Everyone knows in a general way what consciousness is, yet when we try to define it, we encounter some formidable difficulties. Consciousness is so obvious a fact that it is incapable of any formal definition. It is a primary feature of our mental life which underlies every form of experience. It is the condition and form of all our mental activities, the medium and repository of all our mental operations. But there are various other ways of expressing its meaning. If we strike a stone, it is insensible to the blow, whereas, when we strike a living and waking animal, it becomes instantly conscious of it. We can explain this fact by saying that the stone does not feel the blow, but the animal does. We may also define consciousness by its denotation, or by mentioning its various kinds, eg. sensation, perception, memory, imagination, thought, emotion, desire, will. When we have recognised all these kinds of mental states we are being acquainted with consciousness as a general idea. Again it is closely allied to awareness, though the two words are not synonymous. Awareness is either mediate or immediate. Whereas consciousness is always immediate. In this sense it may be called as immediate awareness. Experience means the processes of mental life - sensation perception, memory etc. A man's experience is co-extensive with his entire mental history. It is made up of two classes of elements. First, objects, that is, those things of which he has
experience and these constitute the external or objective elements. The other element is consciousness, which is that in the experiencing person which renders him capable of having it. This is the internal or subjective element by means of which he attains consciousness of the objects presented before him in his experience. Psychologists like Brennan offer another explanation of consciousness by saying that it is the most obvious feature that separates sensitive from vegetative life. Whenever we are dealing with this concept we deal with some kind of animal, as distinguished from vegetable forms, because the plant, gives no sign of being aware of what it does. 1

Early British psychologists, eg. John Locke in 1690 used the term 'consciousness' to designate the mind's awareness of its own operations, but in the nineteenth century consciousness came to mean not only thoughts, volitions, feelings, and images but also the data that come from outside, the perceptions and sensations.

Sometimes consciousness is thought not as an entity but as a function or an activity. Motion is the universal kind of activity in the material world and consciousness is the universal kind of activity in the mental world. They also inter-act upon

each other. All conscious activity is caused directly or indirectly by material activity, again consciousness causes motion. In this connection we can refer to William James' view of consciousness which is typical of the functional conception of consciousness. In his article "Does Consciousness Exist?" he says, "it (consciousness) is the name of non-entity and has no right to a place among first principles." But he at the same time adds the point that he only wants to deny consciousness as an entity but he remarks emphatically that it stands for a function. That function is knowing. Consciousness is necessary to explain the fact that things not only are, but get reported, are known.

There are some concepts which are frequently used by philosophers such as, those of 'intentionality', 'freedom', 'choice', 'meaning', 'alienation' etc. which also can not be ignored by the psychologists. Though philosophy and psychology have now been officially separated yet philosophy has made many interesting contributions to the understanding and elucidation of psychological concepts and problems. How are the mind and consciousness related to the ultimate reality of the world, is an important philosophical question. But the answers given to this problem have some significant bearing upon the

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3.Cf.Ibid., p. 3.
formulation of various psychological theories of mind and consciousness. Behaviourism is a psychological doctrine, which discards mind and consciousness as a distinct reality and gives an analysis of human acts in terms of stimulus and response. It derives its inspiration from materialism which is an age-old philosophical theory. Again any psychological doctrine which regards mind and consciousness as the source of knowledge, or in other words, which relies upon introspection for its data about the workings of the mind, may have its philosophical basis in Dualism or in Idealism. With a view to showing the inadequacy of behaviourism these philosophical theories have made many significant observations about the working of mind and its functions.

In the history of psychology consciousness has been used among psychologists themselves in a variety of meanings. Although there are severe clashes of opinions among psychologists on this point, still a great number of psychologists were clinging to the idea that consciousness is an object of scientific study. In fact, whether they accept or reject the facts of consciousness, they certainly have taken up a definite attitude towards the problem of consciousness. Behaviouristic psychology which came into being with the efforts of J.B. Watson to study men and animal from a purely objective standpoint, thus sets a new fashion among various schools of thought. Like Watsonian School
response psychology holds an objective attitude towards things. But here consciousness is admitted in a round about way, its existence being equated with responses of the organism to external stimuli. The names of Knight Dunlap, Herbert S. Langfeld and Edward L. Thorndike have been associated with theories of this kind. Another dynamic way of viewing the facts of consciousness is found in the psychoanalytic school of Sigmund Freud. The total field of awareness can be considered as having two levels. The first is unconscious having only a vague and shadowy form and the second is conscious which has elements of both reason and will in it.

Apparently though it seems that the term 'consciousness' constitutes the direct field of study for psychology, yet philosophy also has made many interesting contributions to the theory of consciousness. In the history of philosophy the idealistic thinkers like Plato and Hegel have raised consciousness to the level of Ultimate Reality revealing itself in all objects of the world and becoming the permanent background of the world-process. Kant thinks every natural fact is a fact concerning human consciousness. According to him, Space and Time upon which the very structure of the natural world rests are only forms of consciousness. In his 'Critique of Pure Reason' he makes a distinction between Reality and Appearance. Reality for him, is unknown and unknowable, only Appearances are
regarded as knowable. Later, in his "Critique of Practical Reason," he admits that this gulf between Reality and Appearance may be bridged over by the intuition of our moral consciousness. And thus in Kant consciousness is restored to the supreme position which is found in the philosophy of Plato and idealist philosophers.

Materialists like Marx admitted the fact that consciousness is not the stuff of ultimate reality of the universe, rather it is only an emergent quality of the body which originated in course of time. According to old materialism, consciousness has nothing unique and irreducible in itself, so that it may be perfectly identified with some kind of organic processes that are analysable into certain physico-chemical facts explicable in terms of laws of the material universe. But materialism in its advanced form, recognises the fact that in spite of having a physical basis consciousness is an emergent quality higher than and irreducible to those elements that have appeared prior to the appearances of mind. D.M. Armstrong in his "A Materialist Theory of the Mind" wanted to establish that a state of conscious experience is a brain-state and not the effect of a brain-state.

With the aim of reviewing some of the contemporary theories of consciousness, I have, in the first chapter attempted to give a brief account of some of the representative views in the
philosophy of nineteenth century. The second chapter attempts to integrate a great deal some of the views from the neo-realistic standpoint. The third chapter is Edmund Husserl's conception of consciousness, a phenomenological approach to this concept. The fourth chapter is an illustration of the philosophy of J.P. Sartre, the chief exponent of modern existentialism. The fifth chapter concerns Gilbert Ryle, his interpretation and line of approach to this problem of consciousness.

I think that the views of the above mentioned philosophers about the nature and function of consciousness will enable us to form a fair idea regarding contemporary thinking on the subject. It will appear that there is divergence of opinion among philosophers on the subject. While some philosophers have affirmed the positive nature of consciousness there are theories which have denied the existence of consciousness as a fact over and above the workings of the body.

Hence the subject deserves to be studied from all the different points of view. After a critical survey of some of the representative views we have tried to uphold the thesis that the existence of consciousness as a positive feature of mental life can not be totally ignored.