

Consciousness

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CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness refers to a person's awareness about his or her unique memories, thoughts, sensations, feelings, and environment. The conscious experiences of a person are constantly changing and shifting. For example, a person maybe having a conversation with a friend then his consciousness shifts to a storybook he read about the same topic they are discussing with the friend. Next, it may shift to the evening dinner he plans to have with the girlfriend. These streams of thought keep changing between various events but a person's experiences remains effortless and smooth.

In brain philosophy, consciousness was one of the first topics to be discussed by the psychologists (Bennett, 2007). Consciousness sensations, experiences, and thoughts were analyzed and reported by the process referred to as the introspection. Some psychologist such as William James, the American psychologist, stated that consciousness was like a stream; it is continuous and unbroken despite the constant changes and shifts.

Philosophical issues about consciousness

The Problem

It has been a problem explaining the state of consciousness concerning neurological basis. The sensation that a person gets when in pain is not easy to explain why it must be the sensation for pain and not any other sensation. On the other hand, couldn't pain exist without any sensation? The term consciousness itself has a variety of uses and has been used to control behavior, report information this is a question that has experienced failure on both the side of having an answer and the materials to get an answer (Knobe, & Nichols, 2014). Nobody seems to have the answer or the tools to answer this question. There are various perspectives that try to offer solutions to this dilemma:

- *Eliminativism* - this one tries to avoid the problem by stating that the sensations do not exist so there is no problem to be discussed.
- *Philosophical deflationism* - this perspective acknowledges the existence of consciousness but shows no commitment to the idea. It analyzes consciousness in non-phenomenal terms such as cognitive, representational, functional, and behavioral.

- *Phenomenal realism* - this is the perspective that explains consciousness as a substantial property, which would not be conceptually reduced. The concept of pain can therefore not be analyzed in terms of some behaviors.
- *Dualistic naturalism* - the perspective states that naturally, there are deeper levels in which reality can be explained. The sensation of pain is believed to exist and is accompanied by certain types of behaviors.

The place of nature in the natural world

The ways consciousness fits into the natural world is characterized by some kind of uneasiness. Natural world has the conception of being physical; this makes it difficult to conceive consciousness as being part of it (Robinson, 2008). This means that for anyone to find how these two may fit into each other then the conception of one of them must be revised and find out where the other might fit in. Consciousness is a phenomenon of the brain and the problem lies on how to configure brain to the physical world. The solution lies in the fact that mentality could have the same characteristics of neutral substance or physical substance. The problem mentioned above shows that physical process such as those of the brain are closely related to the experiences people have in their lives (Ellis, & Newton, 2010). The experiences people go through are a result of physical processes that happens in systems such as the brain.

Attention and consciousness

There is a close relation between the concept of consciousness and attention. Neurophysiologic scientists have had some challenging questions regarding the issue of attention and consciousness ("history of science," 2012). Some of the questions asked by the researchers are; is possible to be conscious of any object without attending to it? Is it possible to attend to objects, which are suppressed consciously? Between the two, it seems easier to define attention than consciousness. Being able to describe a face without being conscious to it means that it is possible to attend to something or someone even when you are not conscious about it.

For one to be conscious to anything, he or she has to attend to it. This means that it is tricky to attend to anything without attention (Bor, 2012). Consciousness involves being aware of something but goes further to include the content and feelings of the awareness.

Attention involves vigilance, a person would always try to detect a signal whenever paying attention. Attention also involves search whereby a person would be looking for certain features in the environment. Distracters, which try to destruct a person's attention from what he or she is searching for, are also considered in attention. This leads to the concept of selective attention. One must ignore all other features and distracters in order to focus on specific object or stimuli.

Attention is more controllable and active than consciousness. The conscious part of the brain seems to be receiving information from the outside world and then working on them. In selective attention, a person is involved in the processes of attending to some events while ignoring others (Menon, 2013). In consciousness, a person is able to talk about the things he had attended to. These are the things he focused on and ignored others, it therefore follows that there is a very close relationship between consciousness and selective attention.

Suggestion, Suggestibility and Hypnosis

Suggestibility refers to the extent an individual is willing to accept suggestions from people. The higher the suggestibility, the greater the effect of those suggestions on how the person would perceive reality. Suggestibility depends on the state of mind of a person. Hypnosis refers to the altered state of a person's consciousness and can enable a person reach higher greater suggestibility levels (Gennaro, 2012). These alterations can cause great effect to an individual including amnesia, hallucinations, and anesthesia. When a person is at the top of suggestibility then it is said the person is in hypnosis.

Suggestions have the power to influence a person's decision. Sigmund Freud had stated that suggestion is the result of group psychology and that people are compelled to follow what the group has said or suggested. When a person receives suggestion from other people, he has time to communicate with his inner subconscious being to try to find out which of the suggestions would be good. In adults, people perceive each other differently depending with what has been suggested over time therefore building and strengthening societal stereotypes. It is a wide-spread behavior to typecast a person based on factors such as their sexual orientation or even race yet one has not had a first-hand experience but ends up form conceptions on about the person, society, tribe or even race.

Impact of Meditation and Yoga on Mindfulness and Consciousness

Practicing yoga increases a person's mindfulness. The practices affect all aspects of consciousness enabling a person to be more aware of them and be able to create connection with the people around them (Mind & McHugh, 2006). After a short period of meditation

and Yoga lessons, an individual would show improved changes in their emotional and physical consciousness. These improvements increase with time until a person has achieved a complete self-awareness. Consciousness involves a person's wellbeing and the practice of yoga or meditation promotes both the mental and physical wellbeing of an individual.

