CARTESIAN DUALISM AND ITS METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS IN TODAY'S PHILOSOPHICAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines René Descartes' theory of substance dualism in the context of its metaphysical implications within our contemporary ambit. Descartes' theory of substance dualism was born out of his philosophical impetus to debunk scepticism by establishing a foundational knowledge claim built on reason and the indubitable existence of the thinking self, and to respond critically to the rise of mechanical science that was flourishing in the 17th century. This dualism posits the existence of two distinct substances, the mind and the body, which interact causally with each other. As a result, Descartes veered off the Aristotelian hylomorphic framework, which unified the form (soul) and the matter (body) as a single substance.

The study begins with a conceptual clarification of "substance" and "dualism," drawing insights from both classical and modern thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Locke. It then juxtaposes Descartes' substance dualism with Aristotle's theory of substance, emphasizing the shift from a unified model to a dualistic model. Thus, Descartes' cogito argument is presented as the foundational moment in this paradigm shift.

Through a comparative analysis, this paper investigates the metaphysical implications of Descartes' substance dualism across several philosophical domains, including issues on personal identity, epistemology, scientific physicalism, neuroscience, the mind-body interaction problem, on free will and moral responsibility, the afterlife, and lastly, on Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is the "new science" in our world today.

However, despite the foundational impact of the Cartesian dualism and its effort to account for consciousness, the paper argues that the Cartesian dualism, though influential, remains philosophically problematic and inept in debunking scepticism. Its legacy has ignited and continues to inspire diverse responses from philosophers and schools of thought such as occasionalism, parallelism, physicalism, and functionalism, all seeking to address the persistent mind-body problem it created.

Introduction

Historically, philosophers have contended with questions that border on reality and human existence, such as what constitutes reality? What is the limit of human knowledge? Can we know with certainty? These problems have been examined from various worldviews in the history of philosophy, including empiricism, rationalism, materialism, and phenomenology, among others.

Descartes' metaphysical framework of substance dualism is not overlooked in this regard. This framework shifted from the Aristotelian traditional metaphysics on the concept of substance to a dualistic notion of substance, which posits the possibility of the existence of two distinct

yet related substances: the mind and the body.[1]. The Cartesian dualism became part of the legacies that shaped Western philosophical inquiries. It was borne out of his intellectual propensity to account for epistemic certainty in the offer to debunk scepticism. This led him to the cogito argument, which brought about the existence of the mind as a separate substance from the body.

Descartes' substance dualism provided a foundational framework for constructing knowledge through the use of reason. However, despite his intriguing and thought-provoking approach, his position has been labelled by a series of criticisms; some such critics are John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Waqar Aslam, and Philp Goff. For instance, Goff critiques the Cartesian dualism by arguing that the substance dualism, which he terms "Galileo's error," obscures consciousness and leads us to reject its fundamental ontological role.[2]

This paper, therefore, aims to critically expose the metaphysical implications of Descartes' substance dualism, most especially as it borders on our contemporary ambit, such as neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and personal identity. It will make a juxtaposition with the traditional Aristotelian concept of substance, and then assess the continuing relevance and limitations of Descartes' metaphysical legacy in today's philosophical landscape.

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[1] René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy , trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17-23.

[2] Philip Goff, Galileo's Error: Foundations for a New Science of Consciousness (New York: Pantheon, 2019), 1–3.

1. Conceptual Clarification

Substance

The notion of a substance has a long history going back to ancient Greek metaphysics, most prominently to Aristotle, and it has been understood and applied in various ways since then. Etymologically, the concept "substance" has its origin in the Greek word "ousia," which translates to "being" or "essence." The term, as used in philosophy, raises some problems as to its understanding and usage. It connotes things themselves and can also be used to refer to their properties.

Aristotle sees substance as an entity that exists independently and underlies all properties, changes, and relations.[3] Aristotle distinguished between two categories of substance: primary and secondary substance. Primary substances are the fundamental realities that exist independently on their own and are not predicated on anything (for instance, A horse); while the latter, is the species or genre to which the primary substance belongs, and they depend on the primary substance for their existence (the general category of animal).

