

CHAPTER -1

What is Consciousness?

Consciousness occupies a fundamental place in our daily life. Despite all sustained attempt by philosophers and scientists it still remains a deep mystery. Not only philosophical discussion but many disciplines like literature, natural sciences assume and use different concept of consciousness. Recent neuroscientific discussion about consciousness is not an exception. Philosophers try to explain the meaning of the word 'consciousness' and want to know the nature, character and the actions of 'consciousness'. So it is a very important concept in philosophy.

The word 'consciousness' literally means "the waking state of the mind". It derives from the Latin words 'cum' (together with) and 'scire' (knowing). In the original sense, two people who know something together are said to be conscious of it 'to one another'. The Latin conjunction of 'cum' and 'scire' also has an emphatic use, so that being 'conscious of something' simply means knowing it, or, knowing it well. In this sense, the word 'consciousness' can also be used as an adjective a 'knowing' being such as a normal person is a conscious being, while an 'unknowing being such as plant or sleeping person is an unconscious being'.¹ However, the word 'consciousness' is used in different ways. 'It is sometimes used for the ability to discriminate stimuli, or to report information, or to monitor internal states, or to control behavior.'² Sometimes it is used as organism consciousness or control consciousness, or state/event consciousness, or reportability or introspective consciousness, or subjective consciousness or self-consciousness.³ Philosophers have used the term 'consciousness' for discussion about four main topics: knowledge in general, intentionality, introspection and phenomenal experience.⁴ The concept of consciousness is

sometimes described as a hybrid or a mongrel concept. The word 'consciousness' connotes a number of different concepts and denotes a number of different phenomena.

In 19-th century many theorists have noted that thoughts, desires and emotions sometimes occur unconsciously. Even perceptions are said to occur subliminally, without being conscious. Focusing on this sense, we use the term 'conscious' to apply to three distinct and independent phenomena. We call a person or other creature conscious when it is awake and responsive to sensory stimulation. But we also speak of people and other creatures as conscious of something when the person or creature senses or perceives that thing or has a thought about it as being present. Finally, we apply the term to refer to some mental states of which a creature is wholly unaware.

Conscious experience is the most familiar thing to any subject of such experience. We know our consciousness more intimately than anything else. Philosophers have struggled to understand the phenomenon of consciousness. To be conscious it is only necessary to be aware of the outside world. When we think, perceive and act a sort of information processing takes place with an internal aspect, which is characterized as the subjective quality of experience. There is something it feels like to be a cognitive agent. This internal aspect is identified as conscious experience. Following Thomas Nagel we can say that a being is conscious if there is something it is like to be that being. Thus a mental state is conscious if it has a qualitative feel known as phenomenal qualities or qualia. To be conscious, in this sense is to have qualia. Consciousness is in an important sense phenomenal.

The seventeenth century French philosopher Rene Descartes was a dualist. His theory is a form of substance dualism where things can be described using mental terms or physical terms, but one description cannot be reduced to the other. He supposed that the two interacted through the pineal gland located at the center of the brain. Descartes's theory of Conscious

experience always comes as a unified phenomenon. We find many different senses of this 'unity'. The most common among them is the sense that is found in the first-person point of view: we experience the world in an integrated way and as a single phenomenal field of experience. The contents of conscious experiences are united. At any point of time a subject may have multiplicity of conscious experiences. A subject might have visual experiences of a colorful butterfly and a green tree, bodily sensation of a thirst, while having a stream of thought about the nature of appearance. Though these experiences are distinct from each other they seem to be unified under a single encompassing state of consciousness. Even in the case of particular contents of consciousness such as when we see a flying bird a number of different parts and visual features such as color, shape and motion are integrated to form a single well-defined phenomenal object.

Some definitions of consciousness:

Consciousness has always figured in philosophical discussion of the mind. It has not been possible to give a uniformly satisfactory definition of consciousness. Different thinkers have their own view of the nature of consciousness based on their purview of philosophical thought. Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates is one of the greatest thinkers of field of consciousness. According to Socrates, one's soul has been born many times and has learned everything that there is, 'seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection.' Plato, in his famous book 'Laws', says that, 'self is self-initiating motion or source of motion'.⁵In 'Timaeus' he says, '.....nothing can have intelligence unless it has soul. And the upshot of this thinking was that he constructed the universe by endowing soul with intelligence and body with soul.....'⁶

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terms, but one description cannot be reduced to the other. He supposed that the two interacted through the pineal gland located at the center of the brain. Descartes theory of consciousness has some limitations as it is not able to solve the mystery of interaction properly.

