

The ontological commitments of common sense psychology 2The categories of mental life - mental statesIntroduction

In [the previous lecture](#) I examined four arguments for the view that we are or may be committed either by the mental concepts of ordinary language or by empirical evidence to a belief in the existence of a mental or spiritual substance separate and distinct from the human body. Since it seemed to me that none of these arguments carry conviction, I argued that we should adopt the alternative view that we have to deal with a single spatio-temporally extended and located substance, the person or human organism, which has both mental and non-mental (i.e. physical or bodily) properties. I did not however, adequately discuss the positive arguments in favour of such a view. I therefore propose to begin this lecture by briefly rehearsing what I take these positive arguments to be.

- (a) The first is an argument from the way we ordinarily talk which I partly adverted to last time in criticising the Kantian argument for the pure ego, namely that as we ordinarily talk, it is the same 'I', the same person, to whom we ascribe both mental and physical properties. As Strawson puts it "We ascribe to ourselves actions and intentions (I am doing, did, shall do this); sensations (I am warm, in pain); thoughts and feelings (I think, wonder, want this, am angry, disappointed, contented); perceptions and memories (I see this, hear the other, remember that). We ascribe to ourselves, in two senses, position: location (I am on the sofa) and attitude (I am lying down). And of course we ascribe to ourselves not only temporary conditions, states, situations like these, but also relatively enduring characteristics, including physical characteristics like height, colouring, shape and weight" (7b p.89)
- (b) The second argument is also stated by Strawson (7b) when he points out that in order to identify and reidentify the referent of a proper name or what he calls in an earlier work (a) a 'singular referring expression', whether it be animate or inanimate, we normally need to locate the individual in question in terms of both space and time. It is true that Strawson explores the logical possibility of a "No-space World in which all the sensory items were auditory, but in which it did seem possible to find a place for the idea of a reidentifiable particular by exploiting certain auditory analogues of the idea of spatial distance" (7b p.87); but the most that he finds it possible to claim for this scheme was that it might conceivably provide a basis for the distinction "between oneself and what is not oneself" (7b p.88). Such a world is clearly not one in which communication between two distinct individuals could conceivably take place and in which proper names and singular referring expressions can have a referent which is identifiable by more than one person. In order for the referent to be publicly identifiable it must be locatable in space as well as time.
- (c) The third argument is the one which I partly adverted to in [Lecture 3](#) in defending the doctrine of metaphysical materialism. On this argument the notion of logically independent existence in terms of which Aristotle's (1) concept of substance is defined is only intelligible in the case of a spatially and temporally extended entity with clearly defined boundaries in all spatially defined directions which, even if it does not already move independently in relation to its spatial environment, is capable of being dissected out from its environmental matrix as a coherent unit without any arbitrary hacking up of the substance of which it forms part.

If in the light of such considerations we may accept that our ordinary mental concepts refer not to properties and characteristics which belong to a special mental or spiritual substance, but to a spatio-temporally extended substance, the person or human organism, we may go on to raise the second of our questions concerning the ontological commitments of these mental concepts, namely to what extent are we committed in using them to a belief in the existence or occurrence of states, events and processes within the person which are private or covert in the sense that they cannot be inspected or their existence determined with certainty by another person but can be and are inspected and known with certainty to exist or occur by their owner?

Now it is a fundamental principle of the position which I adopt in this matter, whose importance I cannot emphasise too strongly, that a direct answer needs to be given to this question, depending upon the

type or category to which the mental property question belongs. It is therefore, essential that before proceeding to deal with the problem of the privacy of mental life, we should develop a sound taxonomy or classificatory system for distinguishing the different kinds or categories of thing to which our different mental concepts refer.

The ontological taxonomy of mental predicates

I have already discussed in [Lecture 3](#) and on the diagram accompanying that lecture the various existential categories which, so it seems to me, we need to distinguish in thinking and talking about the universe in which we find ourselves. I have also discussed in [Lecture 8](#) under the heading of 'Sentence Frame Analysis' the methodology of the decision procedure which, I would argue, we need to employ in determining the existential category to which the potential and actual referents of a given concept belong. We must now consider what happens when we apply this taxonomy of existential categories and this procedure for assigning the referents of a concept to a particular category to the psychological or mental concepts of ordinary language.