For Kant, a substance is a thing in itself. It is the status of things as they are independent of representation and observation.[4] It is closely related to his concept of the noumena or the object of inquiry. It could be said to be

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[3] Anjov, Terfa Kahaga, and Samuel Okoh Oche. "Aristotle's Doctrine of Substance Revisited." *Nigerian Journal of Applied Philosophy* 1, no. 1, (2023): 118-131.

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Marcus Weigelt (Penguin Classics, 2003), A 249/B 306.

the ontologically independent particulars. He also defines substance as a phenomenal substance that is known through perception.

John Locke defines substance as a substratum or underlying reality that supports the existence of certain properties and attributes. He considers substance to be unknown and unknowable, and that we can only know its properties and attributes. For example, the shape, color, and size of a horse. This position of Locke is borne out of his empiricist worldview.

For Descartes, a substance is an entity that exists independently. Its existence does not depend on any other entity except possibly God. He distinguished between three kinds of substances:

(i) God: This is the only uncreated substance, whose existence is entirely independent of any other entity.
(ii) Mind: This substance is characterized by its principal attribute of thought. For Descartes, the mind is a non-material substance that exists independently of the body, with thought being its essence.
(iii) Body: This substance is characterized by its principal attribute of extension. This meaning takes up space and has dimensions such as length, breadth, and depth; for example, all physical objects.

Dualism

This is a metaphysical concept that posits the existence of two fundamental substances or realms that are separate

and distinct from one another. This theory was supported by many philosophers and became a worldview for their philosophical inquiries. Some proponents of this theory are Plato, Descartes, Kant, John Locke, and Leibniz.

Plato, in his theory of Forms, gave ample exposition on the dualist theory. He believed in the existence of two separate realms: the world of forms and the world of particulars. He argued that the world of forms is the true and eternal reality, while the world of particulars is a mere appearance.[5]

Kant also shares this same idea in his Transcendental Idealism, when he noted that the mind and body are separate entities.[6] For him, the mind is a non-physical substance that imposes structure and meaning on our sense perception.[7] In this type of dualism, Leibniz also agrees with the classification of the mind and body, maintaining that the mind interacts with the body through a process of preestablished harmony—that is, it was set up by God at the creation of the universe.

More so, the theory of dualism in the scope of metaphysics is grouped into the following: Predicate dualism, Property dualism, and Substance dualism.

Predicate dualism: This theory posits that there are fundamental types of predicates that cannot be reduced to

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[5] David Sedley, *"An Introduction to Plato's Theory of Forms."* Royal Institute of
[6] Philosophy Supplement 78 (July 2016) 3–22.
Peter Frederick Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1966), 20-22.
[7] Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 12-15.

a single framework. It focuses on the linguistic and conceptual distinction between mental and physical predicates in the scope of how they are described and understood.[8] For example, what we say and the reality they suggest (what they do) cannot be reduced to a single framework; they do not have the same constitutive structure. The word "disease" in its psychological state has no particular description in its physical state; as such, it cannot be reduced to one framework.[9] Philosophers like Donald Davidson and Jerry Fodor support this view.

Property dualism: This model is a step stronger than that of predicate dualism. This theory holds that there are two essential kinds of properties in the world. In other words, it posits the existence of one fundamental substance (material substance) but argues that this substance can have two distinct types of properties: physical properties and mental properties. For instance, physical substances, such as brains, can have both physical properties (e.g., weight and mass) and mental properties (e.g., beliefs and perceptions). Proponents of this theory are Christof Koch and David Chalmers.

Substance dualism: This theory postulates the existence of two distinct substances: the mind and the body. The former is considered an entity, often associated with consciousness and self-awareness, while the latter is a

[8] Davidson, D., 'Mental events', in L. Foster and J. W. Swanson (eds.), *Experience and Theory*, (London: Duckworth, 1971), 207–224.

[9] Jerry A. Fodor, 'Special Sciences and the Disunity of Science as A Working Hypothesis', *Synthese*, 28, (1974): 77–115.

material entity governed by the laws of physics.[10] Proponents of this theory, like Descartes and Malebranche, argue that the mind can exist independently of the body.

Thus, within the scope of this paper, we shall be focusing on the category of *substance dualism*. However, before moving any further, it is apposite to note that Descartes' dualism was also a response to the erosion of the traditional Aristotelian concept of substance after the Middle Ages. This then raises the question: what was the content of Aristotle's concept of substance?

