CHAPTER - I

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Consciousness is a term which occurs in philosophy, psychology and in common speech with a variety of different meaning. Consciousness in the nineteenth century is considered from an altogether different point of view in the history of psychology. Psychology began to emerge as a separate branch of natural science with a distinctive nature, as the 'science of consciousness' in the early nineteenth century. It includes sensations, mental images, thoughts, desires, emotions, volitions and the like, or the various contents of consciousness of which we are aware at any time. Taking it in a wider sense the older empiricists called them "ideas" and described them as "in the mind" or as "the basic units of the mind". Thus consciousness was considered as a mental stuff, a peculiar sort of substance, quite different from the material substance of which physical objects are composed. Various contributions have been made by different schools of systematic thought about the mind in the nineteenth century. We present here some important contribution of a few representative thinkers of the century.

Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) is one of the leading British philosophers in the nineteenth century. To him it is a truth above argument that a sound philosophy began with an analysis of consciousness. He thinks consciousness may be compared to an internal light by means of which, and which alone, what passes in the
mind is rendered visible. Consciousness is simple, - is not com-
posed of parts, either similar or dissimilar. It always resembles
itself, differing only in the degrees of its intensity; thus, there
are not various kinds of consciousness, although there are various
kinds of mental modes, or states, of which we are conscious. His
contention is that all our experiences contain an element in common
which he names "consciousness". Again he asserts that consciousness
cannot be defined; we may be ourselves fully aware of what con-
sciousness is, but we cannot, without confusion, convey to others a
definition of what we ourselves clearly apprehend. He is opposed
to the view of consciousness to be a special faculty. The general
characteristic of consciousness is that it is the recognition by
the thinking subject of its own acts or affections. Though
consciousness according to him is the recognition of the mind's own
acts and affections we are nevertheless conscious of the things
outside the mind. Thus in the act of perceiving, I am conscious of
myself as the perceiving subject and of an external reality as the
object perceived. We see in Hamilton's view this duality is
present in every act of consciousness. This view has been subse-
quently criticised by J.S. Mill, and William James who take exactly
the opposite position to Hamilton.

According to Hamilton consciousness may be of things
external to self, but it can only be of things present in time.
We are not conscious of the past. He says memory is an act which
exists in present. Because that which is present in memory is not
the thing remembered but there is a present representation of it
in the mind, which representation is the sole object of consciousness. Such a view also has been criticised by J.S. Mill in the book "An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy" (1865).

James Mill (1773-1836) admits that there is no room for any special creative activity of the mind. Consciousness, for Mill contains nothing more than feelings or ideas. 'To say I am conscious of a feeling is merely to say I feel it'. There are two kinds of feelings, one which exists when the object of sense is present, another which exists after the object of sense has ceased to be present. Ideas are explicitly said to be feelings when the object causing a sensation is removed. Apart from this, to have an experience is to be conscious of it, and there is no need of any mysterious or transcendental activity in accounting for this consciousness. In the "Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind" he writes, "It is easy to see what is the nature of the terms 'CONSCIOUS', and 'CONSCIOUSNESS', and what is the marking function which they are destined to perform. It was of great importance for the purpose of naming, that we should not only have names to distinguish the different classes of our feelings, but also a name applicable equally to all those classes. This purpose is answered by the concrete term 'Conscious'; and the abstract of it, Consciousness. Thus, if we are in any way sentient; that is, have any of the feelings whatsoever of a living creature; the word Conscious is applicable to the feeler, and Consciousness to the feeling." \(^1\)

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J.S. Mill (1806-1873) son of James Mill is chiefly influenced by his father. In his "A System of Logic" (1843) he declares "A Feeling and a State of Consciousness are, in the language of philosophy, equivalent expressions: everything is a feeling of which the mind is conscious; everything which it feels, or, in other words, which forms a part of its own sentient existence". Again he thinks that feeling in the proper sense of the term is a genus, of which sensation, emotion, and thought are subordinate species. Thought includes all the things about which we are internally conscious. From consciousness we can think of a red colour when there is no red colour. Thought means that which passes in the mind itself and not other object external to the mind. We may think of a sun or God but that would not be our thought. The mental image of the Sun and the idea of God are the thoughts. The objects themselves are not the states of our mind.

Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) has been called the founder of the new scientific psychology of the nineteenth century. He is primarily a systematic psychologist and secondarily an experimentalist.

For him, consciousness is a name for the total state including sensations, feelings, ideas and volitions. It is a unity and at the same time a plurality. Sensations are the

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elementary forms of experience. Sensation takes place when the sense organ is stimulated and the incoming impulse reaches the brain. Sensations are classified according to modality, intensity, duration, clearness and extension.

Besides this element there are feelings. Feeling includes all qualities of experience which did not come from sense organ nor from revival of sensory experience. Feelings may be classified as pleasant, unpleasant, tense, relaxed, excited or depressed. When many sensations combine into a more complex state then there is also a feeling quality. This total feeling may lead to another new feeling. Every feeling is definable as a simple or elementary volitional tendency. Volition is fundamental, desire does not precede will, but it is repressed volition. Every sensation and every idea has its own affective tone, and so far is an elementary volition. Wundt was a voluntarist, so he believes in purposive nature of human life. So far as we are concerned with the Wundtian elements, the question arises what is the integrating power of those elements. In this reference Wundt used the term "apperception", the process by which the individuals appropriates the elements of experience. The process of relating various elements, sensations, images and feelings into unity is called "creative synthesis".

3. Leibnitz had distinguished between obscure perception and those clearly apprehended or 'apperceived'.

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A strong objection came from William James (1842-1910), the pioneer of psychology in the United States in the nineteenth century, who introduced the functional point of view in psychology in his "The Principles of Psychology" of 1890. Like Wundt he was not concerned with the elements out of which the mind is composed. Wundt upholds the view that in experience there are three main types of elements, sensations, images and feelings. But to James experiences are not groups of elements but are simply what they are. William James first sets forth his view in the essay "Does Consciousness Exist?" in his book "Essays in Radical Empiricism" in 1912. He believes that, "it (consciousness) is the name of a non-entity, and has no right to a place among first principles. Those who still cling to it are clinging to a mere echo, the faint rumour left behind by the disappearing 'soul' upon the air of philosophy".4

James denies consciousness as an entity, but he insists on the point that it stands for a function, the function of knowing. There is one primal stuff or quality of being out of which the material objects and thoughts of them are made. There is a function in experience which thoughts perform; it is the function of knowing and for this performance this quality of being is called for. He asks us to assume that the one "primal stuff"

out of which everything is composed is "pure experience". This stuff is not a single entity but it is a collective name for all sensible nature, the thing which anywhere exists. Knowing then can be explained as a particular sort of relation of things towards one another, the relation itself being a part of pure experience.

The first and foremost concrete fact which everyone will affirm to belong to his inner experience is the fact that consciousness of some sort goes on. 'States of mind' succeed each other in him. 5 We cannot say 'it thinks' like 'it rains' or 'it blows', but simply we can say that thought goes on. In 'The Principles of Psychology' James considers five characteristics of consciousness. 6

1) Every thought tends to be a part of personal consciousness. By the term 'personal consciousness' we mean no consciousness is experienced as consciousness but one's own consciousness. As for example my one thought belongs to my other thoughts. But there is no question of ascertaining the fact of mere thought, i.e., which is nobody's thought. The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousness, minds, selves, particular I's

5. Cf. William James, Text Book of Psychology, McMillan & Co., 1892, Chapter-XI.
and you's end there is no consciousness as such. The universal
conscious-fact is not 'feelings' and thoughts exist but 'I
think' and 'I feel'.

2) Consciousness is in constant change. It does not mean
that thought has no duration at all but what it means is that
no state can recur and be identical with the state which it was
before. Seeing, hearing, feeling, reasoning, recollecting,
these are all several mental states by which our minds are
alternately engaged. These are the complex states constituted
by the combination with the simpler ones. Now the question
arises that are not the sensations which we get from the same
object always the same? Does not the same grass give the same
feeling of green and the same sky give us the same feeling of
blue colour? In this connection James mentions same bodily
sensation is never got by us twice. What is got twice is the
same object. According to James, "The realities, concrete and
abstract, physical and ideal, whose permanent existence we
believe in, seem to be constantly coming up again before our
thought, and lead us, in our carelessness, to suppose that our
'ideas' of them are the same ideas." The colour of the grass
remains the same in the light of the sun, as well as in the
shade. Yet the painter paints one portion as dark brown and
another portion as bright yellow to create the real sensa-
tional effect.