Post-Cartesian philosopher John Locke, in his book, 'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding', writes that, 'consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind.'⁷ Empiricist David Hume does not believe in any substantive self. In his Treatise, by using a metaphor, he describes consciousness in this way:- 'The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, re-pass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.'⁸ In his 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant mentions that '...consciousness is usually named *inner sense*.....'⁹

The British philosopher Gilbert Ryle describes Cartesian dualism as 'the dogma of the Ghost in the machine'. He says that when we consider mind as an entity that does things, we are making a category mistake—turning it into something it is not. Karl Popper and neurophysiologist sir John Eccles have proposed a modern theory of dualist interactionism. They argue that 'the critical processes in the synapses of the brain are so finely poised that they can be influenced by a non-physical, thinking and feeling self. Thus the self really does control its brain.'¹⁰ Psychologist W. James does not agree with the dualist concept of soul. He says that consciousness can be abolished by injury to the brain or altered by taking alcohol, opium or hashish. He coined the phrase 'the stream of consciousness' to describe the apparently ever changing flow of thoughts, ideas, images and feelings. German physiologist Wilhelm Wundt claims that there are two types of 'psychical elements': the objective elements and the subjective elements. 'Every conscious experience depended on a union of these two types.'¹¹

Consciousness has also been explored from phenomenological perspectives that begin with the observation of Franz Brentano. Franz Brentano (1838-1917) says that every subjective experience is an act of reference. Conscious experience is about objects or events, while physical objects are not about anything. This 'about-ness' he calls 'intentionality'. German philosopher and phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) has presented a systematic philosophical method of inquiry method by 'bracketing' any scientific and logical inference about the world. This theory is called the phenomenological reduction or epoche.¹² By this procedure he claims to be able to study experiences directly, without tracing them back to what they refer to in the world.

Consciousness is also defined from different angles by neuroscientist and philosophers. Contemporary neuroscientist and philosopher Daniel Clement Dennett describes consciousness by 'Multiple Drafts Model' theory. According to this theory the brain acts as an information processor. He says; 'There is no reality of conscious experience independent of the effects of various vehicles of content on subsequent action (and hence, of course, on memory).'¹³ Another neuroscientist Francis Crick wants to avoid the philosophical debates about the nature of consciousness because of the dangers of premature definition. But he thinks that the operations of the brain that do correspond to consciousness are only a form of the 'neural correlates of consciousness' (NCC).

From the various definition and explanation of consciousness it becomes clear that to define consciousness comprehensively in a sentence or a group of sentences is not easy. Discussions are going on but we are yet to achieve a consensus about what consciousness is.

Nature of Consciousness:

Now we will try to explain the nature of consciousness following various philosophers. All disciplines of natural science and social science have progressed a lot but

the mystery about consciousness is not revealed yet. Some thinkers believe that there is only a physical world. Some thinkers also admit the reality of a mental world. This is a kind of dualism. But how the mental world is influenced by the physical world or how do subjective experiences arise from objective brain is still a mystery. Philosopher David Chalmers calls this problem as 'hard problem.' Thomas Nagel argues that the problem of subjectivity is intractable. We are yet to have a solution, which is acceptable to all. We do not have a conception of what a physical explanation of a mental phenomenon would be. British philosopher Colin McGinn and psychologist Steven Pinker agree that humans are 'cognitively closed' with respect to understanding consciousness and the explanation of consciousness itself may forever be beyond our reach. Some thinkers have developed the idea of a zombie in order to clarify the concept of consciousness. A zombie is just something physically identical to me, but without conscious experience- all is dark inside. It has no consciousness, no qualia. But whether they really exist—is debatable. Some believe that it is possible, others not. Dennett's criticism of Cartesian dualism or Cartesian theatre is very important for he claims that in all of our mental activity there is no central place or single location from where my decisions are sent out. So no such theory can explain the core problem of consciousness.