We need to begin, as I suggested in [Lecture 8](#), by discovering and classifying in grammatical terms the basic forms of the different concepts which occur within the universe of discourse with which we are concerned. If we do this, we find that the basic forms of mental concepts fall into four grammatical categories (a) nouns and noun phrases (b) adjectives and adjectival phrases (c) verbs and (d) adverbs. Strictly speaking, since as we saw in [Lecture 8](#) and as is implied by the rejection of the notion of a separate mental substance, nouns only occur in the basic forms of mental concepts as the objects of psychological verbs, the psychological nouns in question should perhaps be treated as components of verb phrases which would make all psychological predicates either adjectives and adjectival phrases or verbs and verb phrases. However since psychological verbs only occasionally take psychological nouns as objects and since psychological nouns are often things which people are merely said 'to have', there is a case for treating them as a separate grammatical category, provided we remember that the basic form is something like 'I had a dream' or 'A felt a tingling sensation'.

Psychological Nouns

Now if we classify the basic forms of the various mental concepts we possess according to this grammatical principle, we find that whereas we may say that those concepts whose basic forms are substantival, adjectival or adverbial refer in each case to things of a single existential category, in the case of concepts whose basic form is a verb, at least three different categories are represented. Thus if we consider those psychological nouns which occur as the direct object of verbs like 'have', 'feel' or 'experience' and exclude those metaphorical substantival expressions like 'having something in mind' or 'being out of one's mind' where the noun 'mind' occurs as an indirect rather than as a direct object of the verb, it soon becomes apparent that these expressions invariably refer to some kind of mental occurrence or episode and never to a mental state, that is to say they refer to something that can be and is said to happen or occur or to be happening or occurring at the moment or over the period of time to which reference is being made. They do not refer to as do psychological adjectives to a state which may and usually does persist unchanged beyond the moment or period to which reference is made and need not involve any specific occurrence during that period. Compare here 'A felt a pain in his leg' or 'A was having a dream' with 'A was angry' or 'A is intelligent'. The latter are examples of adjectivally expressed concepts which invariably refer to mental states and never to mental occurrences.

We can define rather more precisely the semantic function of these psychological noun expressions by comparing them with mental activity verbs like 'look', 'listen', 'pay attention', 'ponder', 'calculate' and 'dream' or mental act verbs like 'see', 'hear', 'notice', 'recognise', 'remember', 'infer' and 'decide' which likewise refer to occurrences. The point would seem to be that when we use a psychological noun as the object of a verb like 'have', 'feel' or 'experience' we are emphasising the passive as opposed to the active aspect of mental occurrences, the way they seem to force themselves upon us as passive spectators, in contrast to the control that we ourselves exercise over their occurrence which is what is stressed when a verb form is used. This comes out clearly in those cases where the expression involving a noun is replaceable by means of one which uses a verb form, as for example in the case of 'having a dream' and 'dreaming' or 'having a thought' or 'a thought's occurring to one' and 'thinking'. In these cases the active form of a psychological verb completely replaces the expression using a psychological noun with a shift only in

emphasis from the passive experience to the active production of that experience. There are other cases however, notably the nouns of sensation, where no such replacement is possible, presumably because sensations, as we ordinarily understand them, are not creations of our own mental activity. They are or seem to be imposed on us whether we like it or not by sensory stimulation whether from outside or inside the body over which we have no control. Moreover in those cases where we can arguably replace a sensation noun with a verb, the verb is invariably in the passive - as when one is said to be hurt by a wound in a part of one's body. Another example of what is in effect a passive verb to describe sensory and other kinds of experience is the use of impersonal forms like 'it seems, appears, looks, sound, smells, tastes or feels to me as if so and so'.

We may also note in this connection that with one important exception all the psychological nouns in this group refer to processes, that is to occurrences which are extended over time and involve continuous change over the period of their occurrence. This is true in the case of sensations and it is also true of dreams. The case to which it does not apply is the case of thoughts. For although a train of thought is undoubtedly a process which is extended over time an individual thought is an instantaneous event like a mental act which occurs at a particular moment in time but is not extended in time. It makes no sense to ask how long it took to think a thought, whereas it makes perfectly good sense to ask, however difficult it may be to answer, such questions as 'how long did you feel the pain for?', 'how long did the dream last?' or 'how long did you spend thinking about O?'