When one is involved in regular yoga sessions, he would experience improved aspects in his or her quality of life and cognition. Brings the feeling of happiness and enthusiasm to face life positively (In Smith, & In Whitaker, 2014). The effects of meditation are functions of the cognitive-attention processes, which are involved during yoga or mediation sessions. Studies have also shown that people who have been in involved in the mediation exercise for long scores high when it comes to activities that required attention. Mediation enables people to have higher sustained, executive, and selective attention.

Mediation is sometimes regarded as one of the states of human consciousness. All the five senses are involved whenever someone is experiencing the environment awake. These experiences at the end of the day make people so tired that they need a good rest. Deep sleep is considered by many as the time when the brain is resting. The truth is that the brain only rest during the deep sleep. All other times at least one sense is at work. Therefore, there is need to reach higher levels of consciousness and meditation would make it better.

Meditation prevents stress from entering persons system and the stress already the body is taken out by meditation process (Globus, Maxwell, & Savodnik, 2013). Meditation increases a person's consciousness and enables people to drop negative emotions. When consciousness is in such state, a person is strong enough to face the problems and challenges of life. The person would even know how to handle things that disappoint anger or disturb them in their lives. When one reaches the highest level of consciousness, then everything else becomes simple, but one must take steps to reach the top and meditation and Yoga are the best means of reaching the top.

Daydreaming and Consciousness

Consciousness is important to humans because it connects them to the external world. When one closes his eyes, he shuts out the external reality and experiences the internal reality. In some cases, a person may find himself daydreaming because they have lost touch with the external reality (Jaworski, 2011). Daydreaming is an alternative consciousness and could be so real that one may be confused to differentiate between reality and daydreaming.

Daydreaming is the easiest way to experience an alternative consciousness. Through it, one can move himself to any place he

wishes to be anyway and anytime. When one stops, the imagination it never means that imagination was not real, but just that the image is no longer there. Daydreaming and relaxing may help a brain to reduce the enormous power taken by sensory perception (Bunge, & Ardila, 2007). When one sets his mind on the desire, he or she wishes to achieve, he can let himself wander away and with time the mind strengthens and bring the desired image to the daydreamer

CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTENTIONALITY

Physicalism

Metaphysical doctrine explains that everything that exists is physical in some way. This paper discusses the doctrine both in reductive and non-reductive form. The reductive Physicalism explains that mental realm exists in physical form although it cannot be seen together with other physical aspects of the world (Bennett, 2007). The non-reductive Physicalism states that although the mind is physical, its full appeal cannot be captured by looking only at his physical properties. Through representationality, the intentionality is shown by accounting for the mind as being physical and then the consciousness function is accommodated into the physical framework.

Other group of psychologists, phenomenalist, commit to discussing the mind in the non-reductive form. They explain intentionality by basing their arguments on the consciousness functionality of the brain and not on the physical aspects. The doctrine of Physicalism has shown how intentionality and consciousness have physical aspects with them.

Representationalism

This doctrine views consciousness in terms of the intentional structure. The reductive Representationalism seeks to identify the phenomenal properties of objects and events. Humans while explaining their experiences always inspects the properties of the event or the object, which was experienced (Cavanna, & Nani, 2014). This therefore means that the human phenomenology is representational and looks at objects as having certain properties or being in particular way.

Phenomenalist

This doctrine explains that intentionality is ultimately rooted to consciousness. Phenomenalism is different from the Representationalism as it does not consider consciousness to exist on its own and does not accord much seriousness as the former (Dietrich, 2009). Another difference that exists between Phenomenalism and Representationalism is that the phenomenalist seeks to expand narrowness towards the realms of intentionality while the representationalists seek to expand externalism towards the realms of Phenomenalism.

To achieve the expansion of narrowness they have first the reductive view of intentionality cannot be considered as consciousness (Weber, & Weekes, 2009). They therefore believe that the problems associated with intentionality would never be associated or related to consciousness. The phenomenals have therefore worked differently from the reductive representationalists and have instead supported the works of phenomenal intentionality.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND MATERIALISM

Knowledge Argument

The doctrines states that physical knowledge of something or somebody does not necessarily mean that a person has the knowledge of consciousness. The formulation done by Frank Jackson showed that the girl(Mary),who was brought up in a black and white room had the physical knowledge of what the red color is but since she had not experienced the red color, she did not know how red looks like or how it feels to experience the color (Irvine, 2012). The girl therefore had all the physical knowledge about red but had never experienced it so she was not conscious of the red color. It therefore means that not all facts about the red color are physical.

Conceivability argument and the zombies

Zombies are considered, as the duplicate of the normal conscious human beings .they are also physical and can be conceived but are not conscious. The general argument is that zombies can be conceived but are not conscious. Materialism states that only matter and its movement exist, but the existence and conceivability of the zombies proves that materialism is false.

Qualia and Materialism

Qualia is the term used to refer to the information and symbols that the brain uses to represent experiences according to how they perceive them. Qualia therefore form part of the processes that take place in the mind of a human being (In Sytsma, 2014). Feelings and experiences have non-physical qualities and are irreducibly subjective. Materialism therefore is once again said to be non-existent and false. The process discredits materialism and has been described by some scientists as the end of materialism in philosophy.

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