



## **Cognitive psychology**

*Consciousness: the central psychological question*

### **Male 1:**

Consciousness is ultimately perhaps the most central psychological question. I think most of us at some point in our lives, have wondered what it is to be ourselves. We've kind of tried to work out what it would mean to say who we are. And what we are. And that is a question for psychology. And why is it that psychology shouldn't be able to answer what seems like such a fundamental question, that humans can ask themselves. So I think it's a central question. The other thing that I think about consciousness, is that it's one of these things that seem so difficult to explain.

And perhaps one way of phrasing that, is to think about what it might mean if we could explain today, consciousness in a very scientific way. Well it seems like if we could do that, then we ought to in principle, be able to build an artificial consciousness. Perhaps we wouldn't be able to do that today. But at some point in the future, if we understand rigorously, all the science that gives rise to consciousness. Then surely we could at some point build an artificial consciousness. That is we can build an artefact, but we would want to say is conscious. And I think there's something very kind of paradoxical about that. At least at first glance. That makes many people resist the idea that science actually could explain consciousness.

I am not sure that people do initially spend a great deal of time wondering why am I conscious and so on. Because to be ourselves, to be human, it's part and parcel of it. We're just conscious. We know ourselves. And take it for granted that we're thinking about what we're thinking about and seeing what we're seeing. And then if you come across a course like this, and start to discover 'Oh that's weird, I'm doing a lot of things I don't know I'm doing. How can that be? What part of me is inside doing it?' So what bit of me is it that's conscious then? Which part is me. Those sorts of questions emerge. And immediately becomes really intriguing.

### **Male 2:**

Yes. I think that's a bit like my digestive system, seems to operate purely unconsciously. But breathing is something I normally do unconsciously. But I can bring under conscious control. And conscious processes seem to grow out of unconscious processes.