Schizophrenic process, the emergence of consciousness in recent history and phenomenological causality: the significance for psychotherapy of Julian Jaynes

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Abstract This paper on Julian Jaynes' The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (Jaynes, 1990) illustrates the theme of an earlier paper (Wilkinson, 1998) on 'phenomenological causality', whose affinity to the Buddhist concept of 'co-dependent origination' is also touched on. Jaynes' work is explored through its relevance to schizophrenic experience. He holds that hallucination was a normal aspect of human decision-making in stress situations till around 1200 BC—the bicameral mind. This does not imply a simple equation of schizophrenic experience and hallucination; for originally there was consensual authorization, now lost, of hallucinatory experience of gods and ancestors. Jaynes has four main hypotheses: bicamerality (the two modes of mentality); the constitution of consciousness; the dating; and brain localization of the different modes of experience. Consciousness replaces bicameral resort to hallucination in situations of stress; it is constituted through metaphor. Schizophrenic experience transforms bicamerality through the shift in consensualism: as alienation, deconstruction of thinking and language, loss of the 'analog' constitution of normal consciousness and self, a fusion of consciousness and bicameral modes. Breakdowns, loss and transformations of bicamerality and consensual authority are illustrated by the great religious transformers of bicamerality, consciousness and enlightenment. Depth psychotherapy is similarly based in the potential of deep change at the level of grounding causation. A reflexive plurality of ways of being from the emergence of consciousness is now available. The greatness and limitations of Jaynes' evocation of fundamental change are evoked.

Phenomenological causality and Julian Jaynes

Working Psychotherapist

This is the second part of our discussion about your thesis concerning what you labelled 'phenomenological causality'; you are arguing that Julian Jaynes' neglected work, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (Jaynes, 1990), constitutes the most striking of all illustrations of your thesis. Since Jaynes is neglected we need explanation as well as discussion. Your thesis (Wilkinson, 1998) contrasted an integration regarding causality in psychotherapy, with the standard model of linear causality. Positivistic or physicalist/neuro-

I have continued to use the expression 'bicameral man', and parallels, in the generic sense, in the following, as no gender neutral expression has replaced this in either force or meaning; 'bicameral humanity' has a different edge, for instance.
scientific models of causality you held to conform with linear, and you suggested *hermeneutic* (meaning-based) models contrast themselves with it; personal agency, synchronicity, expression of meaning, and so on are assumed to be *alternatives* to causality. Phenomenological causality you held to be a *third* position, a genuine model of causality, a synthesis of the other two positions, involving: (1) a multi-tense, multi-time-directional, trans-temporal *recapitulation* account of the *time process* involved; (2) an integrative multi-causal matrix model of causality in the realm of consciousness as such, compatible with insights from neuro-science and neural Darwinism; (3) a concept of primary inter-relatedness, interaction with all levels of being, participation in world-creation, ('grounding causation') and its shaping through core metaphors; and (4) a process-based model; permanencing and thingness being simply the forms/metaphors which pure process takes.

You argued psychotherapy and psychotherapy integration obtain a philosophical basis in their own right. No longer sheltering under the umbrella of the major philosophical strands, psychotherapy is free to come of age.

*‘Co-dependent origination’ and phenomenological causality*

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

Since then I have become aware, through the brilliant work of Francisco Varela and his colleagues (*The Embodied Mind*, Varela et al., 1991), and also by the excellent recent book about Buddhism and psychotherapy, *The Resonance of Empinness*, by Gay Watson (Watson, 1998), of the similarity to this concept of the Buddhist concept and tradition of ‘co-dependent origination’, which I would regard as the underpinning metaphysics or ontological theory of Buddhism, or (in Nagarjuna’s ‘middle way’ Buddhism, cf. Candrakirti, 1979) metaphysics *overcoming*. It is striking confirmation that the religious tradition which is the most ‘empirical–phenomenological’ in its procedure, and could be dubbed ‘religion as psychotherapy’ (the nearest to it of the great religions), is based on a similar concept.

*Working Psychotherapist*

You think Jaynes is an *even more* radical or more specific illustration, who solves a big problem by the implicit assumption of ‘phenomenological causality’ (when he calls a chapter ‘A change of mind in Mesopotamia’, Jaynes, pp. 223ff, in your view this is meant literally)?

