

## **Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind and Cognition**

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**Introduction**

Welcome to the course, title of this course is the contemporary issues in philosophy of mind and cognition. I am Ranjan Kumar Panda from the department of humanities and social sciences. This course is also said with a professor Rajakishore nath will teach philosophy in humanities and social sciences, IIT Bombay. Today, we will be discussing about how we shall study this course. As you all know that philosophy of mind is one of the important subject in a philosophy. It is important, because it deals with the concept of consciousness, and consciousness is central to human life as a whole, and consciousness is studied by different disciplines. For example, people from the background of neuroscience, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence are talking about consciousness extensively; but their study of consciousness is purely a scientific study, and our approach will be philosophical rather than purely a scientific one.

It is philosophical in the sense that, philosophical enquiry goes back to the history, in which you know, this question is raised, what is consciousness and how it is related to a human life? As what contains you know, one of the famous of analytic thinker of 20<sup>th</sup> century pointed out that consciousness is life itself. We want to locate how this question is related to life and how this question is dealt you know, since the time memorial. I say it time memorial, because this question is been debated and discussed in Upanishads, this question is been debated and discussed in Greek tradition.

Now, it is from that point of view, whether we will be talking about consciousness, and it is a scientific position in the history of humanity. On a consciousness, as we all know that is not a phenomenon was is existing out there, rather it is a phenomenon that has to be experienced, that has to be felt, that has to be realized etcetera, etcetera. Now, then if it is a phenomenon, which is to be realized, and then the question is how do we talk about it, because I mean the

very talk of this **this** subject becomes a problematic one, because it is not available there, meaning there by it is not available in the world. But many naturalistic thinkers in the contemporary time have discussed that consciousness is part of the world, consciousness is related to the world.

Now, again and again, I will be talking about consciousness, particularly because consciousness is same as a mind. We do not discuss that consciousness is something different from mind, but if you look at Upanishads how this you know, then particularly in (( )) Upanishad; this story of two birds, a very important where consciousness is treated as a phenomenon, which is witnessing the mind, which is witnessing the person, where mind and persons are jiff, they are you know one, and consciousness is something which is different, which is independent of the mind, which is independent of the person.

Now, so there is a distinction between mind and consciousness. In **in** a Greek tradition, you will also find the consciousness is been associated with, which is identified with the concept of soul. But in 21th century, when we talk about consciousness, we do not really talk about the concept of soul. Because people feel that such a discussion takes us in to the realm of religious studies. Philosophy is a discipline is not a religious study, is not associated with religion, it is philosophy is in fact is one of the foundational disciplines. Its questions are very basic to the life, because I have mentioned earlier that consciousness is life itself. So, what kind of questions philosophy puts worth to all of us? So, for example, what is justice? Plato is discussing this in republic, what is good? In similar way, people are also discussing, what is consciousness? So, is consciousness real, is justice is real; we all know that justice as to do or something with our real life. Similarly, consciousness has **has** to do something with our real life, precisely because we all are conscious human beings and there are also conscious beings in the world.

Now, how we are different from other beings. What is our identity as a human being and as one of the distinct unique being in the reality? So, that is the topic which we will be discussing in this course. Now, consciousness a central to our studies; what are the issues that we have been in mainly concerned with? The issues here are the problem of dualism, the problem of reductionism, the problem of feel will, the problem of personal identity, etcetera. Now, dualism is a philosophical problem, precisely because in the history of philosophy people have been discussing about what is the reality, what is the reality as a whole and as sets. Now, philosophers have again and again replied to these metaphysical questions that -

what is reality? Philosophical enquiries precisely a metaphysical enquiry and metaphysics provides a foundation to philosophical enquiries.

Now, what is reality? Is the reality a constituted of matter and some other material elements or is that reality is constituted of something which is non material, non physical etcetera, etcetera. So, when we talk about non material, non physical we do refer to this notion of consciousness. That consciousness is not a physical phenomenon rather it is a non physical phenomenon. Now, this debate is very prominent in the philosophy of more than a dacoit.