2. Traditional Aristotelian Concept of Substance: An Understanding

The traditional Aristotelian concept of substance was a shift from Plato's theory of Forms, which posits that matter and form are two separate entities. Matter is changing and not real, and the Form, which is the essence of things, is real and unchanging. For Aristotle, the matter and the form do not exist independently. They are what make up the composition of a substance. For example, the form of a ship is inseparable from the ship itself. This notion of substance is best explained in his theory of hylomorphism. Hylomorphism is a metaphysical concept that every natural body consists of two intrinsic principles. Matter is subjected to change and

10 Samuel Guttenplan, ed., A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 256–267.

transformation (potentiality), and the form is unchanging and permanent (actuality)[11]
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In the case of animate entities in the universe, for example, plants and animals, their form is their soul, which gives the body the ability to perform its characteristic functions. The soul is not separate from the body, but it is the essence of the body; in other words, it is the actuality of a living being, while the body is the potentiality.[12] When the substances are destroyed, the form that makes them alive through growth, movements, and senses is gone; however, Aristotle did not provide a clear answer to the question of the soul's existence after death. It is on this note that many scholars have debated the position of Aristotle on account of the soul; some, such as Aquinas and Plotinus, maintain that the soul is immortal. In contrast, others like Alexander of Aphrodisias and Avicenna disagree with this claim, positing that the soul is mortal and ceases to exist when the matter (body) is gone.

Hence, for Aristotle, the essence of things is called the "Substantial Form". It makes and gives meaning to the substance of things. It makes a thing what it is and makes it possible to categorize it.

3. Descartes' Substance Dualism: Towards A Response

Descartes' substance dualism was not a direct response to Aristotle; it was a response to the philosophical and

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[11] David Sedley, "An Introduction to Plato's Theory of Forms." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 78 2016: 3–22.

[12] Edwin Hartman, "Substance, Body, and Soul: Aristotelian Investigations," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 43 (1977): 16.

scientific development of his time. Although we can say that Descartes took a paradigm shift away from Aristotle's notion of substance. Many factors led Descartes to this submission, such as philosophical influences, personal experiences, and scientific developments. For the scope of our research, we shall be addressing two major factors. These are the problems of scepticism and the rise of mechanism during his time.

Scepticism

Scepticism is a philosophical position that argues that true knowledge (katalepsis) is unattainable for humans. As a result, while truth may exist, humans cannot apprehend it with certainty. Also, for them, as certainty is impossible, the wise person should suspend judgment on all matters, refraining from assent to any claim of knowledge.[13] Therefore, in the bid to account for epistemic certainty, Descartes decided to create a foundational structure built by reason, which is indubitable, incorrigible, and infallible, and upon which knowledge can be built.

The Rise of Mechanism

This was during the 17th century, when there was a rise in scientism. This period saw a significant shift away from the traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy that places emphasis on teleology, toward a mechanistic view

[13] Anthony U. Ezebuiro, Obioma C. Anichebe, and A. C. Ojimba, "Should Skepticism Be Discredited?" *Conatus –Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2021): 61–81, https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.24589.

that sought to understand all natural phenomena in terms of physical laws.[14] This led Descartes to view the body as a complex machine that operates according to physical laws distinct from the non-physical mind. This reinforces that consciousness, which is separate from the body, must exist outside the physical realm and laws. It is on this note that Descartes needed to create a justification for the existence of the mind, which he considers to be responsible for human consciousness, and which operates outside mechanical laws.

The Cogito Argument: The Genesis of the Dualism

In accounting for epistemic certainty using reason and to argue for the existence of the mind as distinct from the body, Descartes began by engaging in the methodic doubt. He decided to doubt all that he had known, which for him was to build a clear foundation for knowledge. In the process of his doubting, he realized he was thinking, and that gave room for the existence of the thinking self (mind), which is separate from the body that is given by the mechanical laws. It is premised on this argument that Descartes arrives at the famous conclusion, cogito, ergo sum, which translates to "I think, therefore I am." As a result, for Descartes, there are two distinct substances: the mind and the body, which exist independently. For him, the mind is an immaterial thinking entity, while the body

14 Deo Kenneth Camargo, "Cartesian Dualism: Bridging Descartes' Mind-Body Dichotomy to Contemporary Psychology and Mental Health," *Journal of Contemporary Philosophical and Anthropological Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.59652/jcpas.v3i2.513

is a material and extended entity.[15] This is in contrast to the Aristotelian notion of the soul as the form of the body, which subsumes matter and form into one single substance.