Psychological adjectives

The case of the psychological adjectives is very similar. Psychological adjectives, meaning by that those psychological adjectives which are predicated of the person as whole, rather than those such as 'vivid', 'thrilling' or 'painful', which qualify psychological nouns, invariably refer to the various mental states of the person in question. This means that they refer not to what the person in question is currently doing or undergoing, but to what he is liable to do or undergo on other occasions. To say that someone is angry, intelligent or lazy is not to say that he is currently venting his anger, exercising his intelligence or trying to bring it about that he doesn't have to work or otherwise expend energy. He may of course, be doing these things and this may be what prompts the description that is given of him. This however does not alter the fact that you can be angry without expressing anger, be intelligent when doing something that any fool can do and be lazy when currently working very hard.

As in the case of psychological nouns expressions involving psychological adjectives can often be replaced with a psychological verb or psychological verb phrase. Moreover here too we can classify psychological adjectives as those whose sense is expressed by a psychological verb in the active voice which describes what the individual can or is inclined to do, his capacities and traits of character and temperament and those whose sense is expressed by a psychological verb in the passive voice which is characteristic of adjectives like 'angry' 'sad' and 'happy' which refer to temporary moods or states of emotion. In many cases we can only characterise an emotional state by means of what is, etymologically at least, the past participle passive of a psychological verb which has become in effect an adjective in its own right as in 'disgusted', 'pleased', 'excited', 'terrified', 'ashamed' and 'embarrassed'.

Psychological Adverbs

The situation with regard to psychological adverbs is somewhat similar to that of psychological adjectives. I propose however, to reserve the discussion of these until we come to discuss Ryle's 'mongrel categorical' theory of mental activity in [Lecture 19](#).

Psychological Verbs

To Gilbert Ryle (6) must go the credit, not only for drawing attention to the importance of correctly identifying the existential category to which the referents of different mental concepts belong, but also for distinguishing the three basic varieties of psychological verb in terms of what he calls their different 'logical behaviour'. In Chapter V of The Concept of Mind Ryle distinguishes dispositional verbs like 'know', 'believe', 'want' and 'intend' which do not refer or need not refer to anything the individual is actually doing at the time to which reference is made, from mental occurrence verbs which do refer to something which the individual did, was doing, is doing or will do at some specific moment in time or over some specific period of time. Amongst the verbs of mental occurrence he distinguishes two important sub-types namely

activity or task verbs which describe something which the individual can be said to be continuously engaged in doing over a period of time and achievement or 'got it' verbs which refer to something which is done or achieved at a particular moment in time but which the individual cannot be said to spend time in doing; though he can of course, be said to spend time trying to bring about what he can only instantaneously achieve. Examples of psychological task or activity verbs given by Ryle are 'taking care', 'attending', 'applying one's mind', 'concentrating', 'putting one's heart into something', 'thinking what one is doing', 'studying', 'trying', 'enjoying', 'pondering', 'searching', 'testing', 'debating', 'planning', 'looking', 'listening', 'relishing', 'calculating', 'scrutinising', 'inspecting', 'monitoring', 'watching', 'theorising', 'investigating', 'probing', 'scanning', 'savouring' and 'peering'. He also mentions 'noticing' and 'disliking' in this connection, though the former, as I have pointed out elsewhere (4a) is an achievement and the latter like its companion 'liking' is a dispositional verb related to 'wanting'. Examples of psychological achievement verbs given by Ryle are 'discover', 'prove', 'solve', 'detect', 'see', 'hear', 'taste', 'deduce', 'recall', 'descry', 'find', 'perceive', 'observe' (in some of its standard uses), 'discriminate', 'ascertain', 'infer', 'conclude', 'invent' and 'recognise'. Here again he includes an example, the verb 'know' which, as he elsewhere recognises, is a dispositional verb rather than a verb of achievement. Coming to know i.e. perceiving or recognising, is of course, an achievement but knowing is the mental capacity which is thereby achieved.

Ryle's misallocation of the verb 'to know' in this context draws our attention to the fact that what is achieved by the instantaneous event referred to by a psychological achievement verb is always a mental disposition or mental state, a psychological capacity or propensity, such as knowing something, believing something, or intending to do something. Thus noticing, discovering, proving, solving, detecting, seeing, hearing, tasting, recalling, descrying, finding, perceiving, observing (in the relevant sense), discriminating, ascertaining, inventing and recognising all involve subsequently knowing something that one did not previously know. Deducing, inferring and concluding involve coming to believe something which one did not previously believe. While deciding to do something, an achievement verb which Ryle does not mention involves, as we saw in [Lecture 11](#), the subsequent and consequent mental disposition of intending to do what one has decided to do.

