

# Overview of Julian Jaynes's Theory of Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind

Cordelois, Antoine <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PARIS IAS

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## ABSTRACT

*It came from the CMS. Nobody could see it coming..*

## Overview of Julian Jaynes's Theory of Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind

In January of 1977 Princeton University psychologist Julian Jaynes (1920--1997) put forth a bold new theory of the development of consciousness. Jaynes asserts that consciousness did not arise far back in human evolution but is a learned process based on metaphorical language. To support his theory, Jaynes draws evidence from a wide range of fields, including neuroscience, psychology, archaeology, and linguistics. Jaynes's theory can be broken down into four independent hypotheses:

Consciousness --- as he carefully defines it --- is a learned process based on metaphorical language. **Misunderstandings about the theory** That preceding the development of consciousness there was a different mentality based on verbal hallucinations called the bicameral mind. Dating the development of consciousness (as Jaynes carefully defines it) to around the end of the second millennium B.C.E. The neurological model for the bicameral mind, which has now been confirmed by dozens of brain imaging studies.

### Why Julian Jaynes's Theory is Important

There are many reasons why it's important to understand Julian Jaynes's theory, including:

It provides a new way of understanding of human history and the human condition. People that understand Julian Jaynes's theory of consciousness offers a much better understanding of human consciousness than other theorists, bringing much more clarity to the study of human history. Jaynes's theory explains a wide range of otherwise inexplicable phenomena, such as divination, idols, the pyramids and other ancient mysteries. Jaynes's theory offers a fascinating explanation for the origin of gods and the origin of religion --- one of the great mysteries of human history. Jaynes's theory provides a historical context for hearing voices --- providing a radical new way of understanding mental illness. Jaynes's theory provides a neurological model for hearing voices, which has now been verified in dozens of brain imaging studies.

### Understanding Julian Jaynes's Theory

Learning about Julian Jaynes's theory for the first time is an exciting intellectual journey. As Stanford professor Ernest Sosa says, "It is a journey that is worth taking."

We can't stress enough that brief summaries and reviews do not do the theory justice, and unfortunately many commentaries on the theory are misleading.

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If you are interested in understanding of Jaynes's theory, we recommend the following:

1. Start by reading Jaynes's book, \*[The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind]
2. Read our latest book, \*[Conversations on Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind]
3. [Join the Julian Jaynes Society](<https://www.julianjaynes.org/join/>): Access to the Society's resources
4. Read \*[The Julian Jaynes Collection](<https://www.julianjaynes.org/product/the-julian-jaynes-collection>)
5. Listen to the [Digital Audio Programs](<https://www.julianjaynes.org/product-digital-audio-programs>)
6. For those serious about gaining an in-depth understanding of Jaynes's theory, we recommend the following: