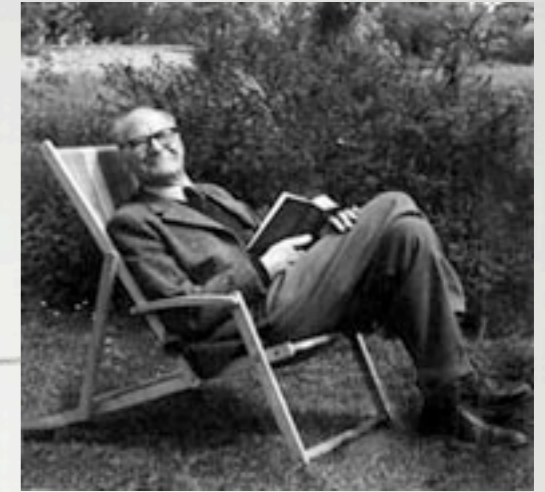


# Behaviourism II

Phil 255

# In Philosophy: Ryle

---



- Philosophical views mirrored those of the logical positivists
  - Philosophy should have a clarificatory role
- The science of interest to him was psychology
- Derided Cartesian dualism for positing a “ghost in the machine”
- Accused most psychologists of a serious “category mistake”
- He didn’t deny the existence of mind, just thought most psychologists mis-characterized the concept

# Criticism of standard usage

---

- Begins by sketching opposing view: a “folk psychological” description of thinking
- But thinking is more than just ‘theoretical deduction’: it’s everywhere, all the time
- He notes a “puzzling element” in this standard characterization
  - Puzzling because it’s unlike all other pursuits (singing, etc.)
- We can’t answer a variety of straightforward questions about thinking
- We shouldn’t think of thinking as being the moving around of some kind of stuff
  - Thinking just is a kind of behaviour

# Positive View

---

- Considers a number of examples of thinking: rowing; admiring roses (p.99)
- Ryle points out that there “incipient thoughts,” related to the main topics, i.e., thinking is somehow directed, or dispositional
- People don’t ‘forget’ threshold thoughts, they just don’t always report them
  - Hence, thoughts are ‘constitutionally inceptive’
- Can answer the two dominant problems:
  - Chronicling:
  - Mind-stuff:
- “thinking is not a rival occupation to the special occupations”

# Troubles with behaviourism

---

- Trouble 1: Diffuseness
- Externalism limits available kinds of explanation
- E.g., emotion explanations needed to be dispositional
  - Anger, love expressed by any number of behavioural acts
  - Highly contextual, hence infinite list
- Such explanations will require long disjunctive lists of behaviour
- Circularity: What groups a set of behaviours as related?

- Need a 'self' to evaluate (or at least a physiological context)
- Watson thought that emotion was the sensation of visceral changes
  - removes autonomy
  - physiological changes don't always result in overt behavioural ones
  - are visceral changes variable enough?
- Maybe have a broader definition of 'physiology'?
  - Even less autonomy

# Trouble 2: Privacy

---

- Explaining the 'easy' cases for introspectionists: e.g.,
- Watson's solution:
  - thinking is simply truncated speech (recall problems)
- Skinner's solution:
  - Self-prediction, but
    - we have to be alert, sophisticated detectives
    - doesn't account for a novel plan
    - it doesn't address the problem(!)

- Ryle's version (can we use dispositions) 'Le Penseur':
  - he isn't doing anything publically observable and
  - nothing follows what he's doing
- Ryle's solution (MM, p. 75):
  - 'as-if' mutterings (that aren't ghostly or symbolic)
  - sleeping analogy
    - why bother with the pretending when thinking?
    - how do you explain non-moving pretending?

# Trouble 3: Productivity

---

- Noam Chomsky ('the' linguist): 1956 Review of Skinner's 'Verbal Behavior'
- Argued that the productivity of language cannot be explained by behaviourists.
- Behaviourist explanation of language was essentially statistical
- Couldn't explain
  - novel grammaticality
  - ambiguity
  - embedded clauses
- One of the main events in the 'cognitive revolution' of the 60s

# The legacy

---

- Many aspects of behaviorist methodology:
  - scientific, materialist approach
  - behaviour as main measure of mental function
- Internal processes like 'imagery' were not taken seriously until the 1970s.
- studying 'consciousness' is only now scientifically respectable
- New movements in philosophy and psychology, like dynamicism, continue espouse behaviorist methods