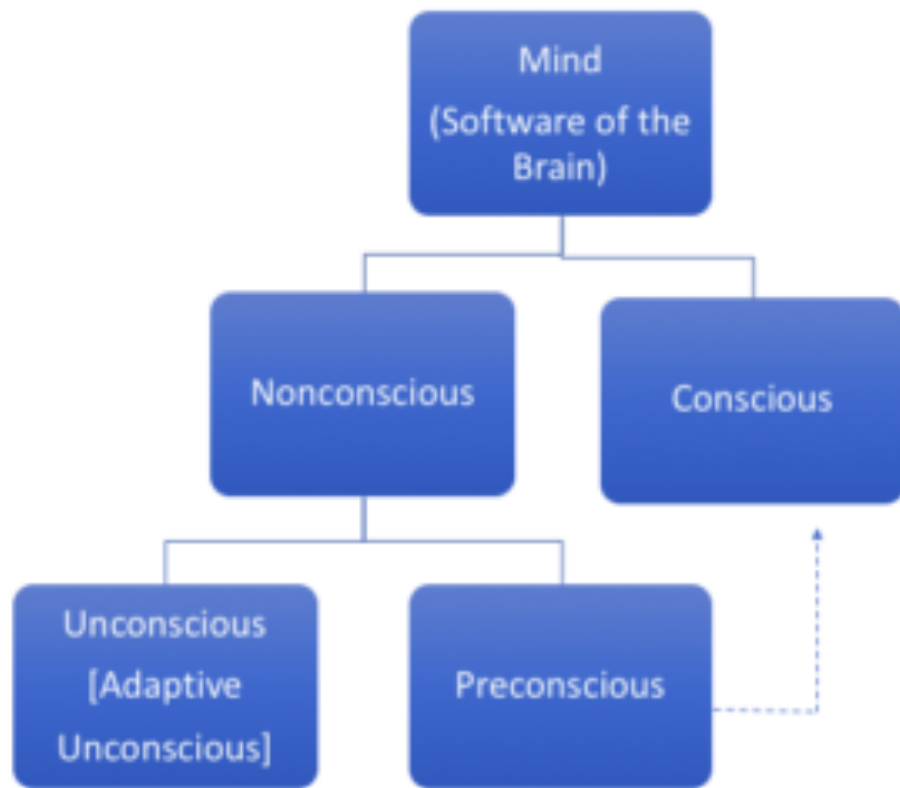


# Theory of the Mind: A Brief Overview



This model was developed by Timothy D. Wilson in his *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*.

The mind can be thought of as the software of the brain, which has nonconscious and conscious elements. The nonconscious is the set of mental processes that the individual is unaware of, is fast, more or less automatic, and efficient; these processes happen without deliberate thought. The nonconscious (unconscious) is inaccessible to consciousness, but it influences judgments, feelings, and behavior. The mind operates most efficiently by assigning most of the high-level, sophisticated thinking to the unconscious.

- The adaptive unconscious is a shorthand term used to describe all of the unconscious mental processes of the mind. It is not a single entity such as Freud's notion of "unconscious" but rather a collection of modules that have evolved over time to initiate action in an efficient and sophisticated manner.

- Preconscious refers to information not currently in use, but which can be easily retrieved and made conscious, such as, the name of your 5th grade teacher.

The conscious is the set of mental processes that the individual is aware of, is deliberate, is relatively slow, and typically requires much effort. These processes are used to solve complex problems, which require slow, deliberate effort as well as to check for mistakes made by the speedy adaptive unconscious: In fact, error correction is a major function of the conscious mind. Consciousness is the awareness of your surroundings in the here and now.

A major problem for those who seek to understand the mind and themselves is that it is difficult because there is no direct access to the adaptive unconscious. Our minds have evolved to operate largely outside of consciousness. Although it may be difficult to believe, the research evidence for is strong that, for the most part, the adaptive unconscious rather than the conscious is in charge of our mind.

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