Human consciousness also comes to us as unified. All our experiences come to us in one form or other. But the explanation of how they are unified, how the human brain unify them is still being debated. Some neuroscientists like Nikos Logothetis, V.S. Ramachandran, and Francis Crick try to solve this problem through the concept of neural correlates of consciousness (NCC). But their explanation fails to explain the unity. So NCC alone is not sufficient to solve the mystery. But in some pathological cases we find some behavioural manifestation that challenges the idea of the unity of consciousness. In such cases it compels us to ponder over the unity of consciousness.

Role of time and space in consciousness is also very important. In this context we can mention Benjamin Libet's claim that half a second of neuronal activity can produce consciousness. In support of his views he mentions the dualist views of Sir Karl Popper, Sir John Eccles, and Sir Roger Penrose. But Paul Churchland and D.C. Dennett oppose such views. We can say that all the theories about consciousness fall into two categories: either dualist or they invoke the wonders of modern physics. Dualism is always tempting. Theories based on modern physics cannot give us solution of how private subjective experience can emerge. 'Higher-Order-Thought' (HOT) in philosophy and 'Global Workspace Theory' (GWT) in neuroscience also faces challenge in explaining consciousness.

Awareness is a key concept in the explanation of consciousness. In the state of being aware, one responds to the stimuli from environment. Equating consciousness with awareness is a commonsense approach to the study of consciousness. Having sensory stimuli and being aware of such stimuli are different phenomena. Husserl describes consciousness as always a consciousness of something. A conscious state then is related to mental content or quale. A mental state is always a qualified state. Awareness then is the state of being aware of these qualified states. But this view cannot accommodate the examples of animal consciousness. We see that some animals are able to react and feel pleasure consciously without having any awareness like human beings. Actually, animal consciousness is essentially a First-order Representation (FOR) where human awareness is a Higher order Representation (HOR)

The phenomenological tradition in western philosophy gives us some insight concerning the nature of consciousness. Edmund Husserl is a leading phenomenologist. In his philosophy, he uses the term intentionality in contemporary sense. He follows Francis Brentano who describes intentionality as a characteristic of all conscious activities. Intentionality is the directedness of consciousness towards its objects. The phenomenological tradition finds intentionality to be an essential aspect of consciousness since it conceives the

objects to be the *intentional correlates of consciousness*. This is expressed in the notion that ‘consciousness is always the consciousness of something’. Intentionality is a mostly debated topic in the contemporary cognitive science and philosophy of mind. One such debate is related to the notion of Artificial Intelligence. Some of the contemporary thinkers hold that intentionality is the feature of consciousness that machines can never claim to have and hence they can never be ‘conscious’. J.R. Searle champions this position using the thought experiment called ‘Chinese Room Argument’. Chinese room argument has been developed by Searle. In this argument, Searle provides a special case of an unknown person was not acquainted with Chinese language. The person is unable to speak in Chinese language and also is unable to write Chinese language. Imagine that such person is locked in a room full of Chinese books, Chinese squiggles and squiggles along with a rule book in English. It is sure that for the first time, the person will feel uneasy to go through the language unknown to him. But the rule book will help him to respond to the quer in Chinese. Now Searle invites us to imagine a situation where a person well versed in Chinese is standing outside the room and asking some question to the locked person and surprisingly he gets answers from inside the room in Chinese like a Chinese person.

In philosophical discussion, there is a classic problem: Is my consciousness free to respond the way I want? This problem is concerned with the concept of freedom and responsibility. In other words, if there is no free will, then human moral responsibility might seem to be threatened. On this issue we have great philosophical discussions. Some philosophers accept that free will and determinism are incompatible. Some thinkers think that free will and determinism can be both true. In role of timing in conscious acts, Blackmore says, the time at which the action occurs and the beginning of brain activity in motor cortex– can be easily explained. But the difficulty comes in the case of timing at which they consciously decide to act. For example we can mention Libet’s experiments. In Libet’s

theories the most important feature is his 'conscious mental field theory.' It claims that subjective experience is a unique and fundamental property in nature. This unified and powerful field explains the two most difficult features of consciousness— both the unity of our mental life and our sense of free will. He mentions that the whole idea of timing conscious experience is problematic. We can say that conscious will is something separate from the processes going on in the brain. All this experiment shows that though these people can perform their actions with all of multiple parallel control system consciously, yet 'feelings of will' can sometimes be wrong.