Furthermore, as Ryle himself points out when he contrasts task verbs with achievement verbs, psychological achievement verbs presuppose not only a subsequent and consequent mental state or mental disposition, they also presuppose an antecedent mental activity which is directed towards the goal of achieving the mental state or disposition in question. Thus noticing and recognising presupposes an antecedent mental activity of paying attention, seeing an antecedent mental activity of looking at something, discovering and finding an antecedent mental activity of looking for something, hearing presupposes listening, tasting presupposes savouring, recalling presupposes racking one's brains, proving, solving, inferring, concluding and deciding presuppose an antecedent mental activity of thinking, pondering or calculating. It thus appears that the mental act or mental event which is referred by what Ryle calls a psychological achievement verb constitutes what I have described elsewhere (4d) as the 'interface' between an antecedent mental activity or mental process and a subsequent and consequent mental state or mental disposition.

Psychological achievement verbs I argued, "all share the common characteristic of referring to an event that occurs at a particular moment of time, but which is not extended in time in contrast, on the one hand, to processes which are extended over time and are said to be occurring or going on throughout the period of their operation and, on the other hand, to states which, like processes and unlike instantaneous events, are extended in time but unlike processes cannot be said to be occurring at any time during the period over which they apply. As I have observed elsewhere, any process like any state entails at least two events, its beginning and its end (4c). One might add that every instantaneous event is both the end of one state or process and the beginning of another. For example, in Hume's famous case of the billiard balls, when the event of a ball's hitting the cushion occurs, one process (movement towards the cushion) ends and another process (movement away from the cushion) begins. In other cases, as when the ball loses momentum and stops, a process gives way to a state. When the ball is struck by the cue or by another ball, the stationary state gives way to a process of movement, although in such cases our attention is more commonly focused on the transformation of the process whereby the cue moves towards the ball into the process of movement in the ball itself. Changes from one state to another without an intervening process, though logically possible, belong to the realm of magic and miracles rather than to reality as we know it in everyday life" (4d pp. 420-1).

Mental Processes, Mental Events and Mental States

It will by now be obvious that the distinction that Ryle draws between task verbs, achievement verbs and dispositional verbs corresponds to the distinction which I first drew in [Lecture 3](#) and have been repeatedly using in subsequent lectures, including this one, between the three existential categories of Processes, Events and States which are distinguished by their different relationships to time and to change at and over time. In a paper published in 1972 (4c) I put the point as follows:

"The logical taxonomy which I am accustomed to using when discussing mental concepts is one which derives ... from Ryle. The fundamental distinction is between occurrences on the one hand and states on the other. A state is something that is the case for a specifiable period of time, but which cannot like an occurrence be said to occur at a specific point of time. The onset and termination of a state are however, occurrences in this sense. The onset or termination of a state is an event, and events together with processes make up the category of occurrences. Events are distinguishable from processes by the fact that though they can be said to occur at a particular point in time, they are not, like processes, extended in time. By these criteria therefore, a process is an occurrence which is extended in time, something of which it makes sense to say both that it occurred, or more correctly, that it was occurring at a specific point in time and that it was the case (was going on) for a specific period of time.

Corresponding to this distinction between states and two types of occurrence, events and processes, which applies equally to things inorganic and things organic, we have a distinction between three kinds of verbs expressing three kinds of things that a person or personified agency can be said to do. Corresponding to nouns (and adjectives) referring to states we have dispositional verbs like 'know', 'govern', 'own', etc. which someone can be said to do for a period of time but cannot be engaged in doing at any one moment of time. Corresponding to events we have act verbs, of which Ryle's 'achievement verbs' are a sub-class, where one can say of someone that he did it at a specific point in time, but not that he did it or was doing it for a period of time; and corresponding to processes we have activity verbs where one can say of someone that he was doing something both at a particular point in time and for a period of time". (4c p.107).