7. Ibid., p. 231.
Our sensations are altering all the time so that the same object cannot give us the same sensation or the same sensation can never recur again. We feel things differently, in different times, according to our moods. We feel differently as when we are sleepy and awake, hungry or full, fresh or tired, at night or at morning, in summer and in winter. Besides this we feel things differently in childhood, manhood, and in old age.

Again every sensation corresponds to some cerebral action and for an identical sensation to recur, it must have to occur the second time in an unmodified brain. As it is a physiological impossibility so also unmodified feeling is an impossibility.

Thus it is obvious that no one state of mind is the same. Every thought of us of a given fact has only a resemblance with other thoughts of the same fact.

3) Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous. Here the term continuous means which is without gap, crack or division. The only breaches which occur in a single mind is either interruption and time-gap during which the consciousness went out and comes again at a later moment or they would be break in quality or content which is so abrupt that what followed had no connection with what had gone before. The affirmation that within each personal consciousness thought feels continuous means two things.
a) That even where there is a time-gap the consciousness after it feels as if it belonged together with the consciousness before it, as another part of the same self.

b) That the changes from one moment to another in the quality of consciousness are never absolutely abrupt. The case of time gaps, as the simplest will be clear with the help of an example.

Paul and Peter wake up in the same bed and realise that both of them had fallen asleep. Each one of them mentally reaches back and makes connection with but one of the two streams of thought which were broken by the sleeping hours. Then Peter's present at once makes a connection with Peter's past, not with Paul's past. He may have a knowledge of what Paul's last drowsy states of mind were as he sank into sleep but it is entirely a different sort of knowledge from that which he has of his own last states. He remembers his own states of mind while he conceives Paul's. This is the identity of the self which the time-gap cannot break, and the present thought can still regard itself as continuous with certain chosen portions of the past.

James, then refers to the "breaks that are produced by sudden contrasts in the quality of the successive segments of the stream of thought". The question arises does not a loud

8. Ibid., p. 239 (author's italics)
explosion abruptly break the consciousness into two? But it does not. Because in our awareness of the thunder, the awareness of the previous silence creeps and continues. In thunder-crash what we hear is not thunder pure, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it. The feeling of thunder is also the feeling of silence as just gone.

Consciousness is continually changing yet the rate of change is not always the same. When the rate is slow, we are aware of comparatively stable objects of thought. When rapid we are aware of a relation, a passage, a transition from one object to another. The stream of our consciousness may be thus compared to the life of a bird, which is made up of alternate flights and perchings. The resting places are sensorial imagination of some sort which can be detained before the mind for an indefinite time. And the places of flight are feelings of relations or transitions between them. The former are called by James substantive states of consciousness and the latter transitive states of consciousness.9

James uses the words "psychic overtone," fringe for those unnamed and vague steps of consciousness.

For example when three persons successively say to us "Wait", "Hark", "Look", although no particular object is given yet our consciousness is thrown into three different states of mind. No one will deny the existence of a real conscious mental state here, yet we have no names for these states.

9 Cf. Ibid., p. 243.
Again when we try to recall a forgotten name, we have a feeling of gap or absence which though nameless is a positive and definite state of consciousness.

When we utter a sentence, every word of the sentence has a double meaning. One is static and the other is dynamic. The former is the unchanging meaning of the word independently of the context and the other is the vague consciousness of the whole to which it belongs, which is different in different sentences. This dynamic meaning is the fringe of consciousness.

4) Human thought or consciousness deals with objects independent of itself. According to Absolute Idealism the infinite thought and objects are one. The objects are, through being thought and the eternal mind is, through thinking them. The objects of our thoughts have duplicate existence outside, as because there are many human thoughts, each with the same objects. Semeness in a multiplicity of objective appearances is the basis of our belief in realities outside the thought. However, complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness.

5) Lastly thought or consciousness is selective, it rejects one and chooses another ...."mind is at every stage a theatre of simultaneous possibilities. Consciousness consists in the comparison of these with each other, the selection of
some, and the suppression of the rest by the reinforcing and inhibiting agency of attention."  

