which takes as its complement a noun-phrase introduced by "that". This purely grammatical fact is not in dispute. What is contested is whether the saying power of such expressions can be elucidated by assuming that they function to designate something called "propositional attitudes"—which are in turn cashed out as a locatable (inner/outer) causally efficacious vehicle of propositional (or other sort of representational) content—the nature of which occupied philosophers for several decades and now is taken for granted in functional/representational theories of mind. Three, philosophers interested in providing theories about the nature of mental phenomena will baulk at the idea that their "causal hypotheses" are to be construed as application-conditions for mental expressions. They insist they are making claims—empirical claims—about the nature of these concepts' referents. The problem however is that the scientific/metaphysical realism that underpins this rejoinder—that ordinary mental concepts purport to refer to items or properties whose nature is open to empirical investigation—is precisely what Ryle is challenging. Four, one argument he marshals against this view is that the comments we make that embody mental expressions show them to have a use which is both regular and effective. We know how to make them with general correctness and to correct others when they turn out to be confused or mistaken: indeed an elucidation of the logical ties or saying power of these expressions will include typical considerations to which we would appeal in checking, correcting, or justifying their use. A theory of the mental that entailed that there *could be no* regular or effective use of these mental expressions has to answer to the fact that their account has managed to throw out a part of the phenomenon they set out to study with

their theory of it. This charge has nothing to do with the untenable suggestion championed by the logical empiricists about the constraints they sought to put on any meaningful statement. Complaints that Ryle is a "verificationist about meaning" utterly miss their mark.

I have hammered home the consequences, as I see them, of accepting the implication of Ryle's (and Wittgenstein's) work in philosophical logic and how this affects today's canon in philosophy of mind. I have done so in order to bring home how problematic it is even to employ the vocabulary of "content-bearing states" or "representational states" or "propositional attitude states" when attempting to assess Ryle's contributions to philosophy of mind and epistemology. The problems are merely iterated when theorists posit so-called "states of knowledge-that", "states of knowledge-how" or "propositional knowledge of special kinds of facts known under a practical mode of presentation". My particular examples above should put to rest the very idea that such entities can be discerned from the function of sentences in which these expressions ordinarily figure. Furthermore, it should be clear that when Ryle used the expression "know that" to contrast with "know how" in his arguments against intellectualism he was not tracking what we ordinarily imply every time we use the expression "knows that". There is no one thing that we ordinarily imply; nor, in particular, is our meaning elucidated by postulating a relation between a named subject such as Solutré and either an abstract object or an internal representation of whatever degree of complexity. He was coining a very particular and pithy way of distinguishing between performances that involve prior theoretical operations and those nonetheless thoughtful or intelligent performances that do not.

Intellectualism

We saw earlier that Ryle rejects the traditional thought that propositions are abstract objects, whether these be construed as the meanings (qua nominata) of sentences, the (external) relata of acts of thinking, or, therefore, as the timeless, context-free, special subject matter of logic. They should be construed instead as abstractions from what live sentences of different languages, idioms, authors, or dates say when these sentences—for the purposes at hand—are deemed to say the same thing or perform the same role.

Similarly, the saying-power of a word or phrase is a functional factor—a discernible common locus—of a range of possible tellings, askings, advisings, threatenings, promisings, and so on. But if we thus invert the natural assumption that the saying-power of words and phrases can be learned, classified or discussed before the consideration of entire sayings, what becomes of the traditional doctrine in epistemology that the apprehension of propositions (qua sentence-meanings) and the apprehension of concepts (qua word-meanings) are supposed to be part of a psychological explanation of the ability to understand the complete expressions or those in which the concepts figure? It was supposed to be these objects of a higher-order, with which we become directly acquainted, that we "grasp" in thought and judgment.

Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, wonders what inclined his younger self to think that in speaking and understanding a language one is operating a calculus in accordance with strict rules. And he goes on to engage in a painstaking examination of the different senses in which we may be "guided by" or "following" rules. The same question occupies Ryle, who explores an ambiguity in the sense in which natural laws, mathematical truths, and the laws of logic "apply" to the world, and who comes to the same conclusion. There had better be a way of "following a rule which does not involve an interpretation"—to use Wittgenstein's expression—or a way of performing successfully by wont and not by prior theoretical operations—to use Ryle's. For if we require the following of higher-order rules as

a *necessary* condition for any successful performance—then we will be committed to a vicious regress.

