CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION
Rene Descartes maintains that consciousness or thinking is the essence of mind without which mind cannot be mind. Consciousness is apriori and it cannot be derived from behaviour. It is consciousness which makes derivation or other activities possible. Psychology is a branch of study which exclusively deals with consciousness, mind or psyche. Descartes' dualism played a great role in shaping the theories in psychology and led psychology to the development of associationism, functionalism, and behaviourism. William James and Dewey don't regard mind or consciousness to be a metaphysical entity. What is given to us in consciousness is revealed in our experience and there is nothing mysterious in or behind immediate consciousness. They thought that it is impossible to tell what immediate consciousness is, because it is something had, not communicated and known. They are happy with the dubious nature of the immediately given consciousness. In order to live our practical life there is no need of metaphysical investigation. Rene Descartes was a philosopher who wanted to establish certainty in philosophy and inquired the real nature of mind in his Meditations on First philosophy. He has succeeded in his mission and declared that consciousness is the essence of mind. It is true that consciousness is not a mystery but it is different from extended bodies. If we try to find consciousness as a physical entity we cannot succeed because, it is a mental entity which is apriori. James and Dewey could not follow the path, which was indicated by
Descartes and remained, far away from getting a solution to the problem of consciousness.

Although psychology has got its status as a science by studying consciousness and mind as its subject matter, some psychologists of recent times tried to ignore the concept of consciousness and defined psychology as a science of behaviour. But it is to be noted that behaviour or behavioural dispositions are the outcome of consciousness. In other words, behaviour is the expression of inner consciousness. Behaviourists are right in saying that consciousness in itself is the subject matter of metaphysics not of psychology. For, as a science, psychology deals with the observable behaviour and consciousness cannot be observed in a psychological laboratory. It is the branch of philosophy, metaphysics, which discusses the concept of consciousness as the essence of mind or soul. C. D. King has pointed out a very important fact about our investigation towards mind and consciousness which supports Descartes' view as well as rejects the prejudice that as a science psychology must have a laboratory, thus:

"...... laboratories do not make scientists, but vice-versa. 'I' possess a fully equipped and ever present laboratory; it is the body to which 'I' am attached. Perhaps the possibility of experiment in that laboratory is the real reason why 'I' have a body, 'I' can make up if 'I' will."1
Hence psychological explanation of consciousness made us believe that consciousness is real and introspection is the method of its investigation, and the outward manifestation of consciousness is behaviour. In order to know what consciousness is we must look towards our own inner consciousness as Descartes has pointed out four hundred years ago. As he says, "Thought is a word that covers everything that exists in us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the operations of will, intellect, imagination, and of the senses are thoughts."²

For Descartes, the mind or the subject can validly think only his thinking and since he is primarily conscious of his own consciousness the knowledge the subject has is nothing else than knowledge of consciousness. Although Descartes accepted that only the existence of the thinking subject is certain his theory of consciousness is not subjectivism. He believes that there was an escape from the difficulties of subjectivism, for he had discovered a criterion of truth in the fact that "things which we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true". In other words, every attempt to show that a certain reality corresponds to mental concepts rests upon the assumption that clear and distinct ideas are the objective expressions of reality.

Descartes maintains that consciousness is the essence or differentiating attribute of mind. Consciousness is the mental
As R.C. Pradhan observes: "It is beyond doubt that there is something called the mental. Consciousness is the mental phenomenon per excellence. It is in this context that philosophers have claimed that consciousness is a fundamental fact of nature and that we cannot eliminate it at all. The reason is that the effort to eliminate consciousness proves infructuous because of the fact that the very act of elimination presupposes consciousness. Consciousness is a built up feature of man. Therefore, it is futile to attempt to eliminate consciousness from the domain of reality."³

Descartes proof of the existence of self-consciousness is a tremendous achievement and self-consciousness cannot be regarded as philosophers' myth. For, it is inevitable for envisaging a self-determining free agent who can claim responsibility for his action. It is true that most of the times of our lives have gone without being conscious of ourselves. But it does not mean that we are not conscious at all or consciousness is unreal.