Kinds of Consciousness:

From the above discussion, it is clear that a proper and unanimous definition of consciousness is not yet possible. But this deficiency does not close the door to discussion on its various types; rather the study of consciousness is greatly enriched by the considerations of the different types of consciousness. David Chalmers in his famous book 'The Conscious Mind' mentions two senses of the term consciousness—phenomenal sense of consciousness and psychological sense of consciousness.¹⁴ To be conscious in the first sense is just to instantiate some phenomenal quality. He thinks that it is the key sense of 'consciousness' and sense of consciousness poses the major explanatory problems. Another kind of consciousness is the psychological consciousness. Psychological consciousness possesses a variety of psychological properties such as reportability or introspective accessibility of information – awareness, attention, voluntary control and knowledge etc. The experiences of emotion, experience of self-consciousness, experience of sensation –all these properties are associated with psychological property. Naturally, it is said that experience itself or property of phenomenal consciousness is associated with psychological property. We can call such property as 'awareness'. We also say that wherever there is phenomenal consciousness there

seems to be awareness. That means, my phenomenal experience of the red pen beside me is accompanied by my functional awareness of the pen and so on. Obviously any conscious experience accompanied by awareness is one kind of reportability of conscious experience. If I have an experience, I can talk about it. This reportability implies that I am aware in such relevant sense. But this view is not always true. It is because an animal or a pre-linguistic human have conscious experience, but they do not have the ability to report. Also they have some degree of awareness. Again like other psychological properties, awareness poses few metaphysical problems. There is room for studying how natural and artificial cognitive systems might function in particular way that they are aware.

On the other hand in our everyday speech, awareness and phenomenal consciousness usually go together. Though we are able to give satisfactory account of psychological consciousness, yet phenomenal the aspect generally goes untouched. So the difficult problem of science of the mind is the problem of phenomenal consciousness. Many contemporary philosophers explain consciousness in non-phenomenal terms. Rosenthal (1996) opines that a mental state is conscious precisely when there is a higher order thought about the concerned mental state. It is an analysis of introspective consciousness. This account does not explain phenomenal experience properly. Similarly, Dennett (1991) wants to provide a detailed cognitive model to explain consciousness but he is also not able to reveal the true nature of phenomenal consciousness. Armstrong wants to explain the notion of phenomenal consciousness in terms of the presence of some self-scanning mechanism. It also leaves the problem of phenomenal experience one side.

David. M. Rosenthal mentions three types of consciousness. These are: creature consciousness, state consciousness, and transitive consciousness.¹⁵

Creature consciousness:

We call a person or other creature conscious when it is awake and responsive to sensory stimulation. Creature consciousness is also divided into three types—transitive, intransitive, and self-consciousness. Some conscious state is transitive when a state's being conscious in one's being in some way conscious of that state. In other words, a state is conscious only if one is in some suitable way conscious of it. Again, we can say, what it is for a state of mine to be conscious (intransitively) is for it to be accompanied by a thought that I am in that state. In other words intransitive consciousness is also called a state consciousness. A distinction is often made between intransitive consciousness and transitive consciousness. A conscious state (intransitive consciousness) of mine is simply a state that I am conscious of (transitive consciousness), and consciousness of is simply a matter of accompaniment by a thought to the effect that I am in that state. Self-consciousness is the possession of the concept of the self and the ability to use this concept in thinking about oneself. Also introspective awareness is another form of creature consciousness. It is sometimes said that this sort of consciousness is solely a matter of its subject having a higher order thought. In this case a person is undergoing a certain mental state. This thought is not based on inference or observation.

State-consciousness:

We can say some mental states as conscious in contrast with those mental states of which an individual is wholly unaware. The intentional conflation has an element of plausibility to it. If we see by comparing two dogs, one of which has a perceptual state whereas the other has a similar perceptual state plus a representation of it, surely the latter dog has a conscious state but the former dog does not. So state consciousness makes less in

the way of intellectual demands than consciousness of, and the first dog could be conscious without being conscious of anything.

Transitive consciousness:

Generally a distinction is drawn between transitive and intransitive consciousness. We may call transitive consciousness when it is one thing for us to be conscious of something. We can understand transitive consciousness as our being conscious of thing. Here the 'of' is intentional. It involves being directed at an object of which the creature is conscious. It is obviously object directedness. Hence, transitive consciousness is different from intransitive consciousness. Consider two scenes – one of five birds and others just like it but with one birds missing. Also suppose that I have seen consciously both scenes. Indeed I consciously see all the birds in each scene. But suppose, finally that despite all this I do not notice any different between the two states because I am not transitively conscious of the difference between the two scenes.

Ned Block mentions four types of consciousness.¹⁶ These are: monitoring consciousness, self-consciousness, access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness.

Monitoring consciousness:

Monitoring consciousness takes many forms. One is some sort of inner perceptions. This is a form of phenomenal consciousness or phenomenal consciousness of one's own states or of the self. Second is 'internal scanning' and third is meta-cognitive notion or 'higher-order-thought'.

To identify phenomenal consciousness with internal scanning is just to encourage slide to eliminativism about phenomenal consciousness. For example, our computers are capable of various types of self-scanning, but no one would think of these computers as

‘conscious’. According to G. Rey, internal scanning is essential to consciousness. Another form of monitoring consciousness is that of accompaniment by a higher-order thought (HOT). According to this theory a conscious state is accompanied by a thought to the effect that one is in that state. It is to be noted that phenomenal consciousness without HOT and HOT without phenomenal consciousness are both conceptually possible.

Self-consciousness:

Self-consciousness is the possession of the concepts of the self and the ability to use this concept in thinking about oneself. There is reason to think that animals or babies can have phenomenally conscious states without employing any concept of the self. It may be that phenomenally conscious states have a non-conceptual content that could be described as ‘experienced’ as mine.

One important and related philosophical view is that self-consciousness requires consciousness of a self. In other words, ‘for a creature to be self-conscious it is not sufficient that the creature in question is able to self-ascribe experiences on an individual basis without recognizing the identity of that to which the experiences are ascribed.’¹⁷ George Herbert Mead, a famous social psychologist, opines that self-consciousness is one kind of social relations to others. Such self-consciousness is formed by adopting the perspective of the other towards oneself. He holds that self-consciousness is *per se* a social phenomenon. Self-consciousness and consciousness are not the same level. Someone alone has access to his own toothache – but it is not self-consciousness.¹⁸ From the view of Developmental Psychology, the so called mirror recognition is one kind of self-consciousness. According to this view, self-consciousness is only present from the childhood when child is capable to recognize itself in the mirror.

Some other theorists hold that self-consciousness is a matter of theory of mind. In other words, self-consciousness needs the capacity to be aware of experiences as experience. This is fully theoretical concept because to think of experience as experience, it requires some un-experienced conception of objects or states of affairs or any others.

Lastly, narrative theorist hold that fully fledged self-consciousness comes from our own life story. Self-consciousness is develops our ability to describe self-narratives, stories about ourselves and to make sense out of our own life in a narrative way.

Access-consciousness:

Another non-phenomenal notion of consciousness is access consciousness. A representation is Access conscious if it is broadcast for free use in reasoning and for direct 'rational' control of action. An Access-state is one that consists in having an Access representation. Access consciousness does not make the intellectual demands of self-consciousness or higher-order-thought consciousness. So we can say that Access state is access conscious if, in virtue of one's having the state, a representation of its content is (a) inferentially promiscuous, (b) poised for rational control of action and (c) poised for rational control of speech. That is to say, the representations of an access state can be freely used in reasoning, can be used for control of actions and can also be appropriated in the rational control of speech.

Phenomenal consciousness:

What makes a state phenomenally conscious is that there is something 'it is like' to be in that state. Phenomenal consciousness is experience. Phenomenal conscious properties are experiential properties. The totality of the experiential properties of a state are 'what it is like' to have it. Our all experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling and pains – are all phenomenally

conscious state. All experiential properties like sensations, feeling, and perceptions are phenomenally conscious properties (P-conscious properties).

The different intentional contents are the basic feature of phenomenal consciousness. However, it may be noted that famous neurophysiologists like Francis Crick and Christ of Koch offer a definition of phenomenal consciousness: ‘a synchronized 35-75 hertz neural oscillation in the sensory areas of the cortex is at the heart of phenomenal consciousness.’¹⁹It has been pointed out by many philosophers that our physical or functional nature does not help us to understand how our subjective experience can be explained. The question is how does our nervous activity give rise to a state of consciousness? This is known as explanatory gap.²⁰ Consciousness, considered in this sense, is phenomenal consciousness. Using synonyms, it can be described as ‘subjective experience’ and also as ‘what it is like to be us.’ In order to explain phenomenal consciousness we may refer to the properties or qualities of consciousness. We can refer to the ways things seen to us or immediate phenomenological qualities. As examples of phenomenal consciousness we can point to the experiential properties of sensations, feelings and perceptual experiences- the ways things look or sound and the way pain feels and so on. However thoughts, desires and emotions are associated conscious aspects and changes in their representational contents make phenomenal differences.