To put the argument succinctly, performing some activity intelligently, rationally, or with reason cannot require prior theoretical operations such as deliberating, calculating, or following rules since these are activities that are themselves performed intelligently, rationally, or with reason. So it must be possible to act intelligently, rationally, or with reason without prior deliberation, calculation, or rule-following. Otherwise one would need to suppose the existence of prior theoretical operations *ad infinitum*.

Let us look at the situation more carefully. We are led, it seems, to talk about standards or norms in the first place because some of our activities or performances admit of good, bad, or medium marks. They are thus judged in relation to whether they come up to or fall short of standards. Perhaps in a large number of cases, these standards are merely implicit—they can be "read off" or abstracted from successful performances or activities by a tactician or theorist. Once codified into instructions or principles, they may be used subsequently as an aid in teaching or as a method for checking whether the moves have achieved the requisite standard, or in the light of which a participant in the practice may henceforth guide her performances. When they are thus used, the participants are engaging in a second-order activity that can sometimes—but not always—help them to achieve the standards sought for the lower-order practice. Why "not always"? First, following rules, like maps, recipes, formulae, or instructions in general involves sub-performances that themselves can be done badly, passably, or well. This includes reading the instructions correctly as opposed to misreading them; figuring out how they are to apply to the case at hand as opposed to misinterpreting what they require; and then implementing them correctly in one's performance. These are discernibly different ways in which the second-order operations might, and indeed do, go wrong. Since the consulting, interpreting and implementing of instructions or principles are themselves performances that can be done well, passably, or badly, simply engaging in them cannot be sufficient for success in the original activity. And further, unless the higher-order activity is itself part of the challenge (as it is in logic and math exams when you are expected to "show your work") consulting the rules is often not necessary for being credited with having met the appropriate standards. For one *may* have engaged successfully in the original activity without having to reflect on or take a sideways glance at second-order principles.

This idea that we grasp propositions or the meanings *qua* nominata of sentences goes back to Plato and resurfaces, with variations, in Frege, Russell, and early Wittgenstein. Indeed it is the analogy with this view about sentence-meaning that funds the equally problematic view that our mental "states" are the vehicles of propositional, semantic, or representational content as well.

Perhaps the confusion arises when logical norms, mathematical truths, or concepts and propositions construed as word- and sentence-meanings, are themselves thought to be part of a Platonic third-realm and not, like instructions, recipes, or maps, obviously conventional symbolic structures that may be misread, misinterpreted or misapplied. The idea seems to be that what is used in the teaching of practices, consulted in the course of them, or read off by an observer, are mere expressions of rules: the real rules are something at which these expressions only gesture. Once grasped, apprehended or intuited by a participant in these normative activities there is no rational option but to do as the rule requires: apprehension of the rule is sufficient to determine and thus to explain how the one who grasps it acts as it mandates. According to this mythical picture, when expressions of the rules are not used in the learning or teaching of the activity, nor within the practice itself, those who have mastered it can be

credited with more than knowledge by wont of the relevant standards of correctness: they have (somehow) come into cognitive contact with rules that determine these standards, unexpressed or unrepresented though they may be, which (somehow) guide them and thus (somehow) explain their ability to act as they mandate. A "cavalierly" *realist* version of this myth supposes that the real rule, shorn of its expression, exists independently not only of any particular individual's grasp and propensity to act in accordance with it, but independently of human practices altogether: the rule consists in steps that are already drawn in advance.

A variation on this picture is that anyone who issues a command, who means something by an utterance, or who intends that his expression be taken in a certain way *has in mind* the way his command, meaning, or expression of intention should be acted upon in all possible circumstances, extending indefinitely into the future, as if the successful implementation of his command, or uptake of his meaning or intention, follows steps already drawn—in his mind—in advance and independently of the particular circumstances of his utterance.

The reach of this fantasy extends to most of the debated topics in philosophy today. Its attraction, as well as its metaphysical mysteriousness, is due to its seeming to accommodate the *objectivity* as well as the *force* of that which we hold most dear. For "rules" we can substitute "reasons", "principles of morality", "linguistic meaning", and "mathematical truths", to name a few. Moreover, if a person's acting morally, with reason, intentionally, or with knowledge of any kind is a matter of her having a private grasp of these rules, as the mythical picture suggests, then the *epistemology* of rule-following brings in tow further wonders about how we could ever know that one is to be credited (or not) with acting in any of these ways.