The most important achievement of Descartes is that he has discovered firmly that consciousness is ascribed to a subject because it is only a subject or an agent who can claim to be conscious. For, we cannot ascribe consciousness to a material body like a stone or even to a dead body. Descartes ascribed consciousness only to the mind or
human mind not to other animals. His concept of consciousness is not the general consciousness, which can be ascribed to other animals and it is not the simple awareness that can be ascribed to lower level of living beings. Descartes' concept of consciousness is only the reflective thought. For him, mind or self is the subject of consciousness but it is not the Aristotelian soul which includes physical body, Descartes was very clear that mind or self is completely different from body. Jose Ortega Y Gasset has rightly remarked; thus: "In Descartes for the first time the material and the spiritual world are separated by their very essence the being as the essence of the external, and the being as being as something essentially internal is henceforth defined as incompatible."4

Philosophers are of the opinion that "Descartes' conception of consciousness as the essence of mind and that the concept of other animals as automata," is the outcome of the Bible. In the Bible it is said that man is created by god at his own image and animals are created for the benefit of man. In the influence of Christianity Descartes maintained the view of man having a conscious mind and animals as automata or moving machine without mind. For him, there is a difference between man and animal. Animals could never use speech or other signs as we do when placing our thoughts on record for the benefit of others. They may exhibit more dexterity than we do in some
of their actions but they do not manifest any dexterity at all in many matters. So, they have no mind. As he says, "Hence the fact that they do better than we do, does not prove that they are endowed with mind..... It rather shows that they have no reason at all, and that it is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs, just as a clock, which is only composed of wheels and weights, is able to tell the hours and measure the time correctly than we can do with all our wisdom." (Passions of the Soul)\textsuperscript{5}

It is to be noted that Descartes has given enough reasons to establish that animals have no mind and these reasons are beyond doubt. Moreover, it is found that Descartes has clearly and distinctly proved that mind and body are completely different. Consciousness cannot be placed in the status of matter. This conception is also found in Anaxagoras and Aristotle and Descartes has firmly established through the method of doubt.

We often notice that philosophers criticize Descartes by pointing to the fact that the difference between consciousness and the body made him to offer the theory of interactionism. But interactionism is indeed an acceptable theory even if it has all those difficulties pointed out by the critics of Descartes. For, monistic theories have more difficulties than that of Descartes' interactionism. We must admit that some kind of interaction happens between consciousness and the
body. It is because we all experience that if any kind of injury is caused in the body our mind feels it and mind reacts to it and vice-versa. If there is no interaction between them it would be impossible to be physically inactive when we are in grief. It is mind which wills to act according to its choice.

Descartes seems to be clear about the fact that consciousness and body can exist without each other. It is a familiar fact that bodies like stones, tables, dead-bodies exist without mind or consciousness. Likewise mind or consciousness can exist without the body. It is because consciousness is truly distinct from body and mind is the thinking substance. The essence of mind is consciousness and therefore, it can exist without body the essence of which is extension. This is the concept of consciousness, which has conformity with the concept of the immortality of soul as accepted in religion. It is not acceptable that the conscious, commanding subject, mind perishes just after the destruction of the body. As a result of Descartes' conception that consciousness can exist without body, philosophers and parapsychologists are trying to prove the disembodied existence of consciousness. It is remarkable that they are reporting to be gained by these Para-psychological researches. It is true that parapsychology is still in its infancy like neurology and brain science. In order to give a final comment on the matter our sciences have to develop more, for,
today's neuroscience cannot tell us why consciousness arises out of the brain with the subject 'I'.

The discussions on the concept of consciousness in Indian perspective resulted that Indian philosophers have given importance on the analysis of the concept and have discussed the problem with utmost care. Actually the concept of consciousness as depicted in the Indian philosophical systems needs independent research for each of them. For, each of the systems of Indian philosophy has its own theory of consciousness despite the similarities among them. As I have planned to write a chapter on Indian perspective I could mention only the important points. Particularly, in this chapter it is noticed that the concept of consciousness seems to be the vital problem of Indian philosophy. We observe some similarities between Descartes and Indian philosophical systems regarding the concept of consciousness.

1. Rene Descartes tried to prove the existence of mind with utmost certainty and discovered that 'cogito-ergo-sum' is the most certain proposition which proves the existence of the subject 'I', the mind the essence of which is consciousness. Likewise the vedic seers urge to look inside the heart. They also tried to know the inner reality. Most of the Indian Philosophical systems follow this path.
II. Descartes found that consciousness couldn't be the essence of the body for body is extended. The same conception is found in the Upanisads where consciousness is not regarded as the essence of the body. Buddhism regards body to be extended. Sāmkhya considered prakṛiti or matter to be unconscious and for Sāmkhya, consciousness is not the essence of the body. Contemporary Indian thinkers are also agreeing with Descartes.