So, we will be discussing about this problem addressing to the contemporary you know philosophers. How this contemporary philosophers like John Searle, Daniel Dennett and Hilary Putnam, P. F. Strawson and many others have, you know discuss this problem. Further philosophy deal resolve the issues is a matter of debate again. We do discuss problems; we do debate on certain issues; but are this debate continuous? Yes, they are continuous. They are continuous, because we need to locate the significance of the debate. We need to understand, what is the significance of this debate? So, philosophical analysis, philosophical explanation do aspire for some kind of understanding. Philosophy does not explain every things like as it happen in the case of science. Science is mostly concerned with explanation, particularly a course less explanations. And most of the philosophers of science who are been influenced by the scientific understanding of the reality of consciousness. They have tried to you know explain away the consciousness - in the notion of consciousness from the reality. Now, so therefore the approach is eliminative.

Now, how science talks about disnortion of consciousness as I mention earlier that philosophy is a discipline is not religious, philosophy is a discipline is not scientific, but philosophy has its unique position. Philosophy as with this time once remarked that philosophy is neither above science nor below the science, it is somewhere - somewhere in the sense that it has its unique, you know, way of describing the reality. So therefore, philosophical explanations are different. There are unique, because they generate understanding. They are **are** not a discipline which will be talking about Dacumas or disciplines which are Healistc in approach. Philosophy is rational enquiry and philosophical approach is been critical and so on and so forth.

So, as a rational enquiry, we would try to locate the issues, will try to study you know this issues of reductionism, dualism, emergentism etcetera. And try to put them in a prospective.

So, from that point of view, philosophy **is** is a rational enquiry, and it is critical, because we would examine this issues, we would examine rather says how this total is talking about the concept of soul, and how dacoit is being reputed such an enterprise, and how dacoit is further, you know, reputed **reputed** by the contemporary thinkers like Dennett and Searle. Our major thesis is a centred around this you know some of the important philosophers of mind, particularly John Searle, Daniel Dennett, Gerry folder, Michael Teichman and Paul church land and many others.

Now, when we discuss these philosophers; the main aim is to go back to the history of the problem. Now, where this problem raised before, and how these philosophers are addressing to the issues. Now, this is important, because most of the time we find as if philosophers are only, you know, trying to repeat certain issues. But this repetition is certainly a philosophical enterprise; other way of looking at is that they do not just simply disagree. Now, disagree means is something represent to philosophy as a discipline. And philosophical enquiries need not have only one view, philosophers do disagree and that disagreement causes purealism. The disagreements enlighten us in many ways; in the sense that of when two philosophers disagree, they disagree on their approach to the problem. Say for example, Searle, Land, Dennett disagrees with each other on this particular notion called consciousness or mind.

Philosophers do disagree with each other. Now, their disagreement is based on their philosophical presuppositions, say for instance Searle disagrees with dacoit. When the dacoit says mind and body are two independent substances. Searle disagrees with that - Searle says they are not too independent substances rather mind and body are coaxially connected with each other. Of course, Searle agrees to this idea that mind cannot be reducible to the brain processes, and when he says that he also disagrees with his contemporary philosophers of mind (( )) Daniel Dennett. Daniel Dennett would rather feel comfortable with this idea that mind is identical with the brain, and brain process is something central to the discourse of the mind. So, there is nothing called mind access rather what is there is only the brain processes.

So, Dennett's position is quite different from the position that Searle will taking. So, the contemporary debate would not only a debate about the existing philosophical theories about the concept of mind rather the contemporary debate is centred around how this problem, you know can be traced from the history, and we will try to show how are philosophical enquiry we do make progress not by explaining the facts as it is done in the case of science, but by you know initiating, you know bringing new facts and clarifying the concepts. So, clarity is

the major issues here. The clarity is something that we would like to achieve when we talk about consciousness, because for many consciousness is a mystical entity, consciousness is a religious entity, but for a philosopher once it is not mystical, consciousness is not something which is not their; we are **we are** not realistic about consciousness, we do talk about consciousness, and will be talking about what is the anthropological significance of consciousness.

