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The State of Being Aware: An Introductory Study of Human Consciousness

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Abstract: Consciousness is a common term consciously being used by all but it is very difficult to understand it. Consciousness is the fundamental principle of human life and existence. The understanding of consciousness keeps evolving day by day. Consciousness is being defined by very many theories from different perspectives. Here in this article, there is some basic information to have little knowledge of what is consciousness. When we delve into the concept of consciousness, we have the nature of consciousness, theories of consciousness, levels of consciousness and stages of consciousness. All these things combine together to give us basic knowledge about what is consciousness. As a whole, the main idea of many theories says that human consciousness is the state of being aware and responsive to one's surroundings.

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Introduction

Consciousness is everything that we come across in our daily life. It is the tune or a melody that stuck in our head, the sweetness of candy which we taste, the love of our parents, the touch of the wind and everything that we feel and experience. It is the fundamental principle of human life and existence. The understanding of human consciousness has been changed from time to time. Once psychology was considered as the study of consciousness but later it is considered as the study of behaviours. The discovery of the quantum nature of our universe

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changed the course of human history. This quantum theory demands a revision of the role of consciousness as the underlying principle of the universe. There are different ways of understanding consciousness and there are different views according to the cultures and ethnic group. This thesis is a brief summary of what is human consciousness and how we can approach it.

Meanings

Consciousness in common defined as the awareness of the mind about its own process in the current scientific psychology. The majority of scholars accept consciousness as an understanding of the relationship to the objective world which is described by

science. Emotions are central to narrative because they are the principal processes in which selfhood is constructed (Ramana, 2014).

According to the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, the term consciousness means the state of being aware physically and mentally of one's environment and being awake fully with thoughts and feelings (Robinson, 1997).

According to the Webster Comprehensive Dictionary, it means the power of self-knowledge or internal perception and any form of intellectual activity or its product in direct and convincing knowledge of external or internal objects (Marckwardt, 1998).

Theories of Consciousness

Consciousness is considered to be the mental experiences of every kind therefore it can be taken as the core matter of the study of psychology and psychology is frequently defined as the study of self-consciousness. There are many theories that tries to explain consciousness from different aspects. Some of the theories that have been given by physiologists and psychologists are found here.

One theory says that each atom of the physical body of a human has the attributes of consciousness but the theory was not able to prove by the experiments.

The second theory tried to prove that some special nerves in the human brain are the causes for consciousness. But the fact is that there no such special system for the production of consciousness.

The third theory explains that consciousness is the product of the impulses of the simple nerve cell stimulations or from the identical nerve cells (Gravin, 1949).

a. Metaphysical Theories of Consciousness

The universal metaphysical theories offer replies to the conscious type of the mind and body problem, the ontological position of consciousness relative to the world of physical reality. The existing responses basically equal the standard of mind and body selections together with the main kinds of dualism and physicalism (Penfield, 1978).

Dualist theories regard at least some aspects of consciousness as falling outside the realm of the physical, but specific forms of dualism differ in just which aspects those are substance dualism, property dualism, fundamental property dualism, emergent property dualism, natural monist property.

b. Dualist Theories

Dualist theories regard at least some aspects of consciousness as falling outside the realm of the physical, but specific forms of dualism differ in just which aspects those are substance dualism, property dualism, fundamental property dualism, emergent property dualism, natural monist property. These arguments have been in favour of dualist and other anti-physicalist theories of consciousness (Penfield, 1978).

c. The Self-Representational Theory of Consciousness

Consciousness arises from a particular type of information processing that is familiar from the early days of discoveries and inventions. Self-representational theory of consciousness is one

of the approaches to consciousness that has a rich tradition but has very recently regained a modest degree of popularity among researchers. According to this view, mental states are conscious only when they represent their own occurrence in the right way. A person's experience of the blue sky represents both the sky and itself it is in virtue of representing itself that it is a conscious experience. Franz Brentano, the eminent German philosopher, held that every conscious state is internally directed at two things. It is primarily directed at whatever object it is about and secondarily directed at itself. The bluish sky of our experience is directed primarily at the sky and secondarily directed to itself. Therefore, a conscious state has two representational contents are other-directed content and self-directed content.

Conscious as Self-consciousness

The procedure is from consciousness. All consciousness is self-consciousness. I am the consciousness of others only in being conscious of myself. What is enlightened in me only illuminate others. One must know the level of his own knowledge. Human is conscious because he knows other things and through that, he knows himself. It the same as self-awareness in other words which make a human know that he exists. Human is the symbol of the unity and self-consistency of the reality itself (Chethimattam, 1971).