III. Descartes' famous statement is "the essence of mind is consciousness". I am a thinking thing. Here he finds supports from Indian Philosophical systems like Jainism, Sāmkhya – yoga etc. and to some extent Buddhism supports Descartes' view, for, it admits that mind is immaterial. Jainism and Sāmkhya-yoga accepted that consciousness is the essence of mind or self. The Upanisadic concept also agrees with Descartes.

IV. According to Descartes, only the existence of conscious subject can be proved with utmost certainty. It is indubitable that I am a thinking thing. Such an emphasis is found in the Vedānta and Buddhism where consciousness is regarded as the only reality.
V. The most important gift of Descartes to the history of philosophy is his dualism of consciousness and body. His dualism is comparable to the dualism of Sāmkhya-yoga, Nyāyavaisesika and Rāmānuja. Sāmkhya-yoga concept of purusa and prakriti is very much similar to Descartes'.

VI. Descartes' belief of disembodied existence of consciousness finds supports from the various schools of Indian philosophy. Descartes maintains that mind can exist even without the body for; its essence is thinking or consciousness. Such a concept is accepted by Sāmkhya-yoga, Nyāya-vaisesika and mimāmsā-vedānta. According to these schools, mind or soul is immortal and it is always in the urge of salvation.

Though there are some similarities between Descartes' conception of consciousness and the Indian concept, we cannot claim that they have no differences. We observe the following differences also.

1. The principal point of difference is that Descartes has pointed out consciousness to be the essence of mind or soul or self. He did not differentiate mind from soul or self, which is observed in Indian philosophical systems.
2. The next point of difference is that most of the systems of Indian philosophy regards mind to be a 'sense organ' like five sensory organs. Here 'self' is regarded as immaterial. Descartes seems to fail to recognize the difference between mind and self as depicted in Indian schools of philosophy. Saraswati Chennkesavan remarks that Descartes could have solved the mind-body problem if he had recognized a self over and above mind and matter.

3. Descartes maintains that consciousness is the essence of mind. Here he means that nothing without which a thing can exists comprises its essence. In other words, consciousness is the 'Swabhāba' of mind but vaisesika regards consciousness as an adventurous quality of the soul. It is not the 'swabhāba' but 'guna' of 'ātmān'.

4. Descartes' interactionism is one of his great gifts to the philosophy of mind. Such a theory is not found in Indian philosophy. Sāmkhya-yoga theory of purusa and prakriti is different from Descartes, mind-body interactionism.

5. Indian philosophers have characterized different states of consciousness; Uapnisad explains six varieties of consciousness and various levels of consciousness. This type of analysis of consciousness is not found in
Descartes. He did not maintain any division or levels of consciousness.

6. In comparison to Indian thought Descartes' concept of consciousness is simple for, he has not elaborately discussed about various levels and types of consciousness. Moreover, he has not analyzed the concepts of mind, self, soul, citta etc. like Indian philosophers. On the other hand, most of the systems of Indian philosophy have analyzed various states and levels of consciousness together with the analysis of self, mind, soul, citta etc.

7. It is to be noted here that like Western materialism cervāka philosophy denies the existence of mind or soul as the subject of consciousness and regards consciousness to be a by-product of matter. Such an interpretation goes against Descartes' view.

In the western philosophy, the idealists like Berkeley, Kant, Hegel and Bradley tried their best to establish that the conscious mind cannot be kept in the same status with matter. Berkeley's idealistic approach to consciousness led Cartesian dualism into his subjective idealism. But Descartes' purpose was to treat mind and matter equally for both are finite substances. When we become certain about our own
existence we can have knowledge of matter as contents of consciousness. Kant's anti-metaphysical theory of consciousness fails to catch the subject of consciousness, the mind, which seems to be unknown and unknowable. Kant could not categorize mind as a substance as depicted in Descartes. Hegel's approach to the concept of consciousness could not reveal Cartesian spiritual substance and matter as separate entities, which is an undeniable fact of experience. But he talked of grades of consciousness. Monistic idealism of Bradley regarded consciousness and the subject of consciousness to be merely appearance. For him, reality is the undivided whole of experience where everything is posited but not related. Here Bradley tried to lead Cartesian concept of consciousness into his monistic idealism. But it seems that Descartes' "Consciousness" is nothing other than Bradley's "experience".