So, in this prospective, our approach will be both contemporary and will also locate how the contemporary philosophers are initiating their debate and bringing new ideas to us; that is our aim. When we say that a philosophical knowledge or philosophical enquiry is a conceptual enquiry; we try to find out how certain concepts are difficult to understand, difficult to translate to you know ordinary languages. So, probably the lack of translation, the lack of analysis, you know gives us this feeling that consciousness is a something mystical. So, in that context philosophy or philosophers bring new concepts in to the discourse. So, that is a you know something a significant. So, concept displacement as **(( ))** as to discuss; that concept is displacement is something very significant to philosophical enquiry, as disagreement is something significant. Now, conceptory displacement is something significant, if dacoit is talking about substance dualism, then Searle is bringing that property dualism. So, people before Searle probably did not talk about property dualism, as you know, it has been talked about in contemporary philosophy of mind. So, people only thought that, yes, there is only one kind of a dualism that is called substance dualism, and consciousness **is** does not have any property or consciousness is not a property. So, conceptory displacement is a **is a** part of the discourse of philosophy of mind.

Now, philosophy as a foundational discipline would definitely initiate this question, what is consciousness and how consciousness is related to human life? So, in this context, we will be pointing out some of the issues **which...** Yes, I mention earlier that philosophy talks about the reality and philosophical questions are fundamental questions, they are not general questions. Usually, general questions are the questions which deal with facts. Philosophical questions are of course they deal with facts, but here the nature of fact probably is something different. Say for example, when I say there are fifty students in my class, I am just stating the fact that there are fifty students in my class. So, I am just describing the fact, but when it comes to the philosophy, we are concerned with the questions which are very fundamental like say for

example, as I mention before that what is justice, what is consciousness, what is life, these are fundamental questions and philosophers are concerned with these questions.

Now, when it comes to the philosophical debates, these questions are viewed from various perspectives. Particularly, the monist say for example, have try to suggest a perspective where they think that only consciousness is real, only mind is real, but this could be also the other way. Say for example, a materialist monist, then I may say that the matter is only real and there is nothing called mind, and if at all there is something called mind, then that has to be explained by nature of the material principles. Now, matter is fundamental and it is fundamental, because it is ontologically real and that constitutes the entire reality.

So, the foundational principles on which the reality is constituted is matter. So, a materialist monist would certainly eliminate the notion of consciousness from the discourse consciousness. But this hallucination is something significant, it does tell us something very unique about consciousness; that is consciousness is a by-product of certain function of the material broadest; that are existing in reality. When I suggest that consciousness is by-product what I mean is this that consciousness is an Epiphenomenon. Now, as an Epiphenomenon it does not have any ontological status. So, to have ontological status of consciousness either we talk about the monist who accept that consciousness is real, and if I say both consciousness and matter or mind and the matter both are a real, then I am no more a monist, I am a dualist. So, dualist do except that there are two fundamental principles which help us explaining the nature of reality. **Now, so...** But dualist do have certain other philosophical problems. So, consciousness has to be or the mind has to be viewed from different perspectives.

So, they have to **to** show us, I mean this philosophers would an really enlighten us, how this perspectives are important for achieving clarity is I mentioned that clarity is an important thing in philosophical enquiry and that has to be achieved, because we do not want to just make a claim that consciousness is something mystical, consciousness is something spiritual. Just saying that it is mystical does not really make any sense to all of us. But since it is real, it has to be viewed how it is real. And therefore, we need to talk about different perspectives from which this particular concept is being viewed; this particular concept has been understood by these perspectives. So, from that point of view consciousness is a rational study in the domain of philosophy. So, philosophers do talk about consciousness and that

talking is different from the scientific understanding of consciousness. But philosophers do say, you know, their understanding with the scientific understanding of consciousness.

If you look at the phase at study in consciousness, most of the functionalist philosophers of mind do borrow their philosophical presuppositions from the achievement of science. So, it is not that the reason of dialogue between philosophers and scientists. It is not that philosophers study in their own way and that is totally, you know different from the way a scientist look at the problem. It is not that way. So, philosophers do talk about the issues **the** sometimes are enlightened by the scientific achievements, but philosophical progress is different from the scientific one. The progress in science is just in terms of scientific productivity, scientific achievements. But philosophers progress is just from the point of view of clarity, from the point of view of lucidity, how clarity one particular theory of mind. So, biological naturalism brings clarity, you know about the nature of consciousness. So, that is and how it refused in substance dualism that has been debated in the history for **a for** centuries. So, that kind of clarity we consider as a progress you know in philosophy. So, this one thing I think we need to talk about.