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Nature of Human Consciousness

Consciousness is not a process in the brain but a kind of behaviour though it is controlled by the brain like any other behaviour. The understanding of human consciousness is the most difficult and complex thing in the scientific field. Perhaps no other problem has proven more tough to both the philosophical and scientific scholars than an account of the nature of consciousness. The reflective nature of consciousness and its ability to consider itself, to provide a sense of being has led some philosophers to assume that it characterizes the very essence of what it means to be human. It is *Cogito ergo sum* in the words of Descartes. This is not the only meaning but one among many meanings that have come to characterize the nature of consciousness in the present times. Modern psychological views of the nature of consciousness originated from “Principals of Psychology” the classical work of William James which was published in 1890. But it has evolved and developed by many philosophers and mystics from early centuries in many ancient cultures and which could be easily seen and appreciated in Indian tradition. *Sankara* and particularly *Ramanuja* are the main persons who dealt with the nature of consciousness as a point of view for evaluating the reality of the world with details. Their basic suppositions and principles give us more than enough sources to construct a metaphysical nature from the consciousness which is distinct from the objective analysis which has been the traditional procedure of the western perspective (Chethimattam, 1971).

Forms of Human Consciousness

The word Consciousness has a huge and different set of meanings. We may have various highly complex mental activities in our mind when we think of consciousness, such as reflective self-consciousness or introspective consciousness

which is only for human beings. Sometimes we may think of something purely phenomenal and something simple and unitary. The examples of consciousness are the perceptual states of seeing and hearing, but the nature of the consciousness actually more complex and far away from clear understanding (Pandikattu, 1998). The realm of consciousness is hardly tired and known by reflective or introspective forms. There are many different forms of consciousness and there is a vital harmony to all these different forms of consciousness. It is distinctive for its subjectivity or one's own perspective. The huge variety in the forms of consciousness makes the problem very complex in understanding the only conscious subject which has direct access to the way of being focus on the nature of the subjectivity and of forms (Zelazo, 2007).

Levels of Human Consciousness

The enlightening and self-manifesting aspects of consciousness are present at various levels in the actual state of soul and body in human. External understanding reminds the intellectual expression in physical categories of substance, action, attributes, relation. It constitutes another level on which the mind moulds logical categories corresponding to things. Psychic experience of thought, action and limitation indicates a deeper level of empirical consciousness. These empirical levels do not mean a mere passive reception of forms from things. Even on the level of sense experience, the conscious understanding is a constriction of the object. However, this consciousness appears in its more friendly condition in the transcendental realization of being, truth and goodness in things. These present less of an obstacle to the self-expression of the subject and approximate to the native condition of consciousness itself (Chethimattam, 1971).

Stages of Human Consciousness

It is quite easy for any human being to bring the boundaries of our thinking and also those of our consciousness into the realm of experience. This may be done in a different way such as asking some questions or rather each attempt to answer those questions raised. The first half of Rudolf Steiner's philosophical work on freedom deals with a stage of consciousness that may be characterized by the fact that the contents of this stage are given through observation. Exclusively this field of consciousness is most appropriate for the observation of thinking or even more precisely, the philosophy of freedom is not the process itself but as in the ordinary usage of the word and the result of this process as it enters consciousness (Kuhlewind, 1973).

I am, moreover, in the same position when I enter into the exceptional state and reflect on my own thinking. I can never observe my present thinking; I can only subsequently take my experience of my present thinking process as the object of fresh thinking. If I wanted to watch my present thinking, I should have to split myself into two persons, one to think, the other to observe the thinking. But this I cannot do. I can only accomplish it in two separate acts. The thinking to be observed is never that in which I am actually engaged. There are two things which are incompatible with one another: active production and its objective contemplation (Kuhlewind, 1973).

The human consciousness soul delivers the opportunity for human independence. This is confirmed, for instance, by the very fact that we can pose the question of freedom, which would be impossible if we were completely unfree. The potential for freedom is inherent in the consciousness soul insofar as it can observe its own past thinking. This past does not compel directly which is a dead world. The observing authority is

always present but always enters consciousness only afterwards. Ordinary consciousness thinking is a phenomenon whose sources and origin lie before the thinking consciousness (Kuhlewind, 1973).

Conclusion

This brief study on knowing what is human consciousness will likely require theories of many types. These theories are very much helpful to understand the human consciousness better and accept a diversity of models that each in their own way without much contradiction. There is unlikely to be any single theoretical perspective that proves the only meaning of what is human consciousness but it has evolved in its understanding and has a lot of different meanings and theories which give understanding. But as a whole, the main idea of many theories says that human consciousness is the state of being aware and responsive to one's surroundings.

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