The materialistic outlook of Locke, Hume and Armstrong shows that they have followed the path directed by Descartes that "matter is an extended substance which can exist independently." Further, they even denied the spiritual substance, the mind, which was accepted by Descartes. John Locke pretended to be a materialist by saying that mind is a 'white-paper' (tabula-rasa) but he could not keep it defended for he ascribed conscious activities like 'formation of ideas', 'having experiences' etc to the mind. Hume did not find an entity like 'mind' as
the subject of consciousness, but a bundle or collection of different perceptions. But it is useless to talk about perceptions if there is no perceiver or doubter or a conscious thinker. Hume accepts the existence of his own 'I' but denies it as something different from the body. Perhaps he fails to catch the point that mind is so united with body that one cannot separate them in the first sight. It needs continuous meditation, which was maintained by Descartes. D. M. Armstrong tried to give a complete materialistic explanation of consciousness. He did not even hesitate to mark consciousness as self-scanning mechanism. He believes that within the boundary of materialism we can explain consciousness. For him, although mental activities are having tremendous power of creative thinking it can be explained that this is also physical-not spiritual. We need not allow a non-physical spiritual substance to be the subject of creative thinking. But Armstrong cannot solve the problem of consciousness in such a way, which he is following. It is because he pretends to be sleeping although he is awake. For, he is going to establish the non-existence of his own self, his own 'I' which is a contradiction. One must admit his own existence in order to explain or examine something.

We observe a fully developed existentialist's concept of consciousness in Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre regards consciousness to be nothingness and he also attributed consciousness only to man.
"Man alone in this world exists for himself (pour-sui)." Here Sartrean view represents Cartesian view that 'I am a thinking thing' and other animals are mere automata.' But he rejects the disembodied existence of consciousness for, consciousness cannot be perceived without embodiment, Here Sartrean view seems to be correct to some extent but we must not try to treat consciousness like physical objects. It is because 'mental' phenomena are very different from 'physical' phenomena. Mind is very different from body. In order to avoid the dualism of Descartes, Sartre maintains that body cannot be separated from consciousness and what we conceive, as body is the conscious body. Here Sartre has said nothing more than Descartes' view that 'mind is so united with the body.' Moreover, Sartre agrees with Descartes while regarding consciousness as 'reflective thought'.

G. E. Moore seems to agree with Descartes' dualism of consciousness and the body for, he maintains that consciousness and the object of consciousness both are different from each other. We must not identify the object with the consciousness of it. Within the barrier of realism Moore could not find room for disembodied existence of consciousness as Descartes had contended. A. J. Ayer rejected the existence of mind as metaphysical entity and believed in a self as a logical construction out of the sense experiences. Ayer accepts the existence of consciousness and says that a mental substance (mind) is not needed
to explain self-consciousness. He seems to reject the method of doubt for he maintains that “it is non-sensical to doubt our own experience.” Here Ayer goes against Descartes but to whom he refers by using personal pronoun “I” to a body or to a mind that is not clear. He cannot keep consciousness in the same status with physical body. Analytical method cannot reveal the real status of consciousness which is clearly and distinctly revealed in the method of doubt. Bertrand Russell, on the other hand, denies consciousness as the essence of mind. He goes against Descartes’ concept that consciousness is the essence of mind and bodies are extended. For him, mind is not completely different from physical body and from other animals as Descartes thought of, for there are similarities between them. Man has developed out of the animals, and there is no serious gap between him and the amoeba. Russell maintains that mind and matter alike are logical constructions. The stuff out of which the world of our experience is composed is neither mind nor matter, but something primitive than either. Exactly the same building blocks can occur both in a material object and in a mind with regard to the distinction between mind and matter, these building blocks are therefore, “neutral”. Russell thinks of “aspects” or “events” as “neutral stuff” out of which the universe is made. Russell’s criticism against Descartes is not acceptable so far as the essential nature of mind is concerned. It is because animals and other physical bodies lack consciousness in the sense that they cannot talk, think and
reason like us. This thinking or understanding is the essence of the mind. Descartes never denies the life and awareness to the animals. Moreover, if mind and matter are logical constructions then we need to suppose a subject, a thinker who thinks or infers them from particulars to make the logical construction. We must admit a thinker whose essence is thinking or consciousness.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's account of consciousness shows that he has not tried to advocate a theory of consciousness but carefully examined the uses of the words for describing mental process. For him, if we use these words according to their grammar no problems arise and "philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday".\(^7\) We observe similarities between Descartes' concept of consciousness and that of Wittgenstein's. Wittgenstein agrees with Descartes in regarding consciousness and mind as the central feature of the world. It is because human language and actions are enormously important to our understanding of the world with which we are concerned. Both of them are of the opinion that we cannot ascribe consciousness to animal automata and to other physical things. Consciousness can be ascribed only to human beings who are capable of using language-game (P.I., Sect-418). Both Wittgenstein and Descartes maintain that we must not confuse mental processes with physical processes. For, mental processes have their own logic.
Moreover, they accept that human mind makes a difference to the world. The reality of mind is established in cogito-ergo-sum and Wittgenstein accepts that mind is real though not a mental entity. He believes that mental states are logically connected with the behaviour of human beings and that is true of all mental predicates. In spite of the similarities we have noticed there are vast differences between Descartes' concept of consciousness and Wittgenstein's analysis. The following points are noteworthy:

1. Wittgenstein differs from Descartes while denying mind as a spiritual substance or entity. For him, "mind or self is not a substance, as a substance it is something non-changing and simple". Mind stands for a set of activities rather than for a mental entity. He guarantees metaphysical certainty to the existence of the world and also to that of the mind in the sense that both thought and language are part of the world.

2. Descartes' concept of consciousness seems to be the first-person account which led to give a private ostensive definition of consciousness. While Wittgenstein rejects such an account by his beetle-in-the-box argument. For him, consciousness is logically connected with the behaviour of human beings.
3. According to Descartes, consciousness or thinking is the essence or nature of human mind. But Wittgenstein maintains that mind is not the seat of mental processes and consciousness is not the innate nature of mind. For him, it is wrong to make thought an inner process in the invisible and subjective realm of the mind as distinguished from the body of man.

4. Wittgenstein's approach to the problem of consciousness is logical and metaphysical while Descartes' approach is epistemological and metaphysical. Descartes regards the mind as the knower, the subject of conscious activities whereas in Wittgenstein's logical behaviourism the mind, the subject "I" is only the logical agent involved in the language game.

5. Moreover, Descartes finds differences between mind and body. On the other hand, Wittgenstein goes against the idea that life consists of two parts: a mental part and a physical part.

6. For Descartes mind is inner, private and therefore, something mystical whereas for Wittgenstein there is nothing mystical about mind. It is out there in the sense that to have mind consists in taking part in a language game involving mental terms and to understand them.
7. We observe differences between Descartes' view and that of Wittgenstein so far as the statement "I am in pain" or "I have a pain" is concerned. According to Descartes, when I say "I am in pain" or "I have a pain" here pain is not anything beyond our mind (Principle-LXVII). For Descartes the statement 'I am in pain' means I am having a mental state which is private to me and it is a state of which I am directly conscious. Only I can know that 'I am in pain'. The statement 'I am in pain' is a report of a private mental state. This statement names a private experience which which alone can be known by the person who makes the statement. On the other hand, Wittgenstein holds that 'I am in pain' is not a state of report of a private experience. 'I am in pain' is not a statement but it is a pain behaviour. It replaces the natural expression of pain like crying, moaning etc. According to Wittgenstein, these natural expressions of pain are very much necessary for learning and understanding the meaning of the sensation word 'pain'. A child hurts himself and cries and the adult asks him whether it is paining and consoles him that after sometime it will be alright. In this way the child learn to use the sensation word pain and pain behaviour. Thus for
Wittgenstein, 'I am in pain' is not a statement of report of a private mental state but it is pain behaviour. For Descartes, 'I know I am in pain' is a meaningful statement but for Wittgenstein, 'I know I am in pain' is meaningless. Wittgenstein holds that this statement 'I know I am in pain' would make sense if I can contrast this statement with 'I rather think that I am in pain' or 'I doubt that I am in pain'. Since I can never say that 'I doubt I am in pain' or 'I strongly believe I am in pain' therefore, I cannot also say that I know that I am in pain. But the statement 'I know he is in pain' is meaningful, because I can also say sometimes that 'I doubt he is in pain'.