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

Certainly. However, Jaynes as a cognitive psychologist and scientist has no sense that his position is a philosophically based *grounding causation* position; indeed he has no conception of phenomenological causality as such, and clearly indeed believes *he has assisted in the physical reduction of consciousness, this to be understood in functionalist terms*, as well as that of the paranormal (on p. 291 he calls dualism a spurious problem, and he dismisses, pp. 438–441, all the manifestations of non-materialism as bicameral nostalgia—this will be explained—though recognising, p. 443, the paradox that *science too* is a manifestation of the paradigm he puts forward).

*Working Psychotherapist*

But we’re jumping ahead. I propose we try once again to relate this to clinical (dreadful word, I’d rather say ‘practice’, and will hereafter) issues, and will you please introduce Jaynes’s
themes in relation to them? I'll try and ask the naive and basic and practice-related questions as we go along. Where would be best to start?

**Jaynes and schizophrenic experience**

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

We shall have to alternate wide-ranging thinking and immediate practice implications, because Jaynes' work draws from a wide range of insights, but I think the obvious place to start is in relation to schizophrenic experience, for which Jaynes' work has huge implications, in relation to which it can be defined and described.

*Working Psychotherapist*

How is that?

**Hallucination as normal till 1200 BC**

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

I will start with Jaynes' core hypothesis in relation to schizophrenic experience. If we assume that schizophrenic experience *commonly* involves hallucination and a tendency to delusion, in our terms, then, in relation to this, Jaynes' core hypothesis is that we *all* hallucinated, particularly in situations of stress or high demand, and delusionally (in terms of modern assumptions), right up to approximately 1200–1000 BC. The difference, in relation to schizophrenic experience, is that *then no one* noticed. The hallucinatory experiences were collectively interpreted, *absolutely* uncontented, *absolutely* consensually, as visitations of gods or ancestors, on the basis of and maintaining a *total and unquestioned authorization structure*. Their reality was no more questioned than the modern listener to a Walkman questions or even raises the reality of recorded communication.

*Working Psychotherapist*

I'm not clear about 'authorization structure'.

**Consensual authorization of hallucinatory experience: the bicameral hypothesis**

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

What Jaynes means by 'authorization' is a process of implicit recognition and permitting of some experience or behaviour, by way of its being excluded from being forbidden or prohibited or rather primally *refused* on the basis of shame. Jaynes gives the example of counting the time out loud in a busy street, which would evoke shame although it has never been formally forbidden and is not against the law—yet might still get one taken away to a psychiatric hospital. We can also imagine the consequences of violating the deepest conventions of a country we simply *do not know*—but will still feel shame about. The point is that most authorization, though experienced as allowed, operates against a background of exclusions which have never been made explicit. There is probably nowadays no describable human experience or behaviour which is simply *intrinsically* acceptable or for which the question of acceptability simply does not arise. But the claim about hallucinatory experience before 1200 BC is that *then it was not forbidden or questioned*, which meant it was completely authorized, but
so implicitly it did not arise as an issue. The basic social values were not debated in that world's procedures, and the hallucinated gods themselves simply, unquestioned and also without insistence of will—involuntarily as it were—commanded or dictated.

The hypothesis about hallucination is the bicameral hypothesis. 'Bicameral' meaning having two chambers; the hypothesis is so-called because he links it to a thesis about the left- and right-sided brain localization of the two aspects of human functioning which are involved. These are: (a) the functioning of normal, 'even-keeled', experience, which is now experienced as conscious, but was not then, on his hypothesis, because it was absolutely subordinate to the second aspect; (b) the hallucinatory function, which came into play as an external locus of decision-making in the form of a god's or ancestor's instructions or commands, carrying the authority of the sense of identity. The second aspect, then, of the bicameral hypothesis is that bicameralism existed prior to the development of reflexive consciousness, which replaced it, being essentially linked to the possibility of self-authorization, which began to be acquired or invented around 1200 BC in the Mediterranean basin, though bicameralism still prevailed in South America much later. Pizarro and Cortes, the 'subjective and conscious' conquerors of Inca Peru and Aztec Mexico, actually encountered live functioning imperial bicameral civilizations, of course, poignantly without awareness of the significance of this. Thus Jaynes regards schizophrenic experience as deriving from the same sources as the hallucinatory experiences of the gods, more ancient than consciousness, which is very recent.

