

what is consciousness?

many views of consciousness

- consciousness not an object: essentially subjective
- subjectively, our consciousness is what we are
 - > everybody is an expert
- in our ordinary waking state, consciousness is transparent to us:
 - > we are conscious of the content of our consciousness,
not of our consciousness itself
 - > mind and consciousness are equated

“the” mainstream (medical) view

– rooted in the ordinary physical consciousness –

- the world is basically physical
- mental processes are dependent on physical processes
- only some mental processes are conscious
 - > mind is a wider concept than consciousness
 - > consciousness is epiphenomenal
 - > knowledge is objective, constructed,
something we have

interestingly, this view is commonly held even by
people who do believe in the existence of God

“the” Indian view

- consciousness is primary
- Brahman (= consciousness) manifests the world out of itself
- there is only one consciousness: the Self = Brahman
(in Consciousness Studies, a reflection of this is known as the “binding problem”)
- consciousness is transcendent, cosmic and immanent
- consciousness exists in many modes, one of them mind
(in *koshas*: *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, & *manomaya purusha*)
- consciousness is pure & involved: there is being & becoming
- consciousness is power; silent and dynamic (*chit-shakti*)
(not all schools of philosophy agree)
- (true) knowledge is inherent in being: one *is* the knowledge

can we call both "consciousness"?

- from an Indian perspective,
 - the medical view is a beginner's error
 - and its consciousness is just one type of consciousness amongst many
- in our ordinary waking state (OWS)
 - consciousness is enmeshed in the working of the brain,
 - we equate consciousness with mind,
 - and so, the medical view holds
- but ... there are other types of consciousness:
 - e.g., in matter consciousness is matter's habit of form & function
- so, what do consciousness in matter and consciousness in mind have in common?

consciousness in matter & mind

- everywhere consciousness is:
 - awareness
 - essence of identity
- in matter, consciousness is fully involved in its form and function
- in mind, consciousness is still involved in matter, but...
 - our matter lives,
 - our brain "images", makes maps, plans
- beyond matter, beyond mind, consciousness still is:
 - on many different planes, and even
 - beyond everything...