The Body

For material things, Descartes views them as part of a single substance, which he calls a corporeal (extended) substance. The essential property of this substance is extension (res extensa), meaning that it occupies space and is governed by mechanical laws. Descartes views the body as a machine that operates according to mechanical principles and lacks inherent mental properties. This, for him, includes animals, which he considers to be purely mechanical systems without souls or minds.

Also, the body is divisible into parts, much like cutting paper into smaller pieces. It also relates to the mind through causal influence. Hence, Descartes suggests that the pineal gland is the site where the mind interacts with the body, facilitating this causal exchange between them.[16]

The Mind

The mind, for Descartes, is characterized by its principal attributes of thought, imagination, and sensation. He

[15] Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. John Cottingham (Trans.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 15.

[16] Study.com, "Dualism in Psychology | Definition, Theory & Examples," accessed April 16, 2025, https://study.com/learn/lesson/dualism-psychology-overview-examples.html.

referred to the mind as "res cogitans," meaning a "thinking substance". Hence, the mind is the first substance he can be certain of, as he cannot doubt his thinking without affirming his existence as a thinking being[17]. This becomes the key concept for his substance dualism.

Consequently, the Cartesian substance dualism primarily addresses the distinction between the mind and the body, not the nature of material objects. It is most explicitly applied to humans, where the mind (soul) is considered an immaterial substance capable of existing independently of the body.

4. Towards A Comparative Analysis

The Cartesian substance dualism seeks to refine and address the traditional Aristotelian concept of substance. On the very nature of substance, the Aristotelian concept posits that it's a composite of matter and form; a unity of body and soul, wherein the soul is the form of the body and the body is matter organized by the form. This was rejected by Descartes, who argues that the mind and body are two distinct substances, yet they relate to each other. The mind is an immaterial substance, and the body is an

[17] Descartes' notion of the mind is compatible with theological positions that claim that immortal souls occupy an independent realm of existence distinct from that of the physical world; thus, proponents of this Cartesian theory tend to equate the soul with the mind. Cf. Moreland, J. P. "The Origin of the Soul in Light of Twinning, Cloning, and Frozen Embryos," *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics.* 3 (1) (2010): 1–12.

extended, non-thinking substance. Thus, Descartes made a shift from unity to duality, which set the agenda for contemporary debates in philosophy of mind, especially regarding consciousness and personal identity.[18]

5. The Metaphysical Implications of the Cartesian Substance Dualism

Descartes' substance dualism, which is a response to the Aristotelian notion of substance, was born out of his intellectual concern to defeat scepticism; this gave birth to various philosophical problems that have been argued in the history of modern philosophy to date. However, we shall be focusing on the metaphysical implications of substance dualism, and this is seen in the following:

1. On Personal Identity

Descartes' substance dualism helps us to account for the notion of personal identity. In the scope of personal identity, many factors must be considered. The name of the person, the colour, the relationship, the country, the consciousness, and many others. Mel Thompson argues that what makes for personal identity "is the way in which the body, mind, and social function all come together in a unique combination."[19] In practice, identity is not a matter of body and mind only, but of an integrated functioning of

[18] Howard Robinson, "Dualism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2023 Edition, (accessed April 28, 2025). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/dualism/.

[19] Mel Thompson, *Philosophy in a Week*, (Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), 61.

the entity comprising both body and mind. It is on this note that P. F. Strawson affirms that a person is such that both physical characteristics and states of consciousness can be ascribed to it. This is evident in Descartes' position on how the mind relates to the body.

Also, persistence is a key theme that accounts for personal identity over time. Just as Aristotle in his doctrine of hylomorphism noted that the Form is what persists despite the matter being subjected to changes, Descartes argues that the thoughts may vary as well as the body, which is subjected to change, but to account for personal identity over time, the thinking mind accounts for a person's identity since it remains the same over time. This persistence reinforces the notion of personal identity; the self is identified with the mind or soul, not with the changing body or brain.