Though the different definitions are given by different thinkers, the completeness is far away. Different thinkers like O. Flanagan, J. Searle, M. Davies and N. Humphreys criticized this theory. Phenomenal consciousness naturally differs from Access consciousness. Access consciousness is a non-phenomenal notion of consciousness. A representation is access conscious if it is broadcast for free use in reasoning and for direct ‘rational’ control of action. An A-state is one that consists in having an A-representation. Access consciousness does not make the intellectual demands of self-consciousness or

higher-order thought consciousness. So we can say that A-state is access conscious if, in virtue of one's having the state, a representation of its content is (a) inferentially promiscuous and (b) poised for rational control of action. That is to say, the representations of an access state can be freely used in reasoning, can be used for control of actions and can also be appropriated. On the other hand, access consciousness is, in virtue of its representational content, access conscious. Again access consciousness is a functional notion, but phenomenal consciousness is not. If you are a functionalist about phenomenal consciousness, it would be very natural to identify it with access consciousness. Lastly, access consciousness applies to state tokens, or rather tokens at times, but phenomenal consciousness is best thought of as a feature of state types. So there are three main differences between Access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness. These are -

- 1) It is in virtue of its phenomenal content that a state is phenomenally conscious, whereas it is in virtue of its representational content or the representational aspect of its content that a state is access conscious.
- 2) Access consciousness is a functional notion, but phenomenal consciousness is not. If you are a functionalist about phenomenal consciousness, it would be very natural to identify it with Access consciousness.
- 3) Access consciousness applies to state tokens, or rather tokens at times, but phenomenal consciousness is best thought of as a feature of state types.

The concept of access conscious state is distinct from the concept of phenomenal conscious state. We can conceive phenomenal conscious state without the concept of access conscious state. However, it is still an open question whether the phenomenal conscious state is actually possible without access conscious state.

Problem of Phenomenal consciousness:

In our above discussion we have seen that phenomenal consciousness is also identified as experience. Curiously there are a significant number of philosophers and neuroscientists who deny the existence of phenomenal consciousness.

Many philosophers and neuroscientists believe that the problem of phenomenal consciousness does not exist. They seem that what we call 'consciousness' can only be a property of the functions performed by the brain and body. According to these philosophers only access consciousness exists. But it is a mystery how access consciousness might be experienced if phenomenal consciousness does not exist.

Chalmers (1996) describes the philosophical problem of phenomenal consciousness, as hard problem. The hard problem can be consciously defined as 'how qualia are related to the physical world, how an *objective* physical brain can produce *subjective* qualia.'²¹ But the hard problem cannot be solved because whatever the phenomenal consciousness is it cannot be explained by neural correlates.

Further, a few words about the search for the physical or functional basis of Consciousness is in order. First, eliminativists like P.S. Churchland, D. Dennett and G. Rey opine that phenomenal Consciousness does not exist. Secondly, functionalist and physicalist draw a reductionist conclusion in respect to phenomenal consciousness. According to them, there are no mysterious ambiences so far as the physical basis of consciousness is concerned. Though they admit such a thing as consciousness they do not admit any singular explanatory gap. To them, whatever explanatory gap remains is unremarkable. Thirdly, for S. White's transcendentalism, a new form of mysterianism, Consciousness is not a natural phenomenon and, so, not amenable to scientific descriptions. However, according to C. Mc Ginn, another mysterian, consciousness is a natural phenomenon but we are bound to be deterred by the

problem in understanding the physical basis of consciousness. He tries to show that though the physical properties of our brain do explain consciousness yet it is available only to other type of being and closed off to us.