Four main hypotheses, bicamerality, consciousness, the dating and localization

Working Psychotherapist

Presumably, he now needs a theory of consciousness?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

Certainly. Overall he has four main hypotheses, bicamerality, consciousness, the dating and localization, which he summarizes in his 'Afterword' (pp. 447–469), where he says they stand and fall separately. But they are closely woven together, the first three of them being mutually defined, and only the last of them, localization, readily amenable to the methods of positive or physical science (Wilder Penfield's cerebral localization experiments for instance), as opposed to historic method and hermeneutics—Geisteswissenschaft, human science. This, since so many regard positive physical science as the only valid form of proof of anything, and now the only valid form of intellectual authorization, may partly explain why he has been so neglected. Though of in Jaynesian terms, science as conceived positivistically or materialistically is the modern unquestioned hallucination, and almost as peremptory in its exclusions. I am speaking here of its mode of acceptance, not its validity. The creativity, originality, historic imagination, and indeed artistry, of every part of Jaynes's book, demands an unusual reach of understanding. There is, certainly, a strong element of speculation.

The three major theses other than the localization thesis, briefly, are, firstly: the bicameral mind, already mentioned. The second is the hypothesis that consciousness is based upon language, which is what enables it to emerge as part of history, to both cause and be caused, as a kind of software programming, on Jaynes's view. For, though it tells us little about the logical modes, or socio-economic structures, of steps in civilization prior to reflexive consciousness, of which authors like Levi-Strauss, Habermas, and Wilber, or Piaget in regard to individual cognitive development, have written; what it tells us about far more then any other theory is the inner psychological experiential mechanism, or process of 'changes in mind'. The third thesis is the dating of the transition from bicameral mind to reflexive consciousness as
we know it. The theory of 'authorization' implicitly runs right through, as an unofficial fifth hypothesis. There is a great deal of detailed historic application of the theories in detail about poetry, prophecy, oracles, hypnosis, and so on, and theories of the linkage of development of both language and civilization, richness and detail we simply cannot encompass here.

**Were we all literally schizophrenic? Over-literal and subtle versions of the thesis**

**Working Psychotherapist**

Before we acquired reflexive consciousness, we were all schizophrenic, then?

**Philosophical Psychotherapist**

He comes near to saying that (p. 89, p. 93), and seems actually to say it. The context however qualifies it, and ambiguously recognizes the aspect of authorization, the social definition and therefore logical reflexivity of madness:

There is, for example, no idea of insanity in the *Iliad*. I am emphasizing individuals set apart from others as ill, because, according to our theory, we could say that before the second millennium BC, *everyone* was schizophrenic. (p. 405)

But later he moves away from this equation (pp. 431–432). Here he transcends both the pro-psychiatric model, and anti-psychiatric positions on the models of Foucault or Laing. For his theory of the development of consciousness from the breakdown of the bicameral mind places at the centre our *consensual* desire, in the post-bicameral epoch, to self-authorize, to hang on to consciousness, the sense of my 'I'. Where we are psychically located, in relation to holding on to this sense of 'I', *legitimately defines*, in a non-pejorative sense, and in social, not medical, terms, our madness or sanity. This is at the special depth level of 'grounding causation' (Wilkinson, 1998, see below).

After the breakdown of the bicameral mind, consciousness is what is authorized, free to develop and transform. Freud can eventually discover that what is not authorized as part of consciousness is censored, even in our dreams (Freud, 1961). The authorization of consciousness is correlative to the censorship, as truth is correlative of falschood; it is grounded—in a specific authorization structure manifest against a background which makes it possible. In schizophrenic experience we have to imagine how it is when what destroys the whole system of that authorization becomes dominant. There is disturbance in relation to the underpinning ground, but this also makes possible psychotherapy with those with schizophrenic predicaments.

Bicamerality broke down for both environmental and genetic reasons (genetic selection being at times imposed by indiscriminate slaughter, pp. 219–220, deliberate mass slaughter, pp. 311–312, and marginalization, pp. 405–407); Jaynes' theory implies a depth environmentalist thinking about schizophrenic experience and life-positions.

**Consciousness now replaces bicamerality in situations of stress**

In short, in situations of stress and threat, where once in bicameral times a god would have appeared to us, now problem-solving consciousness is heightened. Consciousness involves the ability to be aware of my own process, to be able to conceal it if necessary, to *privately legitimize* it (even if it is known to be externally forbidden) as secret on this basis, and to *defer action* on the basis of this reflection. It becomes the new norm of response to stress. This *very* Freudian model is both neurotically based on the achievement of capacity for chronic and
revivable anxiety, and traumatically developed in the light of the acute need to avoid danger. In the light of Jaynes, then, the traditional contrast between schizoid and neurotic, between pre- and post-Oedipal, in Freudian terms, takes on a new significance, as a post-bicameral distinction, which could not exist in the bicameral era. This relativizes the Oedipus complex, along with schizophrenic experience, to a particular era and system of social authorization, and the associated mental constituting and change processes. For a Freudian the collective manifestation of the Oedipal stage might constitute the arising of consciousness for the species (cf. Totem and Taboo, Freud, 1960).

