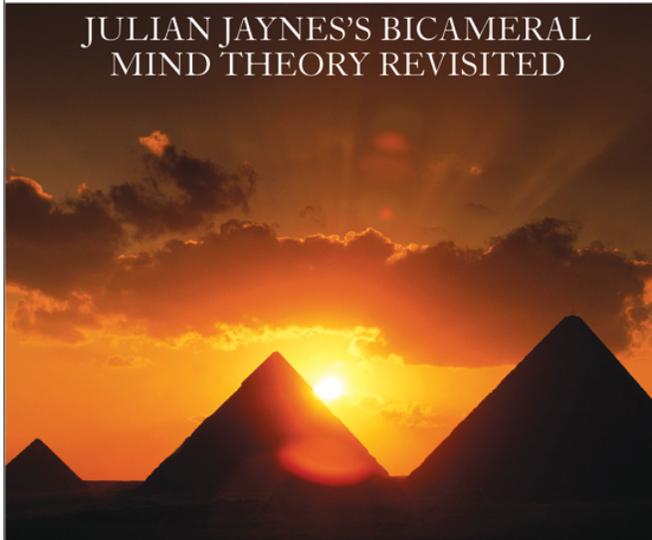


# Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness: Julian Jaynes's Bicameral Mind Theory Revisited

Edited by Marcel Kuijsten

## REFLECTIONS ON THE DAWN OF CONSCIOUSNESS

JULIAN JAYNES'S BICAMERAL  
MIND THEORY REVISITED



EDITED BY  
MARCEL KUIJSTEN

Why are gods and idols ubiquitous throughout the ancient world? What is the relationship of consciousness and language? How is it that oracles came to influence entire nations such as Greece? If consciousness arose far back in human evolution, how can it so easily be altered in hypnosis and “possession”? Is modern schizophrenia a vestige of an earlier mentality?

These are just some of the difficult questions addressed by Julian Jaynes's influential and controversial theory of the origin of subjective consciousness or the “modern mind.” This book includes an in-depth biography of Julian Jaynes, essays by Jaynes, and the discussion and

analysis of Jaynes's theory from a variety of perspectives such as clinical psychology, philosophy, neuroscience, anthropology, linguistics, and ancient history.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributors

Foreword by Michael A. Persinger

Preface

Introduction by Marcel Kuijsten

## PART I: Julian Jaynes

1. Julian Jaynes: Introducing His Life and Thought

*William R. Woodward & June F. Tower*

## PART II: Voices of the Mind

2. The Ghost of a Flea: Visions of William Blake *Julian Jaynes*

3. Verbal Hallucinations and Preconscious Mentality *Julian Jaynes*

4. Consciousness, Hallucinations, and the Bicameral Mind: Three Decades of New Research  
*Marcel Kuijsten*

5. Auditory Hallucinations in Nonverbal Quadriplegics *John Hamilton*

## PART III: Consciousness and the Self

6. Language and Consciousness: Jaynes's "Preposterous Idea" Reconsidered *John Limber*

7. The Self as Interiorized Social Relations: Applying a Jaynesian Approach to Problems of Agency and Volition *Brian J. McVeigh*

8. A Knowing Noos and a Slippery Psychê: Jaynes's Recipe for an Unnatural Theory of Consciousness  
*Scott Greer*

## PART IV: The Origin of Religion

9. The Oracles and Their Cessation: A Tribute to Julian Jaynes *David C. Stove*

## PART V: Ancient Civilizations

10. The Meaning of King Tut *Julian Jaynes*

11. Greek Zombies: On the Alleged Absurdity of Substantially Unconscious Greek Minds *Jan Sleutels*

12. Dragons of the Shang Dynasty: The Hidden Faces *Julian Jaynes*

13. The Shi 'Corpse/Personator' Ceremony in Early China *Michael Carr*

Index

## REVIEWS

*From the Foreword by Dr. Michael A. Persinger, Professor of Behavioral Neuroscience, Biomolecular Sciences Program, Laurentian University:*

“In this book Marcel Kuijsten and his colleagues have integrated a quintessential collection of original thoughts concerning Jaynes’s concepts as well as some of Jaynes’s original essays. I have rarely read a manuscript that so eloquently and elegantly examines a complex and pervasive phenomenon. The contributors of this volume have integrated the concepts of psychology, anthropology, archaeology, theology, philosophy, the history of science, and modern neuroscience with such clarity it should be considered an essential text for any student of human experience.”

