

**NITheCS Colloquium**  
**Monday, 23 May 2022, 16h00 – 17h00**  
Prof Mark Solms (University of Cape Town)

## **‘A new approach to the hard problem of consciousness’**



### **ABSTRACT**

I will begin by reviewing the ‘hard problem’ of consciousness. Then I will summarise clinico-anatomical and physiological evidence for the views (1) that consciousness is generated primarily in the brainstem and only secondarily in the cortex, and (2) that the form of consciousness which is generated in the brainstem is not lacking in content or quality, as is widely claimed. Furthermore, regarding (1) I will argue that the cortex can perform most of its information-processing tasks unconsciously -- which raises the question as to why it ever processes information consciously. Regarding (2) I will argue that the brainstem form of consciousness is fundamentally affective in nature.

This will lead me to the conclusion that affective consciousness is the fundamental form of consciousness and that it is prerequisite for all other forms, such as conscious perception and cognition. Against this empirical background, I will revisit the philosophical hard problem. Finally, I will consider afresh the biological function of affective consciousness and offer some hypotheses concerning the nature of the relationship between this (brainstem) form of consciousness and the cortical form.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Prof Mark Solms is Director of Neuropsychology at the Neuroscience Institute of the University of Cape Town, and Honorary Lecturer in Neurosurgery at the St Bartholomew’s & Royal London School of Medicine.

He is rated ‘A1’ by the National Research Foundation. He is a Member of the South African, American and British Psychoanalytical Societies

and an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Psychiatrists.

He has received numerous honours and awards. He has published 350 articles and chapters, and eight books, the latest of which is *The Hidden Spring: A Journey to the Source of Consciousness* (2021).

**CLICK TO REGISTER**

Or register at: <https://bit.ly/3s2z9r4>

**Join us online afterwards to meet the speaker: [https://www.kumospace.com/nithecs\\_social](https://www.kumospace.com/nithecs_social)**