Working Psychotherapist

So what is the model of consciousness that becomes so peremptory?

Consciousness as metaphor

Philosophical Psychotherapist

This involves radical, compressed, clear yet elusive, thinking on the basis of the symbolic realm, and the deep nature of metaphor. The detailed theory of the metaphoric and symbolic constitution of both consciousness and self Lacanians and Buddhists would recognize in many aspects. Jaynes’ distinctions relate to Freud’s (1961) between displacement and condensation, and Lacan’s (1977) between metaphor and metonymy. Consciousness and the sense of self are constituted, created, contextually developed within the already given context of language. They do not simply emerge, in the sense in which the genetic predisposition to language itself emerges in childhood. Their processes were and are discovered, originated.

They are constituted through a combination of uses of metaphor: (i) as evocative suggestiveness brought into our awareness through open-ended metaphor; (ii) as located analogically, by direct comparison, through closed-reference metaphor (these evocations of metaphors are all themselves metaphors; there are ‘dormant metaphors’ in this whole definition); and (iii) as reflexive reference back, ‘the map of the map’, which finally constitutes reflexive consciousness, to the developing consciousness, or self, potentially constituted as a totality by the previous two. Illustrating these in relation to time-consciousness: (i) ‘Time meanders on’ carries the semantically indeterminate suggestion of such things as a slow unhurried walker, or a river, or a path; (ii) ‘In the next minute’ locates time-sequence by direct comparison, semantically restricted and focused approximately in a one-to-one way, with points or spaces in space; (iii) ‘I found myself hesitating for a time’ refers to ‘I’ and ‘myself’ as located in narrative time thus established. In the spirit of this creation of an inner metaphoric space, consciousness is connected in a circular way with the possibility of the ‘as-if’, giving me another (alternative) frame of reference on myself, which also is yet part of ‘myself’. All the elements in consciousness are next cross-linked. The sense of the ‘as-if’ is one of the major things lost in schizophrenia (cf. Searles, 1993).

Working Psychotherapist

So, in short, consciousness is metaphor? I realize this does coincide with what psychoanalysis, particularly object relations theory, and Lacanian symbolic theory, has always partly said, but no one has put it quite so blatantly as Jaynes appears to here. We still think of ourselves concretely as entities, as subjective things, in the mode of Descartes, who is far too easily dismissed, whatever our lip service to other models. No one before Jaynes has left conscious-
ness quite so nakedly deprived of concreteness. But this opens up the possibility of seeing how the transformation of schizophrenic thought and experience through psychotherapy actually works. So how is schizophrenic experience, and its agonizing quality, itself a constituted culturally recent experience, not merely a throw-back to a bicameral type of experience?

**Schizophrenic experience transforms bicamerality: the shift in consensuality**

**Philosophical Psychotherapist**

The crucial reason, as we have seen, why schizophrenic experience now is different from the process in bicameral man concerns the consensual basis. The absolute consensual basis, for their way of experiencing and authorization, which bicameral man had, was linked with an elaborate social super-structuring, rituals, and methods of bicameral ‘thinking’ of their own. In face of the failure of orthodox archeo-science to tackle this, modern popular quasi-science (summarized in Wilson, 1997, invoking many undisputed facts standing in need of explanation), indicates that many bicameral civilizations had access to sophisticated mathematics, technological expertise, some far in advance of our own, and massive continuity of social organization. It probably went back far further, drew on longer tradition, than orthodox datings of, for instance, the Pyramids and the Sphinx would allow. Jaynes’ position is compatible with very advanced discoveries, including mathematical ones, being made in external projection on the basis of inspiration and dictation (cf. Jaynes, pp. 200–201, 202–203, 217).

So an absolute authorization and thinking framework prevailed. To breach this would have involved a kind of absolute shame. The non-adaptivity of this is part of why it broke down.

Jaynes speaks graphically of:

[the contrast between] the absolutely social individual of bicameral societies...
and the schizophrenic’s] dissonance with the habitual structure of interpersonal relations, and the lack of cultural support and definition for the voices, making them inadequate guides for everyday living.... In effect, he is a mind bared to his environment, waiting on gods in a godless world [my emphasis]. (p. 432)

This results in the desperate alienation the schizophrenic experiences, an alienation doubly terrible, because it draws upon a different realm of human resource, and a different human conceptual mode. Not only the ‘world’ but the structuring of relation to the world is ex toto caelo different for the schizophrenic. ‘Grounding causation’ (Wilkinson, 1998) is different both for the schizophrenic, and bicameral man.