“*Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness* is ... an accessible re-introduction to Julian Jaynes, whose wondrous and wonderful *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* first brought to public awareness the ‘invisible mansion of all moods, musings, and mysteries ... the introcosm’ that is consciousness.”

— Richard M. Restak, Clinical Professor of Neurology  
George Washington Hospital University, School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
author of *The Naked Brain* and *Mozart’s Brain and the Fighter Pilot*

“Blending biography with analytical and critical discussions and evaluations, this volume presents a rounded picture of Jaynes as an individual and scholar, while not shrinking from controversial and difficult issues.”

— Klaus J. Hansen, Professor Emeritus  
Dept. of History, Queen’s University, Ontario, author of *Mormonism and the American Experience*

“*Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness* explains, extends, and expands many of Julian Jaynes’s most provocative ideas. For readers who finished *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* and wondered ‘What comes next?’, this collection provides answers. Gathering together both additional writings by Jaynes himself, along with thoughtful essays by scholars from a wide range of disciplines, the book both explores ways in which Jaynes’s thought can be applied in specific fields of study and serves as a testimony to the centrality of the issue of consciousness to all fields of intellectual endeavor. This worthy sequel to Jaynes’s original book has been a long time coming, but the wait has been worth it.”

— Ted Remington, Assistant Professor, Department of English and  
Foreign Languages, The University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, Indiana

**“An indispensable resource for ideas on consciousness, religion, and theory of ancient civilizations.** Includes various authors including some important but lesser known articles by Julian Jaynes himself. Interdisciplinary, insightful, provocative, in the original spirit of Jaynes’ seminal work, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, but goes well beyond mere support and evidence of that work. Contains profuse notes and bibliographies for each article.”

— John Hainly, Dept. of Philosophy, Southern University, LA

“I believe that this is **one of the most significant books of this century.** It should be read by all people who have an interest in psychology.”

— Dwight C. Mogge M.D.

**“... Offers insights into otherwise inexplicable aspects concerning the pharaoh Tutankhamun and dragon-motifs in Shang China ...** Jaynes’ theory merits in my view the reassessment by the scientific community urged in this volume.”

— Ilkka Kallio, Statistics Finland, Helsinki, in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*

“A book which ... after 30 years and in light of new research and ideas, **introduces again Jaynes’ theory to a scientific world that, now, may be ready to accept it.**”

— Roberto Bottini, Dept. of Human Sciences, University of Bergamo, Italy

“In 1972, the Pioneer 10 spacecraft rocketed into space carrying a plaque carved with symbols meant for the “eyes” of extraterrestrials. Those symbols included two naked human beings, one male and one female, and a sketch of the solar system they came from. Four years later, Julian Jaynes launched a bold new theory into the postwar scientific atmosphere — a theory that defamiliarized the human beings of a scant 3,000 years ago, making them out to be as strange as space aliens. According to Jaynes, the oldest books of the Hebrew Old Testament depicted characters who could neither reason nor reflect on their experiences, but instead heard hallucinated voices that commanded their actions — voices they attributed to gods.