In the light of our discussion of psychological nouns and psychological adjectives and their relationship to verb forms which occur in the passive rather than the active voice in psychological contexts, we are now in a position to elaborate this classification by distinguishing within each of the three basic categories of mental process, mental event and mental state, two sub-categories corresponding to the use of an active and a passive type of psychological verb and the nouns and adjectives that go with each type of verb. Thus within the category of mental processes we can draw a distinction between mental activities corresponding to Ryle's activity or task verbs and passive mental processes or experiences like the sensations, images, dreams and trains of desultory thought which one can be said to have, feel or experience, without actively controlling or producing them in any obvious way. Similarly within the category of mental events we can distinguish mental acts corresponding to Ryle's achievement verbs from passive mental events like the occurrence of an individual thought; and within the category mental states we can distinguish mental dispositions which include those capacities and propensities of the individual represented by active voice dispositional verbs like 'know', 'believe', 'want', 'like' and 'intend', together with a whole range of psychological trait and capacity adjectives, from the states of mind or emotional states represented in the main by passive voice verbs as when the individual is described as pleased, excited, angered, terrified, disgusted, ashamed, embarrassed, saddened, relieved or relaxed.

Further subdivisions can then be made within the six sub-categories so defined. Thus in the case of mental dispositions (active mental states) we can distinguish specific mental dispositions represented by the dispositional verbs 'know', 'understand', 'believe', 'want', 'like' and 'intend' and general mental dispositions represented by the psychological trait and psychological ability adjectives.

Mental Properties						
Mental Occurrences (Change)				Mental States (No change over time)		
Mental Processes (Extended over time with continuous change)		Mental Events (Change at points of time)		Mental Dispositions (Active)		States of Mind (Passive)
Mental Activities (Active)	Experiences (Passive)	Mental Acts (Active)	Thoughts (Passive)	Specific	General	
<u>Cognitive</u> paying attention to <i>concentrating on</i> studying <i>watching</i> looking for <i>looking at</i> listening to <i>savouring</i> thinking about <i>pondering</i> calculating	<u>Cognitive</u> it seems as if <i>it looks as if</i> it sounds as if <i>it smells as if</i> it tastes as if <i>it feels as if</i> sensation <i>tingle</i> throbbing <i>spots before the eyes</i> ringing in the ears	<u>Cognitive</u> perceive <i>recognise</i> realise <i>notice</i> see <i>hear</i> smell <i>taste</i> feel <i>recall</i> find		<u>Cognitive</u> knows <i>understands (some uses)</i>	<u>Cognitive</u> intelligent <i>stupid</i> well informed <i>ignorant</i> perceptive <i>blind</i> competent <i>incompetent</i> wise <i>foolish</i>	
<u>Putative</u> contemplating <i>dreaming</i> day-dreaming <i>picturing in the minds eye</i>	<u>Putative</u> dream <i>image</i> hallucination <i>train of thought</i>	<u>Putative</u> infer <i>conclude</i> decide that <i>imagine</i>	<u>Putative</u> it occurred to	<u>Putative</u> believes <i>thinks that</i> considers <i>expects</i>	<u>Putative</u> credulous <i>suggestible</i> prejudiced <i>fanatical</i>	
<u>Volitional</u> enjoying <i>trying to</i>	<u>Volitional</u> thrill <i>pain</i> itch <i>nausea</i>	<u>Volitional</u> decide to		<u>Volitional</u> wants <i>needs</i> likes <i>intends</i>	<u>Volitional</u> ambitious <i>headstrong</i> obstinate <i>sympathetic</i> sociable <i>aggressive</i>	<u>Volitional</u> pleased <i>excited</i> angry <i>terrified</i> worried <i>disgusted</i>

A further threefold sub-division is also possible within mental processes (mental activities and experiences), mental acts and mental dispositions, both general and specific, between those which are either aimed at (in the case of some mental activities) or entail the subsequent (in the case of mental acts) or current (in the case of mental disposition) existence of either (a) knowing something (Cognitive), (b) believing something (Putative) or (c) wanting something (Volitional). This classification is set out on the accompanying diagram.

The arrows on this diagram running from left to right across the page are intended to show the causal sequence whereby mental activities like paying attention, thinking and dreaming control the nature of the individual's experience which in turn gives rise to the mental act or event of construing or interpreting one's experience in a given way, thereby establishing a subsequent and consequent mental disposition whereby the individual comes to know or believe certain propositions to be true which in its turn has an effect on the individual's emotional state of mind. As we shall see later, this causal sequence which is implicit in the logical relations between the mental concepts belonging to these different categories as they occur in ordinary discourse bears some remarkable resemblance to the information flow diagrams that are used in contemporary signal detection theory.

