Twin Consciousness and the rise of Humankind

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Abstract

This paper will present the thesis that the Conscious and the Subconscious are twins, whose roles can be interchanged; and that furthermore, the Subconscious is a trait unique to Humans, fundamental to our success on this planet Earth.

Introduction

What might be the true nature of our Dreams?

How can the “other characters” which accompany us in our dreams do or say things we would never say or do ourselves? How can we be so surprised by the cunning they sometimes display?

Pierre M.F. Janet coined the term “Subconscious”, while describing the state of consciousness of patients in a “dissociative state” [1]. To define “The Subconscious”, let us use Sigmund S. Freud’s accidental definition, “another consciousness, a subterranean one” [2].

What might be the source of this nebulous entity?

Is it related to the part of the brain which is doing the driving when we are thinking of something else []? Is it the one walking during sleep-walking, while “we” are still asleep []? Is it the source of intuitions, which when they “click”, can lead to broad and intricate paradigm shifts occurring in an instant []?

There are some even more concrete experiences, well studied by science:

* Shock: people this state will generally experience confusion. They won’t seem to be “themselves” anymore, and their memories of the experience will be distant, *as if coming from a dream* [].
* Hypnosis: no longer awake… and at the same time, not actually asleep []?
* Multiple Personality Disorders: are there really more than two personalities []?
* Split-Brain Syndrome: its discovery yielded a Nobel Prize.

Chapter I: The Starfish, the Hologram, and the Brain

The Split-Brain syndrome reveals in stark detail a very intriguing property of the brain. It has been seen, post-operation, in patients with epilepsy so severe that it was deemed necessary to section the Corpus Callosum connecting their two cerebral hemispheres [3].

Nobel laureate Dr. Roger W. Sperry described these hemispheres as subsequently having “two separate conscious entities or minds running in parallel in the same cranium, each with its own sensations, perceptions, cognitive processes” [4].

To reach this conclusion, he and his team devised experiments in which the visual fields of each cerebral hemisphere were separately presented with conflicting information. With this, they were able to show how these subjects can give, with one hand, the correct answer to a question, without being able to, verbally, display the correct awareness of the question itself.

In one striking experiment, a young subject even tried to come up with an explanation of how that hand's answer somehow related to what was shown in the *other* visual field at that time (the one about which he could actually verbally display awareness) [5].

A large number of studies show high degrees of specialization in the structures of the brain. Specific regions have been found which, when damaged, will lead to the same symptoms in different people. This is how Wernicke and Broca identified the areas responsible for our ability to translate between words and thoughts [6]. And to those with a malfunctioning Fusiform Gyrus, passers-by might as well have an apple instead of a head [7][8].

The brain is not like a starfish, which can regrow into two wholes when cut in half [9]. The brain is not like a hologram, where the whole can be rediscovered in the fractal fractions of the source [10]. If a separate consciousness emerges in people with the Split-Brain Syndrome, it strongly indicates that *this division was already there in the first place*, and that when properly connected, the two consciousnesses work in so well a unity that they themselves do not realize this separation.

The striking experiment [5] from above suggests that *we will actively try to obfuscate this separation from our own selves*; a testament to how far Nature would be pushing to maintain this powerful unity.

The Human Brain is quite a fascinating artifact of Nature, it will no doubt take many decades still before we fully understand all of its intricate details. Yet as with any such mysterious artifact, all it can take is a snag in its gears for the seamlessness to cease, and secrets about its internal workings to start being revealed...

Chapter II: Instinct, Emotion, and Reason: Life is that which can Anticipate for its Survival

Certain processes include a dynamic which will drive their continuation, sustaining a consumption of fuel. An example of this is fire, whose consumption of fuel will be sustained by the heat it generates [11].

Nevertheless this kind of dynamic is not sufficient for anticipating for survival. Once the fuel is depleted, the fire will not be seeking more; it will just go out. It is not commonly considered a form of Life.

Now some continuous processes do include a dynamic which will ensure their continued positioning towards untapped sources of fuel. An example of this is plankton, which has feeding (and mating) strategies [12].

And this behavior is sufficient for anticipating for survival, and for having the permanence generally ascribed to forms of Life. Of course, additionally having danger-avoidance strategies allow for an incrementally greater form of Life; but this is not a necessity.

All of these strategies may simply be borne out of a set of behaviors pre-programmed in each individual life-form. And this is one definition of Instinct [13].

However having an inner-picture of the outer-world can bring a virtual layer allowing these instinct-based behaviors to have more flexibility. An example of this is with plants, which adjust their daily circadian rhythm to the cycle of day and night by measuring the amount of sugars in their cells [14].

Plato mused over how what we see are just shadows of reality [15]. With these sugar levels, plants can have a Virtual Picture of the time having passed by, albeit that picture being just a rather indistinct shadow on Plato's cavern walls.

Now a creature which is able to recognize its own Self, in this inner-picture that it creates of the outer-world, heralds a land-mark in the sequence of greater forms of Life. From this Virtual Picture of the Self, can be borne a set of behaviors which will be even more appropriate to a given scenario. An example is Fight or Flight, or the ability to assess one's place in the balance of power of the situation at hand [16].

For this cognition to take place, nothing more is needed than what we understand as Emotion [17].

We can experience this for ourselves:

- when deciding on food, thoughts are not needed, emotions are sufficient;
- when hunting after prey or pests, thoughts are not needed, emotions are sufficient;
- when running from danger, thoughts are not needed, emotions are sufficient;
- when playing a sport, thoughts are not needed, emotions are sufficient;
- etc.

A creature which does not have the tools for linear thought (such as grammar [18]), will only have Emotional Thinking at its disposal for deciding what to do. But is that really inconsistent? Won't that actually be plenty to Anticipate for Survival?

The final step in the sequence of greater forms of Life on this planet (if we assume that as being Humans) is one where Reason primes, when deciding how to respond to a developing situation [19]. But how does one generate such a thing as Reason? How does one generate such things as Emotion and Instinct, even?

This thesis will not attempt to answer these questions. It will merely observe that these capacities exist, and hypothesize on how they coordinate to govern behavior, and the areas in the brain from which they may be sourced.

Chapter III: An evolutionary map of the Brain

https://www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.com/the-triune-brain

(to be continued)

[1] Pierre Janet: A Neglected Intellectual Heritage (http://www.trauma-pages.com/a/vdhart-89.php)
[2] The Question of Lay Analysis ()
[3]
[4] Hemisphere deconnection and unity in conscious awareness (https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1969-07214-001, https://www.endominance.com/is-split-brain-theory-really-a-myth-what-new-research-says)
[5] The Integrated Mind (https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9780306310850, https://books.google.nl/books?id=tKVADwAAQBAJ&pg=PA69
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[8] About face (https://www.cep.ucsb.edu/press/duchaine04.htm)
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