

# ***WHAT IS A MIND?***

## ***GLOSSARY***

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**Note:** The definitions of the terms provided in this glossary refer to their meaning in this particular neuroscientific context.

**'Aboutness':** Another term for intentionality, the property of the mind that encapsulates how all mental states always have to be *about* something — one cannot have a thought without it being a thought about something.

**Abstraction:** A cognitive function, heavily reliant on language and the prefrontal lobes, which involves the ability to break away from the concrete present (from being stimulus bound) through the use of symbolic thought processes to represent mental life. This allows for complex associations to be made between objects, both in the present and spread over time.

**Affect:** A technical term for feeling, which is the experience of emotions. Emotion is a subjective conscious experience (the cognitive component) accompanied by bodily arousal (the physiological component) and by characteristic overt expressions (the behavioural component).

**Agency:** A property of the mind that involves the capacity to think flexibly about possible scenarios before deciding on an appropriate course of action. This property is based on learning and on having a representation of oneself in one's own mind. Agency allows for the ability to decide whether or not to do something rather than being at the mercy of one's instinctual drives. It requires the ability to inhibit instinctual drives in order to be able to think. The functioning of the prefrontal lobes and the role of **abstraction** are crucial to having agency.

**Automatise:** To render (repress) the solutions of solved problems or unsolvable problems to the unconscious. For example, once one successfully learns how to drive a car, the associated actions become automatic and one no longer thinks consciously about what one is doing.

**Awareness/subjective awareness:** The conscious perception of one's own bodily feelings, emotions and thoughts.

**Basic emotion systems:** Seven instinctual systems that are inherently hardwired in the brain and that are fundamental to the survival of the organism. Each is characterized by a particular subjective response (a stereotypical behaviour and a particular feeling state) in relation to situations of biological significance in the outside world. For example, a feeling of fear and then running away when met with a dangerous animal. The basic emotion systems are the SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE,

PANIC/GRIEF, and PLAY systems; however there are other types of emotions that are not considered to be basic emotions.

**Confabulation:** Filling in gaps in one's memory with false narratives and memories about the self or the world (a type of misremembering). There are two types of confabulation: *forced confabulation* and *fantastic/florid/spontaneous confabulation*.

**Consciousness:** Consciousness comes from the Latin word *conscientia*, meaning 'knowledge-within', or knowledge that is shared. It is the awareness (through feelings) of the state of the embodied self, grounded in affect, and simultaneously coupled from moment to moment with awareness of the state of the outside world.

**Drive:** The instinctually derived motivation to explore the outside world in order to meet biological needs in it. Drive is synonymous with the functioning of the *mesocortical-mesolimbic dopaminergic system* (the SEEKING system).

**Emotion:** An internally directed perceptual modality that is characterized by both a feeling state (of pleasurable or unpleasurable valence) and expression in the form of motor discharge.

**Feelings:** The subjective experience of emotions. The technical term for feelings is **affects**.

**Free will:** The ability to flexibly make decisions and choices that is based on the capacity for inhibition and the functioning of the prefrontal lobes. In other words, it is the ability to think that is allowed for by the suppression of basic instinctual responses.

**Instincts:** The genetically inherited basic emotions that are geared towards survival of the organism. They are hardwired in the brain from birth and do not require learning or experience. They manifest in the form of a range of good or bad feelings (for example, FEAR) accompanied by stereotyped motor patterns.

**Intentionality:** A property of the mind that pertains to the fact that all mental states always have to be *about* something — one cannot have a thought without it being a thought about something. Also referred to as aboutness.

**Objectivity:** A concept that encapsulates the goal of investigating phenomena using empirical methods, where predictions/hypothesis are made that can be systematically tested using observable and measurable criteria.

**Orders of consciousness:** The different components that make up conscious experience in its entirety, and which involve various parts of the brain. The first order of consciousness is the endogenous state grounded in affect, and which is subjective — 'I feel like this'. This conscious state then gets broadcast outwards and upwards onto the forebrain which receives information from the outside world and acts on the outside world — a second order of consciousness: 'I feel like this about that'.

**Panpsychism:** A philosophical position that posits that all objects, animate or inanimate, possess subjectivity.

**Pleasure:** An extremely positive *emotional* feeling derived from stimulation of the *ventral periaqueductal gray (PAG)*. It correlates with actions of biological significance, telling the organism 'this is good for my survival, do more of this'. It is the polar opposite of *unpleasure*.

**Qualia:** The subjective correlates of mental experiences/perceptions.

**Reflexivity:** The ability to think consciously about oneself, and to be aware of one's own awareness, subjectivity and intentionality. It is heavily reliant on language.

**Subjective awareness/awareness:** The conscious perception of one's own bodily feelings, emotions and thoughts.

**Subjectivity:** The state of the being of an organism that is unique to the individual organism in question.

**Thinking:** Imaginary action; a cognitive function enabled by the prefrontal cortex and other key processes such as language and memory. It is reliant on the inhibition of action, which prevents distraction from instinctual responses, thereby allowing for potential actions to be evaluated (involving planning and problem solving) through the utilization of working memory (consciously holding things in mind).

**Unconscious:** A term that can refer to either: (i) the mental processes that occur outside of **conscious** thought and without one being aware of them, yet which nonetheless influence behaviour; or (ii) the state of being in a coma (i.e. not being awake, alert or aware).

**Unpleasure:** The polar opposite of *pleasure*; the most extreme form of negative *emotional* feeling. It is generated by stimulation of the *dorsal periaqueductal gray (PAG)*. It correlates with actions of biological significance, telling the organism 'this is bad for my survival', avoid this situation.