“Scientists knew it would take tens of thousands of years for Pioneer 10 to approach a star that might support an alien life form. In the meantime, the craft hurtled on alone through the silent stretches of space. And, for a while, so did Jaynes’ trailblazing theory. Though it earned a National Book Award nomination the year after its publication, few scholars stepped forward to endorse it. Marcel Kuijsten, in his Introduction to this edited collection, explains why: The politics of securing academic tenure and bureaucratic grants prevented researchers from risking their careers on an unproven theory. In an age of

specialization, few scholars were familiar with more than one of the disciplines spanned by Jaynes: neuroscience, psychology, religious studies, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and poetry, to name just a few. And, of course, new ideas that shake up the status of human beings relative to their world have never gone down easily, from Galileo to Darwin to Jaynes.

“Yet, over the past three decades, a dozen or so scholars have gambled their reputations on the possibility that Jaynes may be right. Gathered in this volume, **their research provides hard data in support of Jaynes’s claims.** Like radio signals beamed back to Earth thousands of years in the future, such information holds the power to restore mystery and wonder to the world we thought we knew.”

— Julie Kane, Associate Professor, Dept. of Language & Communication, Northwestern State University

“**Anyone who has read Jaynes’s book should read *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness*** for a greater appreciation of the work. Whether one agrees in whole or part, it is a testament to Jaynes’s research and work that this collection ... either agrees with him in total or does not find a great deal to dispute concerning his theories. In the thirty years since *Origin* was released a great deal of research has in the main proven the man to be remarkably prescient.”

— John Holt, in *California Literary Review*

“This is a **beautifully arranged tribute to Jaynes** with a broad mix of contributions about aspects of his theory. In new and convincing linguistic evidence, Chinese characters evolve in form and meaning as the ritual for accessing ancestral voices devolves from ‘serene’ personators to ‘frenzied’ shamans to ‘drunken revelry.’“

— Carole Brooks Platt, Ph.D., independent scholar

“**Long awaited and worth the wait.** ... For three decades I have been enthralled by the ideas put forth in Julian Jaynes’s *The Origin of Consciousness In the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* and have been waiting in vain (until now) for a follow-up volume. *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness* is a collection of incisive essays by Julian Jaynes himself and by others, commenting on and extending his previously published work.”

— Bruce Trinque, Amston, CT

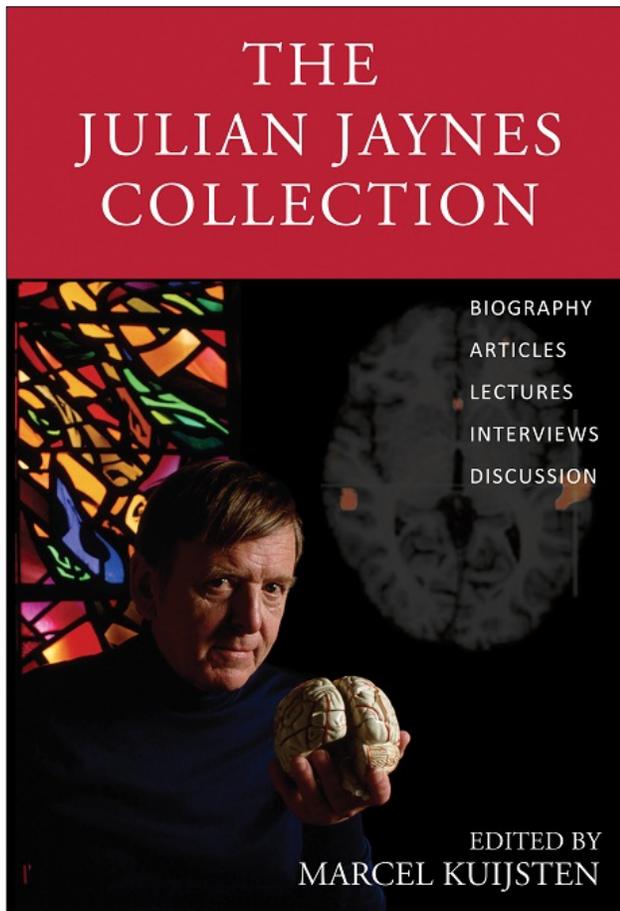
“A commendable follow-up to *The Origin of Consciousness* ... **Anyone fascinated and moved by *Origin* will find much of interest in this collection...**”