Mental States and Logical Behaviourism

Most of what I have to say about the ontological commitments of those mental concepts which are allocated on this classificatory system to the category of mental states has either, as in the case of mental

dispositions already been said in previous lectures or, as in the case of states of mind, will be discussed later in [Section 7](#). In [Lecture 6-1](#) I discussed Ryle's account of dispositional concepts in general and defended his view that statements in which such concepts are predicated of a substance are to be interpreted as concealed hypothetical statements about how the substance in question would behave, if certain contingencies were fulfilled and not as referring to the underlying categorical state of the micro-structure of the substance on which the existence of the disposition in question usually, if not invariably depends. In the course of [Lectures 11, 12 & 13](#) we saw how Ryle's theory of dispositional concepts when applied to mental dispositional concepts like 'intending', 'knowing', 'believing' and 'wanting' can be used to explain both the explanatory function of these concepts in relation to human behaviour and the fact that we usually need to ask the agent questions in order to discover what he knows, believes, wants or intends without having to postulate a private inner state which explains why he acts as he does and on which he is giving an introspective report when he answers our questions.

This Rylean account of dispositional concepts and its application to the interpretation of the mental concepts of ordinary language is the cornerstone of the view known as logical or philosophical behaviourism according to which when we use these concepts we are simply talking in a complicated and roundabout way about the publicly observable behaviour of human beings; our use of these concepts does not at any point commit us to a belief in the existence of any covert or private states, processes or events within the person of whose existence or occurrence he is apprised in a way that no external observer can ever be. It is in fact doubtful whether any philosopher with the possible exception of Norman Malcolm (3) has ever consistently maintained a thorough-going logical behaviourist position. As I have pointed out elsewhere (4a), Ryle himself is reluctantly compelled to recognise a reference to the occurrence of occult processes in at least three cases (a) sensations (b) mental images (seeing things in the mind's eye) and (c) thinking in the special sense of sub-vocal talking to oneself. He makes no mention of the phenomenon of dreaming in [The Concept of Mind](#); but had he done so, he would almost certainly have had to concede defeat here also. Wittgenstein (8), though he puts forward a logical behaviourist account of sensation in the form of the suggestion that "the expressions of pain replace crying", certainly abandoned this view in his later works, if indeed it was ever intended to be taken seriously.

Ryle makes a valiant attempt to apply his dispositional theory both in the case of mental acts, where the fact that mental acts entail, as we have seen, a subsequent and consequent mental disposition makes this plausible, and in the case of mental activities, where the absence of such an entailed reference to mental dispositions makes it very much less so (4a). Nevertheless it is evident that a logical behaviourist thesis is very much easier to sustain in the case of mental states than it is in the case of mental occurrences and that a logical behaviourist thesis with respect to mental occurrences can only hope to succeed in so far as mental occurrences can be construed either, as in the case of mental acts, as the initiation of a mental state or, as in Ryle's 'mongrel categorical' theory of mental activity verbs, as the performance of some publicly observable behaviour as an exercise or expression of a mental disposition. The reason for this is that Ryle's theory of dispositional concepts implies that dispositional concepts per se make no reference to any actual occurrence, from which it follows that any expression which displays the logical characteristics of an expression referring to an occurrence cannot express an unadulterated dispositional concept. This in my view, is why logical behaviourism while providing what I regard as a substantially correct account of mental states, comes unstuck when the attempt is made to apply it to mental occurrences and in particular to mental processes which lack the mental state entailments which are characteristic of mental acts. This is also why I attach such importance to the distinction between these different categories of mental concept.

If however, as I shall argue in [the next lecture](#), logical behaviourism fails as an account of mental processes, it necessarily follows not only that it fails to exclude a reference to overt occurrences in the case of mental acts which as we have seen, involve a reference to an antecedent mental process as well as a subsequent and consequent mental state, but also that it fails to wholly exclude a reference to covert and private occurrences in the case of mental states. For there is nothing in Ryle's theory of dispositional concepts which would prevent us from including various covert mental processes such as pondering, dreaming or concentrating in a particular way amongst the characteristic exercises or expressions of such mental dispositions as knowing, believing, wanting or intending something. It is true that these private or covert exercises of a mental disposition have no special status as compared with the public utterances and actions of the individual which constitute exercises of the same disposition. Consequently we do not need to enquire into the nature of the individual's private mental processes in order to determine what he knows, believes,

wants or intends, if he has already shown what he knows, believes, wants or intends in what he has publicly said and done. These private exercises of his mental dispositions may however, be much more important to the individual himself in making his own assessment of what he knows, believes, wants or intends.