Again, O. Flanagan and J. Searle²² admit that there may be significant differences between the naturalistic explanations of consciousness and that of other explanations but they point out that this does not warrant us to conclude that consciousness is something non-natural or that it cannot be explained in naturalistic terms. Reductionists, in general, do not distinguish phenomenal consciousness from the cognitive, intentional or functional concept of consciousness, and covertly slide from the concept of phenomenal consciousness to these other concepts of consciousness. They do this by conflating phenomenal consciousness with these other types of consciousness. First, they try to show that phenomenal consciousness requires the concept of self and, so, is a form of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, we have seen, is the possession of the concept of the self as well as the ability to use this concept about oneself. In response to such attempts Ned Block says that such a claim imposes an ‘implausible intellectual condition on phenomenal consciousness.’ It is possible that phenomenally conscious states involve a non-conceptual content that could be identified as ‘experienced as mine’. However, this representational aspect, Block points out, does not exhaust the phenomenal properties of that state.

Similar attempts have been made by identifying monitoring consciousness with the phenomenal consciousness. Monitoring consciousness comes in many forms. One of its forms is ‘internal scanning’. It is an obvious mistake to conflate internal scanning with phenomenal consciousness. G. Rey²³ points on that it will be silly to consider our laptop computers as conscious because it is capable of internal scanning. He also suggests that internal scanning is sufficient for consciousness, if there is any such thing. From these observations he goes on to conclude that the concept of consciousness is incoherent because

it both admits and denies consciousness of laptop computers. In response to such claim Ned Block points out that internal scanning is not sufficient for phenomenal consciousness and this is enough to show that the concept of consciousness is a coherent concept.

Again, phenomenal consciousness is sometimes identified with higher-order-thought consciousness, which is another form of monitoring consciousness.²⁴ Block objects to such identification by observing that phenomenal consciousness does not involve the intellectual component that is necessary for the higher-order-thought. Cats and babies may have phenomenally conscious pains without any accompaniment by a higher-order-thought to the effect that they have those pains.

An important distinction is sometimes made between transitive consciousness (i.e. consciousness of) and intransitive consciousness, which is often designated as state consciousness. In an important sense we say that consciousness is a creature's being conscious, or aware, of something. This can happen in two ways. First, a creature is conscious of an object by seeing, hearing or sensing it in some way. Secondly, one can be conscious of something without sensing it. This happens when one entertains a thought about it – that is to say, by having a thought that represents that thing as something present in one's immediate environment. Since descriptions of both the forms of consciousness involve grammatical objects of reference it has become customary to call these two as transitive consciousness. Again we are said to be conscious of various things by way of perceptions of them or thoughts about them. However, these perceptions and thoughts can very well be either conscious or non-conscious. In scientific and philosophical literature we find considerations of non-conscious perceptions such as subliminal perceptions. Similarly, it is generally accepted that many of our thoughts fall outside of our stream of consciousness and, hence, are said to occur non-consciously. These are examples of state consciousness.

Again, with Ned Block, we can say ‘if I say I am nauseous, I ascribe a kind of intransitive consciousness to myself, and if I say I am seeing something as a mosquito, I ascribe transitive consciousness.’ Some thinkers try to collapse these notions by an intentional conflation. Thus, higher-order-thought view maintains that a conscious state (or any instance of intransitive consciousness) of mine is, by its very nature, a state that I am conscious. According to this view, all cases of intransitive conscious states are accompanied by a thought of the form ‘I am in that state’. In response to this view Block insist that state consciousness, unlike consciousness of or transitive consciousness makes less intellectual demand.

Lastly, we want to mention that there has been an attempt, made by the reductionist, to identify phenomenal consciousness with access consciousness. Here, we want to state Block’s two reasons why phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness are conceptually different from each other. In the first place, it is due to its phenomenal contents, or the phenomenal aspect of the content, a state is phenomenally conscious. But it is in virtue of its representational aspect of its content that a state is access- conscious. Secondly, we have seen that access- consciousness is a functional notion, but phenomenal consciousness is not a functional notion. However those who are functionalist about phenomenal consciousness will away try to identify it with access consciousness.

Another important way to understand this distinction is to consider the cases of one without the other. In this connection a robot with a computer brain has been conceived which is behaviorally and computationally identical to ours. Now, the question is that whether what is it is like to be that robot is different from what it is like to be us? We can also ask whether there is anything at all that it is like to be that robot. If there is nothing it is like to be that robot then this robot is called a ‘zombie’.²⁵

Thus, in our above discussion, we have seen that the concept of phenomenal consciousness is most problematic. It is true that at the time of the discussion of phenomenal consciousness, we face difficult philosophical problems that are easy to solve. Some difficulties will be addressed in the next chapter.

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