— Scott Driver, Tucson, AZ

## ALSO FROM THE JULIAN JAYNES SOCIETY

### The Julian Jaynes Collection

Edited by Marcel Kuijsten



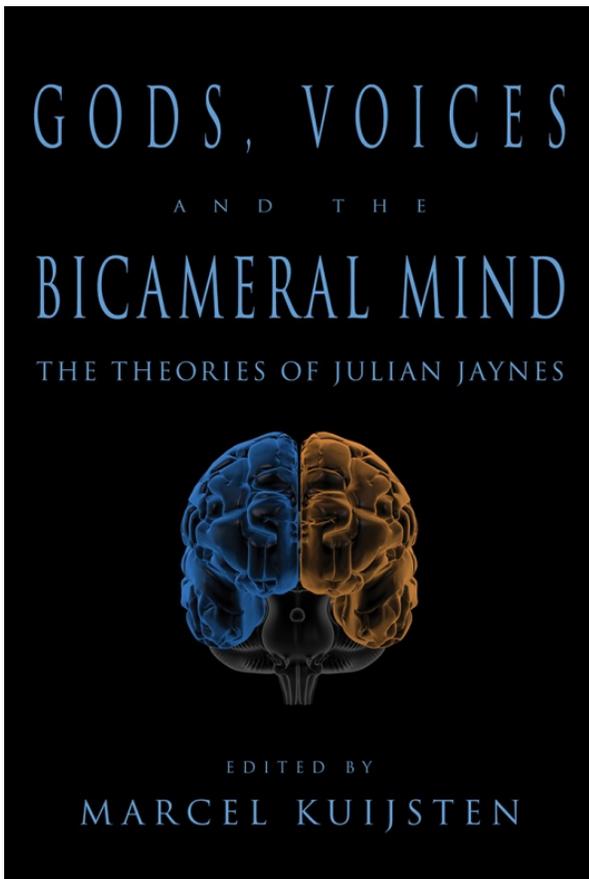
Princeton University psychologist Julian Jaynes’s revolutionary theory on the origin of consciousness or the “modern mind” remains as relevant and thought-provoking as when it was first proposed. Supported by recent discoveries in neuroscience, Jaynes’s ideas force us to rethink conventional views of human history and psychology, and have profound implications for many aspects of modern life.

Included in this volume are rare and never before seen articles, lectures, interviews, and in-depth discussions that both clear up misconceptions as well as extend

Jaynes’s theory into new areas such as the nature of the self, dreams, emotions, art, music, therapy, and the consequences and future of consciousness. Now expanded to include a new, never-before-seen 30-page radio interview with Julian Jaynes.