However, it can be considered that James theory has a close resemblance to David Hume's rejection of personal identity. When we fix our attention on consciousness to see what it is, it vanishes and what is left behind is mere emptiness. From the point of view of William James and Hume it can be suggested that if consciousness is not any special faculty it is nothing but the self or the subject itself. Consciousness and self being identical there arises the inability of introspection to know consciousness.

It cannot be denied that my thinking, feeling and desires are all the processes of consciousness. These are my processes as conscious being. Consciousness is therefore not a faculty in addition to other faculties but is implied in the functions of my mind, it is an essential property of processes that go on within my mind.

James Ward (1843-1925) had established his reputation as one of the leading British psychologists in the late nineteenth century. His work in psychology is contained in his famous article of 1886 in the "Encyclopaedia Britannica", subsequently twice revised and then reaching its final form in his

10. Ibid., p. 283.
"Psychological Principles" in 1918. Ward declares that psychology is the science of individual experience on the ground that every mental act has its locus in an individual life. He maintains that the duality of subject and object is fundamental. There is an agent as well as an action behind each and every mental state. For a sequence of states has no inner unity and could not know itself. That is why we have to admit in addition to knowing, feeling and willing, that which knows, feels and wills. If the self or the Ego is not to be some detached essence it must be equivalent to the total state of consciousness, and regarded as the inner unity of self-knowledge.  

Consciousness, to whose constituents Ward gave the name, 'presentations' - is not a chaotic manifold but a unity. "At any given moment we have a certain whole of presentations, a 'field of consciousness' psychologically one and continuous; at the next we have not an entirely new field but a partial change within the old." Every new experience is not an addendum but a modification of the pre-existing whole as there is no discontinuous presentation. Thus consciousness is not an aggregate of distinct and independent units, but a continuous process in which only the presentational field undergoes certain constant modifications.  

In this way he tries to overcome the views of traditional empiricists according to which, psychologists analyse the contents

of experience into its various elements and examine these elements separately.\textsuperscript{13}

There is a single subjective activity which may be termed attention, a term Ward prefers to consciousness. It is more basic than awareness or than conation. Attention is ultimate unanalyzable subjective activity.\textsuperscript{14} Attention is required both for sensory and motor presentations. Without attention no mental state, not even a sensation is possible.

According to Ward consciousness and attention are essentially identical. We cannot be conscious of a thing without giving it some attention. That is why to be aware of it is to attend to it. Thus for Ward it would be meaningless for one to say that he was aware of something but had not given it any attention. In Ward's theory seeming absence of attention is explained as a low degree of attention. In ordinary usage attention implies some selection or preference. Association is not a passive and mechanical process in which the contents of consciousness enter into new relations with each other automatically, but is controlled by a purposive subject that chooses and selects its own suitable experience. This emphasis on purposive selection led Ward to make attention the central

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. L.S. Hearnshaw, \textit{A Short History of British Psychology}, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1964, p. 133.
function of consciousness. Consciousness is always a greater or less degree of attention to what is new in the presentational-continuum. The term 'inattention' is used to describe the state of mind of one who is not paying attention to what he is supposed to be doing. When there is nothing to which a person is supposed to be paying attention it would be proper to say that he was non-attentive, or rather inattentive.

Thus Ward's theory would be true of inattention but not of non-attention. He could not abandon this fact that every element of consciousness is an object of attention of at least some degree. A state we would call non-attention is described by William James, who puts forward a theory of attention that goes against Ward's, by maintaining that there is a condition of consciousness which is free of any trace of attention.

Ward's new ideas brought about in the field of psychology a revolution which took the form not of a radical departure from the traditional methods of psychological investigation but of a slight modification of the general point of view from which the phenomena and structure of mental life is usually regarded.

15. Cf. Dr. Rudolf Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, pp. 401-402.
His methods are much the same as those of Locke and Hume, that is introspective. He left no room for experimental and physiological psychology, and made use of the comparative method as a way not of discovering conclusions but of illustrating them. He started from inner perception and described the immediate data of individual consciousness. 17

17. Cf. Dr. R. Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, p. 403.