Gilbert Ryle's concept of consciousness reveals that consciousness need not be regarded as a part of the definition of the mental. He advises us to believe in the senses in which the word "consciousness" is used in ordinary language. It is because the official theories of consciousness and introspection are logical muddles. He has not tried to offer any new information about mind and consciousness but tried to rectify the logical geography of the concept. Ryle tried to disclose the mystery of the human mind and contributed towards the development of the philosophy of mind. We observe the following differences between Ryle and Descartes:
1. According to Descartes, consciousness is the essential nature of the mind but Ryle does not regard consciousness as a part of definition of the mental. Ryle rejects the thesis that a mind is constantly aware or conscious of all the states and processes of his private state and also can know some of these states and processes by a non-sensuous inner perception called introspection. Ryle believes that there is no mental happening or mental states or processes but there are only the dispositions to behave in a certain manner. Since there is no mental happening therefore, the question of one's being conscious of these happenings does not arise. Ryle also holds that if consciousness is regarded as the essence of mind in the sense that all mental states and processes are defined as conscious states and processes then it would follow that if I am inferring then I am conscious of inferring and if I am conscious of inferring then it implies that I am also conscious of being conscious of inferring and thus it would lead to infinite number of onion-skins of consciousness. Hence 'consciousness' could no longer be regarded as part of the definition of mental.
According to Descartes, one has a privileged access to one's own mind in the sense that one can directly know through introspection what is going on in one's own mind but one has no direct access to another's mind. Through observation of a third person's behaviour one can make an inference regarding a state or process about his mind. However, Ryle rejects this privileged access theory of Descartes and holds that no one can introspectively scrutinize the state of panic or fury. To be in state of panic is to be not cool and to be cool is not to be in a state of panic. The moment I try to scrutinize the state of panic I am no longer in panic and therefore all I can do is to retrospect the state of panic. Thus Ryle holds "If retrospection can give us the data we need for our knowledge of some states of mind, there is no reason why it should not do so for all."¹⁰

2. Descartes regarded mind as a thinking substance while Ryle does not agree with him. For Ryle, mind is not a substance; it is simply the disposition of a person. "To talk of a person's mind is .... to talk of the person's abilities, liabilities and inclinations to do and undergo certain sort of things and of the doing and undergoing of these things in the ordinary world."¹¹

3. Descartes advocated a dualism of mind and body, mental and physical. On the other hand, Ryle advocates that
Descartes' dualism commits the category-mistake. It is because like body, mind does not have any independent existence.

4. For Descartes, "thinking" or "consciousness" proves the existence of the thinker, the thinking "I" in his cogito-ergo-sum. But Ryle does not accept that mental processes ever refer to mind for, they refer to the dispositions of some kind of behaviour. There is no ghost in the machine.

5. One of the differences between Ryle and Descartes is that while former is accepting the third-person account of mind or mental the later is accepting the first-person account.

6. They also differ in their approaches to the problem of consciousness. For, Descartes' approach is metaphysical and epistemological, while Ryle's approach is behaviouristic. Moreover, they differ in their methods also for, the former is following the method of doubt and the later is following the analytical method.

7. Rene Descartes has given consciousness or the mental processes a status but Ryle maintains that "mental" does not denote a status, such that one can sensibly ask of a
given thing or event whether it is mental or physical, "in
the mind" or "in the outside world".\textsuperscript{12}

8. Moreover, Descartes believes that we are conscious of
our "cogitations" and such a concept is rejected by Ryle.
For Ryle, sensations cannot be objects of observations
and they are not themselves observings of objects.\textsuperscript{13}

In spite of the criticisms against Descartes' concept of
consciousness as the essence of mind I would like to say that
consciousness as reflective thought is the essential nature of the mind.
It is because human being as a minded being is distinct from the body
and the other animal automata. We must agree with Descartes that
consciousness in special sense which is self-revealing, reflexive
consciousness cannot be attributed to animals. Animals have general
awareness which is much lower grade of consciousness and they lack
the capacity to play language-games. So far as the essence of a body
is extension and it is distinct from mind, the body and bodily behaviour
cannot be the essence of mind. On the other hand, thinking or
consciousness is in-separable from mind. The self-stultifying character
of the negation of cogito gives Descartes the ground to say that
consciousness is the essence of mind. Criticizing, analyzing,
comparing, reasoning etc. are acts of creative thinking or
consciousness. From such acts of the critics Descartes prove that they
have minds and if to have mind is to do reflective thinking then it follows that these reflective thinking is the essence of their minds. Hence we may conclude that Descartes' view that consciousness is the essence of mind is tenable.

It is observed that Descartes' concept of consciousness as reflective thought which forms the essence of mind played an important role in the history of the philosophy of mind. His concept of consciousness is different from other western and Indian philosophers. Thus, as a whole, all these discussions on the concept of consciousness show the contemporary relevance of Descartes not because Descartes offers the only solution to the problem of consciousness but because he opens up the issue in a fundamentally peculiar manner in as much as it draws attention of the philosophers of the contemporary world.

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5 Descartes, Key Philosophical Writings (H.R.), P-109.


8 Ibid, Sect-2.027.


10 Ryle, G.; The Concept of Mind, p-159

11 Ibid, p-190.

12 Ibid, p-199.


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