The attempt to "naturalise" this picture has done nothing to avoid its inherent problems. Jerry Fodor was in no doubt, for example, that his proposals were well within the line of fire of such regress arguments. In the introduction to *The Language of Thought*—which is partly responsible for the wide acceptance of functionalist and representationalist (if not computationalist) theories of mind—he remarks that it is difficult to think of an area of cognitive psychology in which the array of arguments in *The Concept of Mind* would not apply or in which Ryle does not apply them. He says, astutely, that

> . . . it is perhaps Ryle's *central* point that "Cartesian" (i.e., mentalistic) psychological theories treat what is really a *logical* relation between aspects of a single event as though it were a causal relation between pairs of distinct events. It is this tendency to give mechanistic answers to conceptual questions which, according to Ryle, leads the mentalist to orgies of regrettable hypostasis: i.e., to attempting to explain behaviour by reference to underlying psychological mechanisms. (Fodor 1975, 5)

Fodor goes on to acknowledge that if this is a mistake, his whole discussion is in trouble. Indeed. For if we are to understand theoretical operations by analogy with, as Fodor suggested, deliberation before acting, or hypothesis-testing, or by analogy with the consultation of instructions, recipes, maps, diagrams, formulae, and so on, then there must be the possibility that the deliberation or consultation, interpretation and implementation of the instructions—even if it is allegedly implicit or unconscious—goes awry. This is a simple corollary of the fact that an appeal to norms is what allows us to credit a "move" with good, medium, or bad marks. If we insist, against the recommendations of the regress argument, that the individual credited with a good performance must have somehow been guided by the rules embodying these norms, then, presumably she must have avoided being misguided by them. As Will Small shows in his contribution to this volume, this problem simply reappears when philosophers attempt to introduce additional layers of "normative mechanisms".

In defending his own version of a representational theory of mind—one that construes cognition as (implicit, first-order) rule-governed computations over syntactically structured symbols or representations—Fodor attempts to avoid the regress by claiming that the (implicit) appeal to explicit rules is halted since the second-order rules that govern these first-order computations are reducible to built-in causal processes. This, in effect, is to concede the original conclusion of Wittgenstein's and Ryle's regress arguments, to wit, that there must be a way of following a rule that does not require an interpretation. or "knowledge-how" is logically prior, and thus not reducible, to "knowledge-that". It is also to concede that not every performance which can be evaluated in the light of standards or norms must have involved an explicit or appeal to those norms.

Nonetheless, Fodor, and those that follow in positing further and further iterations of normative mechanisms, nonetheless owe us an explanation why we needed to posit these occult processes to begin with. For doing so resurrects all of the mysteries of the mind-body problem discussed above. The fact is that we just do credit individuals with achievements or blame them for failures—in acting rationally, for reasons, morally, intelligently, in speaking and understanding a language, and so on—in virtue of having or failing to have satisfied norms, even if we cannot credit them with having cast a sideways glance at any putative instructions that codify these norms. We certainly do not base these normative judgements on "explanations to the best hypothesis" about their (mechanised) subsystems.

In any case, rules have different explanatory functions from those of natural laws. The rules that govern rational action or logical inference, for example, help us to identify what is incorrect in certain performances and correct in others. Such explanations function by showing how the performance attains or fails to attain the standards or norms set for the practice. These are explanations relatively high up Ryle's "sophistication lad-

der". They are descriptions of the referee, theorist, or tactician. Once theoretical operations such as hypothesis-testing, deliberation, map-reading, following diagrams, images, formulae, etc. are "mechanised" in this ideal fashion, two different kinds of explanation are conflated. The first, by appeal to standards or norms that are codified in the performance-rules that govern some activity or practice; the second, by appeal to causal relations or to the laws of nature which are supposed to subsume them.

This is perhaps what Ryle means when he says that the intellectualist legend should be rejected not merely because it tells myths but because those it tells are not of the right type to account for the facts which they are invented to explain. As Bäckström and Gustafsson so nicely demonstrate, the idioms in which they are expressed belong to different forms of discourse. They come from different founts.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

I have suggested that the very notion of content-bearing, causally efficacious mental states, let alone representational states of knowledge-that or knowledge-how, and so forth, embodies the very presuppositions that Ryle calls into question. Thus my pessimism about engaging in a debate in which Ryle is to play a part against a framework in which so much of what he has had argued against is taken for granted as true. But the contributors to this volume are braver souls than I. It is to their work that we should now turn.

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