2. Problem of Knowing Other Minds

Giving credence to the Cartesian Dualism, one cannot have direct knowledge of the minds of others. If minds are private and non-physical, and accessible only from the first-person perspective, then we can never directly access or observe another person's mind. We can only know by analogy, and this is gained through the analysis of what is experienced from the interaction between the mind and the body, such as actions, writing, facial expressions, and so on. This gives room for solipsism since we can only know our mind and experiences, and cannot be certain of the existence of others or the external world.

3. Against Physicalism and the Operations of Science

The Cartesian dualism stands in contrast to physicalism, which is a theory that argues that everything is ultimately

physical and that mental phenomena are either identical to or dependent upon physical processes. Since the mind in Cartesian dualism is not located in space and is immaterial, it goes beyond the domain of science. Science cannot fully explain consciousness or mental phenomena, since these are not reducible to physical processes.

4. On Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Dualism supports the notion of free will by arguing that a non-physical mind is rightly capable of making undetermined choices. This has ample implications for discussions about moral responsibility and human agency. The human person in society is seen as a responsible entity and not an individual that is programmed for a desired goal, as in the case of robots that work with given algorithms. This puts in the human person the consciousness to strive to be a better citizen in society, and as a result, society is seen as a "living society" that is characterized by rational, conscious, and responsible people. For example, Denmark topped the 2024 World Economic ESG Index with a score of 98.8 percent, leading environmental, social, and governance assessments.[20] This landmark is owed to the integral responsibility of both their citizens and leaders.

5. The Possibility of Life After Death

The mind and the body, according to Descartes, are two separate entities, yet they relate together. They exist

[20] World Economics. "ESG Index Rankings – 2024." *World Economics*. Accessed June 5, 2025. https://www.worldeconomics.com/Rankings/ESG-Governance.aspx

independently; that is, the mind can exist outside of the body. This reaffirms the possibility of the existence of the mind (soul) even after death, which has been an age-old debate in the history of philosophy. Although during the medieval epoch, various theological frameworks were put in place to elaborate on issues about the afterlife by including concepts of heaven, hell, purgatory, and particular judgment immediately after death.[21] Some of which can be seen in the works of Aquinas, Augustine, and Anselm.

However, many modern and contemporary thinkers followed this line of thought in a more refined way to suit their philosophical interests. For instance, John Locke did not necessarily argue for the soul's immortality in the traditional sense, but he believed in the possibility of an afterlife and the continuation of personal identity, which is tied to consciousness.[22] Leibniz, on the other hand, believed in the immortality of the soul. He argues that the soul is a monad that continues to exist even after the death of the body.[23] This same view was shared by Kant when

[21] Helen Foxhall Forbes, "The Theology of the Afterlife in the Early Middle Ages, c. 400–c. 1100," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 153–175.

[22] Diego Lucci, "The Soul and the Last Judgment," in *John Locke's Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 106–133.

[23] Filippo Costantini, "There is No Anima Mundi: Leibniz on the Impossibility of a Soul of the World," *Ergo* 10, no. 20 (2023): 833–859, https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.6785.

he noted that the immortality of the soul is the practical reason necessary for moral accountability and the pursuit of virtue.

6. Interaction Problem

The Cartesian substance dualism is unclear about how the non-extended mind and extended body causally interact. In other words, it becomes difficult to explain how mental intentions cause physical actions or how bodily sensations produce mental experiences. However, Descartes responded to this problem by arguing that the place of interaction is located in the brain (pineal gland), although this response was a physiological hypothesis rather than a philosophical solution. He went further to claim that while we can distinctly conceive mind and body as separate, our experiences as embodied beings give us a direct, though less clear, understanding of how they interact. Hence, Descartes maintained that interaction is a basic fact of human nature, even if its mechanism remains mysterious.[24] Nonetheless, despite Descartes's efforts to address the mind-body problem, the issue remains a central concern in the philosophy of mind discourse, as well as in recent advancements in artificial intelligence, which we will discuss in the next segment.