Our knowledge of our own mental states

This mention of the individual's assessment of his own mental state raises another issue with regard to the ontological commitments of mental state concepts which we have not yet adequately discussed.

It is one of the principal virtues of the dispositional theory of mental state concepts as compared with the traditional account in terms of an introspectively observable inner state, that it explains, in a way that the traditional theory cannot do, why it is that we do not simply accept the individual's own assessment of such things as what he knows or understands or how intelligent, vain or ambitious he is, and prefer to make our own assessment on the basis of what he says or does in this and in other situations. There is however a rather different situation in the case of other mental dispositions such as believing, wanting and intending. In the case of believing a particularly strong case can be made out for the view not only that a man cannot be mistaken in claiming to believe what he claims to believe, however mistaken the belief itself may be, but also for the view that a man cannot be said to believe a proposition which he does not know he believes. This logical feature of belief cannot be readily accounted for on a dispositional theory of belief and it has been used, notably by Phillips Griffiths (2) as an argument for rejecting such a theory. I have tried to account for this logical feature in terms of a dispositional theory of belief in a recent article (4b), ~~a copy of which is appended herewith.~~

The case of wanting something is slightly different in this respect from that of believing in that although a man can hardly be mistaken in claiming to want something, there are many cases where we are quite happy to say that a man wants something that he does not know he wants. The fact that man cannot be mistaken in claiming to want something is readily intelligible in terms of Toulmin's (8) observation, mentioned in [Lecture 13](#), that to say that you want something is a way of asking for it and is therefore an exercise of the disposition to act so as to bring about what one desires in which wanting consists. It follows from this that a statement of the form 'I want O' is as much a self-verifying statement as the statement 'I believe that p' and without the complications discussed in the appended article which arise from the fact that believing that p involves a disposition to act on p which is not expressed in saying that one believes p as the disposition to assert p is. On the other hand the fact to which I drew attention in [Lecture 13](#), that one can be disposed to act in such a way as to bring something about, without necessarily being disposed to bring it about by asking for it, explains why it is that a man can want something which he is not disposed to ask for and which consequently he does not know that he wants.

The case of intending is different again. Here not only can a man not be mistaken in claiming to intend to do something, he also as in the case of believing, cannot have an intention which he does not know he has. However the reason for this is rather different from the case of belief. We need in this case I suggest, to bear in mind the distinction drawn in [Lecture 11](#) between intending to do something one has not yet started to try to do and doing something with a particular intention in mind. I argued in [Lecture 11](#) that in the former case a disposition or state of readiness to do something only counts as an intention to do it in so far as it results from either the acceptance of an instruction or a conscious decision to do so and that to forget such a decision or instruction necessarily involves the disappearance of the disposition so to act. This I suggest is sufficient to account both for the fact that one cannot be mistaken in claiming to intend what one claims to intend and for the fact that one cannot be said to have an intention which one does not know one has. Similar considerations apply in the case of acting with an intention in mind. Here cases where a man acts so as to bring about a given result without being aware that he is so doing are simply excluded from the class of intentional actions as we saw in [Lecture 11](#) in discussing hysterical purposive behaviour. There is however, as we also saw in that lecture, a sense in which intentional action involves the control of behaviour by paying attention to the feedback from the movements as they develop, which is inseparable from some kind of knowledge of the object or goal of the behaviour in question, even though this knowledge may not always be expressible in words.

Continuous states and states of Mind

If in the light of the foregoing considerations we can accept that a dispositional analysis along Rylean lines is the correct solution to the conceptual analysis of those concepts which I have labelled as mental

dispositions, the question arises as to what extent, if at all, this analysis can be applied to mental states in general and specifically to those emotional states which I have classified under the heading of states of mind. This is a problem which we shall discuss further in Section 7. For the moment however, some consideration needs to be given to an argument to be found in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (9, p. 59) where he draws an important distinction between these two types of mental state. In quoting this passage I have substituted the expression 'State of mind' for the expression 'mental state' which Miss Anscombe uses to translate Wittgenstein's 'seelischer Zustand' in order to bring the terminology into line not only with my own terminology but also, I believe more into line with ordinary English usage. So altered the passage reads in English as follows:

"Understanding a word': a state. But a state of mind? - Depression, excitement, pain, are called states of mind. Carry out a grammatical investigation as follows: we say

'He was depressed the whole day'

'He was in great excitement the whole day'

'He has been in continuous pain since yesterday'

We also say 'Since yesterday, I have understood this word'. 'Continuously', though? To be sure one can speak of an interruption of understanding. But in what cases? Compare: 'When did you stop understanding that word?'"

