

# WHAT IS A MIND?

## UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



### WEEK 1 UNDERSTANDING THE MIND

#### STEP 1.6 WHAT ARE YOU IF NOT YOUR MIND?

00:00:00

What is a mind? Think about it. It's actually a difficult question. It's also an important question, because after all, what are you if not your mind?

This thing, the mind, is studied from a great many different points of view by a great many different disciplines. **Psychoanalysis** studies and treats the mind. **Psychology**, that is to say academic and scientific psychology, studies the mind. **Psychiatry** treats disorders of the mind. **Neuroscience** studies the apparatus of the mind. Actually, even **Computer Science** via the discipline of Artificial Intelligence would claim to be studying the mind.

The answers, though, that they'll give to the question, what is a mind, are subtly different. So the answer that we're looking for must somehow span what all of those disciplines are contributing.

Then there's also the **Humanities**. In a way, I suppose the very term "the Humanities" refers to what they study. They study what us humans are all about-- so that is to say, they study the sciences of the mind. In German they say "Geisteswissenschaften" which means human sciences. **Philosophy**, for example, was the parent discipline of Psychology.

But then even the **Arts**-- what are the arts about if not about the life of the mind? I think that if we really want to answer the question, what is a mind, really, I think that all of these different disciplines, all of these different approaches have something to contribute. And what I'm wanting to do with this series of six lessons on the question, what is a mind, is I'm wanting to try to gather together the perspectives, the answers, the evidence, the approaches of all of those different disciplines, all of those different methods, to try to come up with the real answer-- what is a mind, really?

After you've viewed these six lessons, I hope that you will, if not have the answer, at least be able to think a lot more clearly about it-- what is a mind? And also, to be able to think about such closely related questions as, why do we have minds? What are minds for? What does the mind do, and for example, how does that differ from what the brain does?

So this transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, integrative approach-- I call it **neuropsychology**-- which is a shorthand term for indicating that we're bringing in

hard, natural sciences, and also the humanities and the arts. Bringing them together, and trying in an accessible way to answer the question. I will also point you to specialist literatures, give links to technical material. But most of all, I want to really address this question in a way that we can all relate to, all of us who have minds. So here goes.



Mark Solms 2015

This material is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).