[24]Broughton, Janet and Mattern, Ruth, "Reinterpreting Descartes on the Notion of the Union of Mind and Body," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (1978):23-32.

7. On Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is that branch of computer science that focuses on creating machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include learning and recognizing patterns, reasoning, solving problems, and making informed decisions.

Stuart Russell & Peter Norvig (2010) gave AI a more pragmatic nuance when they noted that AI is "the study of agents that receive precepts from the environment and perform actions."[25] This gives the notion of AI a broadened understanding to include a system that interacts with the immediate environment. It is premised on this that they propose four ways of defining AI: as (a) acting like humans, (b) thinking like humans, (c) thinking rationally, and (d) acting rationally.[26]

The mind-body problem has deep implications for artificial intelligence, especially regarding consciousness, embodiment, and the possibility of machine minds. On one hand, if Cartesian dualism is plausible, then AI, which is purely physical, cannot be said to be conscious since it has no mind. On the other hand, if it falls into the category of those who attempted to remedy the mind-body problem created by the Cartesian dualism, for instance, physicalism (which advocates that mental states are identical to physical states in the brain) or functionalism

[25] Stuart, Russell, and Norvig, Peter, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*. 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 34.

[26] Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach, 3rd ed., 2.

(which equates the mind with brain functions), then we can argue for the fact that AI has consciousness.

However, if we agree with the above claim that AI has consciousness, then we are faced with the salient question: Is consciousness in machines subjective? In responding to this question, the paper agrees with David J. Chalmers in his work Facing Up to the Hard Problem of Consciousness, where he argues that AI may simulate intelligent behaviour but still lacks subjective experience. This is because the AI models are built with certain algorithms to meet certain goals in a preferred manner, which in turn questions the idea of absolute autonomy in machines. For example, a robot might process data identically to a human, but we are not sure it feels anything. This nullifies the idea of intelligent machines having subjective conscious experience.[27].

8. Conclusion

Since the emergence of Cartesian substance dualism, there has been a series of criticisms that have been levelled at the position. One pronounced critique is Descartes' inability to provide a clear understanding of how the mind interacts with the body. Critics argue that it is metaphysically mysterious and scientifically implausible that two distinct substances could affect each other causally. Descartes maintains that the interaction takes place in the pineal gland. This position creates more problems for him. Since the brain is a physical entity?

[27] David J. Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Hard Problem of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 200-219.

How then can that which is immaterial (mind) be said to relate to the body in a material space?

However, some Cartesian followers, like Arnold Geulincx and Nicolas Malebranche, unable to solve the interaction problem, proposed the occasionalism theory, which is the position that God intervenes to coordinate mind and body interactions. This move is criticized for undermining natural causation and making Cartesian dualism less scientifically plausible.

Gilbert Ryle rejected the Cartesian dualism, calling it a categorial mistake with the mind being a non-physical "ghost" inhabiting a physical "machine" (the body). He maintains that the Cartesian dualism treats the mind as if it belongs to the same logical category as physical objects, when it does not. For Ryle, mental states generated by the mind should be understood as patterns of behaviour or dispositions to behave in certain ways, not as hidden, ghostly entities inside the body. Simply put, the mind is expressed in human behaviour. For example, asking "Where is the mind?" as if it were an entity located somewhere is a category mistake, or asking "Where is the university?" after being shown all the administrative blocks and libraries.[28]

Moreover, modern neuroscience and psychology subscribe to Ryle's position, challenging Cartesian dualism by demonstrating strong correlations between

28 Shanjendu Nath, "Ryle as a Critique of Descartes' Mind-Body Dualism," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 3, no. 7 (2013): 1–5, https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0713/ijsrp-p19101.pdf

brain states and mental states, suggesting that mental phenomena are closely tied to physical processes. This empirical claim raises doubts about the existence of an immaterial mind independent of the human body.

Nonetheless, despite how rigorous and fascinating the Cartesian dualism seems, and its impact on modern philosophy, particularly in the area of consciousness, AI, and neuroscience, there remains an inherent difficulty in the theory, which makes it fall back to the problem of scepticism, and gives rise to different contemporary theories such as occasionalism, physicalism, functionalism, parallelism, and epiphenomenalism, which are all attempts to put an end to the mind-body problem that Descartes created.

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