Before examining this argument and its implications it is worth asking to what extent the examples which Wittgenstein gives are typical of what I have called mental dispositions on the one hand and states of mind on the other. To what extent is 'understanding something' typical of other mental dispositions? Is Wittgenstein justified in treating pain as a state of mind along with 'mood words' as Ryle calls them, like excitement and depression? To the former question the answer must surely be that what is true of 'understand' is certainly also true of other cognitive and putative dispositional verbs like 'know' and 'believe'. The same goes but with certain qualifications for volitional dispositional verbs like 'want' and 'intend' where one can sometimes speak intelligibly of wanting to satisfy some very pressing desire such as a biological need continuously all afternoon or of being continuously geared up in readiness to do something over a similar period which is arguably a form of intention. On the other hand it would be absurd to talk of continuously wanting to get one's degree or continuously intending to take an examination on a particular day for weeks on end or even for a whole day. The conclusion seems to be that while some desires and some states of readiness, if not intentions, do qualify as states of mind by Wittgenstein's criteria, wants and intentions in general do not.

With regard to the status of pain as an example of a state of mind we need to recognise that while pain in the sense in which pain is felt is undoubtedly a sensation and therefore a mental process rather than a mental state, it is one of the distinguishing marks of pain, which differentiates it from all other sensations apart from nausea, that it causes acute anguish and distress, and anguish and distress are undoubtedly both mental states and states of mind in the sense in which I use those terms. There are of course certain people usually referred to as masochists who under certain circumstances are able to enjoy sensations of pain instead of being distressed by them. But although a masochist can quite properly be said to feel the pain, he could hardly be described as being in pain. For to be in pain entails being in anguish and distress as a result of the pain sensations one feels which the masochist clearly is not. Thus although the pain that is felt is a sensation and hence a mental process rather than a mental state, 'being in pain' refers primarily to the state of mind normally induced by prolonged and severe pain sensations rather than to the sensations themselves, which justifies Wittgenstein's use of 'being in pain' as an example of a state of mind. The need to distinguish between emotional states or states of mind and the more standard varieties of mental capacity and tendency was recognised by Ryle in his chapter on Emotion in The Concept of Mind (6, Chapter IV, pp. 90 & 100) where he draws a distinction between 'long term motives' and mood words as 'short-term tendency words'. However this distinction which Ryle does not develop systematically encounters the objection that the length of the term of these different mental states is so variable and indeterminate that the distinction is virtually meaningless. A belief or a desire which Ryle would count as a long-term tendency may last for only a few seconds or even less, while some moods such as depression may last for months or even years.

Wittgenstein's account which uses the criterion of the applicability or not of the adverb 'continuously' to distinguish what my colleague Bill Rees has aptly called 'continuous states' (5) from other states and dispositions which people and things cannot be said to be continuously in, is clearly to be preferred to that of Ryle. It raises the question however, which is also raised by Wittgenstein's inclusion of pain as a

state of mind, as to whether or not these states of mind are not perhaps more like processes than they are like the kind of mental state I have referred to as mental dispositions and whether indeed a dispositional analysis is correct as an account of the concepts under which they fall. My own view is that Ryle's assertion of the dispositional character of mood and emotion words is basically correct. Nevertheless there is an important difference between states of mind and mental dispositions proper to which the application of the adverb 'continuously' in the former case, but not in the latter, draws our attention, in that, although to describe someone as being in a particular state of mind does not specify the occurrence of any particular kind of behaviour at the moment or over the period in question, being in a particular state of mind does involve a change in the whole character of the individual's behaviour, thought and experience so long as the state persists, in marked contrast to mental dispositions like 'knowing', 'believing', 'wanting' or 'intending' which only bring about a change in the individual's thought and behaviour when a particular topic arises in conversation or when relevant circumstances occur in the environment. Only then does the effect of what is known, believed, wanted or intended appear. The effect of a state of mind by contrast is shown continuously in a thousand subtle ways.

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