# Gods, Voices, and the Bicameral Mind: The Theories of Julian Jaynes

Edited by Marcel Kuijsten

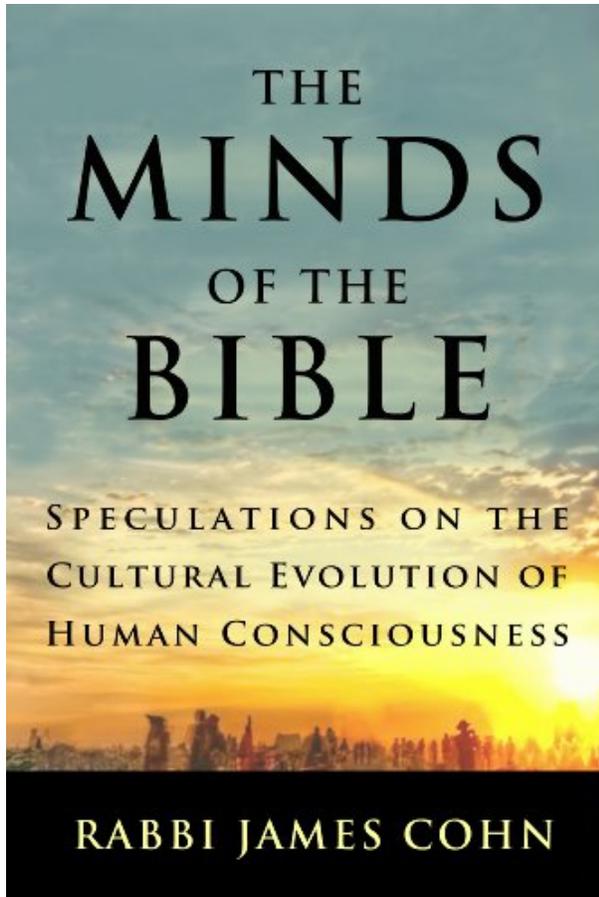


Does consciousness inevitably arise in any sufficiently complex brain? Although widely accepted, this view — inherited from Darwin’s theory of evolution — is supported by surprisingly little evidence. Offering an alternate view of the history of the human mind, Julian Jaynes’s ideas challenge our preconceptions of not only the origin of the modern mind, but the origin of gods and religion, the nature of mental illness, and the future potential of consciousness. The tremendous explanatory power of Jaynes’s ideas force us to reevaluate much of what we thought we knew about human history.

*Gods, Voices, and the Bicameral Mind* both explains Julian Jaynes’s theory and explores a wide range of related topics such as the ancient Dark Age, the nature of dreams and the birth of Greek tragedy, poetic inspiration, the significance of hearing voices in both the ancient and modern world, the development of consciousness in children, the transition to consciousness in early Tibet, the relationship of consciousness and metaphorical language, and how Jaynes’s ideas compare to those of other thinkers.

# The Minds of the Bible: Speculations on the Cultural Evolution of Human Consciousness

By Rabbi James Cohn



Two developments in the history of the Bible are deeply related, and not merely coincidental. One is the lamentation of the loss of the experience of hearing God’s voice. The other is the rise of the language of introspection: an interiorized subjective dialogue with oneself

In our own time, we are acculturated from infancy on, to understand our mental life as a narratized interior mind-space in which we introspect in a ceaseless conversation with “ourselves.” Our ancestors, however, were acculturated to understand their mental life in terms of obedient responses to auditory prompts, which they projected outwards as the

external voice of God. Although these “bicameral” people could think and act, they had no awareness of choices or of choosing — or of awareness itself.

In 1976, Julian Jaynes proposed that that as recently as 3,000 years ago, human beings were non-introspective. Jaynes claimed that one could trace this cultural transformation over the course of a scant millennium by analyzing the literature of the Hebrew Scriptures (“Old Testament,” OT). This book tests Jaynes’s assertions by examining the

OT text in Hebrew, as seen through the lens of the Documentary Hypothesis and modern critical historical scholarship.

Did the writers of the oldest biblical texts have words in their cultural lexicon to correspond to our words such as “mind” or “imagination” or “belief?” Or do the translations into English that employ such mentalistic words (such as the King James Bible) tell us more about the minds of the translators than the minds of the biblical authors?

In sharp contrast to the early OT texts, the later texts of the OT display a lexicon of profound interiority. The writers have become acculturated to experience their mental life as a rich introspective consciousness, full of internal mind-talk and “narratization,” and perceiving their own actions as the result, not of obedience to an external voice, but of self-authorized, internal decisions.

This study includes observations about emerging understandings of the neurology of auditory hallucinations, and supports Jaynes’s idea that while the brain’s structure has changed little in three millennia, culture can and will determine whether a child’s mental life is bicameral or introspectively conscious.

For more on Julian Jaynes’s theory of the origin of consciousness and the bicameral mind, please visit the Julian Jaynes Society at [www.julianjaynes.org](http://www.julianjaynes.org).