Jaynes only takes us part of the way here. Wittgenstein, whose temperament was very schizoid, helps us, for he had a deep intuition of such types of change in the ground. In uneasy accord with his logical theory, he wrote that

If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can only alter the limits of the world, not the facts—not what can be expressed by means of language.
In short the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole.
The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man. (Wittgenstein, 1961, §6.43)

Blake, another schizoid temperament, wrote similar things.
Schizophrenic experience, alienation, deconstruction of thinking and language

Working Psychotherapist

These transformations, then, are limited to deep attitudinal changes (certainly including altered constructs, making e.g. science and technology possible). But won't this type of isolation make it nigh impossible for us to work psychotherapeutically with schizophrenic clients? Won't the schizophrenic feel an absolute alien? Is this why their thinking seems so often to break down, the recoil from such colossal alienation?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

The alienation is certainly part of the explanation of why so many schizophrenic expressions take the form of an alien or extra-worldly identification of some kind. That is actually a retrospective defence, an attempt to make consensual sense, in terms of the categories of consciousness, of what is happening. But the breakdown, or actually transformation, of thinking is even more dreadful than ordinary loneliness or isolation, and more primary to defining schizophrenic experience; the isolation is the result. On this, as almost always, Jaynes has explanations.

Working Psychotherapist

How does it relate to psychotherapeutic accounts of schizoid process? And how does it relate to what we think of as normality, and normal thinking?

The ‘analog’ constitution of normal consciousness and self

Philosophical Psychotherapist

It relates in a way which tallies well with the work of, for instance, Scarles, Lacan, Freud and Tausk, Segal, and Jung, which is fundamentally akin despite differences of emphasis. There are real differences, e.g., between the ‘retrospective decomposition model’, of what happens to language and concepts, of Freud, Scarles, and Lacan, and Jung's ‘alternative source of production model’, of language/concepts; ‘downsurge’ versus ‘upsurge’, as it were; but, in the light of Jaynes overview, these are correlative, not contradictory.

Working Psychotherapist

So if we are defining schizophrenic thinking, what is it contrasted with, what, on his model, does he say is the norm of consciousness-based thinking? What follows from the metaphoric constitution of consciousness? How does he define what the schizophrenic is alienated from?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

Jaynes registers the following as central to constituting our normal, metaphoric consciousness-based, being-in-the-world, and correlated the thought-process: (i) our narrational time sense; (ii) our capacity to spatialize our inner experience, including time, through spatial metaphor; (iii) our spatial capacity metaphorically to locate the ‘point of view’, ‘the “I think” which must be capable of accompanying all our perceptions’ (Kant, 1964) of our ‘I’ (the ‘analog “I”’, Jaynes calls it) which goes with our narrative continuity of time sense, and capacity for causal construction and reconstruction, as Kant profoundly saw; (iv) our ability
to distinguish our 'me', which of course may perfectly well be observed in our 'mind's eye', ('mind's "I"'), by the time-continuous 't'; (v) our sense of the 'as-if', and ability to make the part stand for the whole; (vi) and our ability to overview and conciliate our disparate experience into a meaning-unified whole. *All these constitute our sense of reflexivity, of who we are*; we are so hugely and unconsciously invested in this, so subject to its state of authorization, that we cannot imagine an alternative, we cling to conscious common sense, even found whole philosophies—Descartes, Hegel, Husserl—upon consciousness. It is as tenacious as (ultimately identical with) the form of our belief in external reality itself (Hume, 1961; Kant, 1964). This does not allievate our fear; we acutely fear madness, 'losing our minds', as if madness were equivalent to, even worse than, death, and annihilation itself.

**Our fear of loss of self-consciousness as madness**

*Working Psychotherapist*

So this is something we as conscious persons are desperate to cling on to? And it is replaced by something else in schizophrenic experience, which is experienced as a desperate loss and disorientation in the world? Where hallucination is compatible with holding on to our sense of our 'I', is it not as disturbing?

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

It is still pretty disturbing, and at odds with the authorization consensus, and people therefore keep quiet about it, for understandable reasons. But it does not make someone schizophrenic as such to hear voices, and the 'hearing voices' movement has recently been rightly emphasizing this very strongly, because this in itself does not affect the 'I think' process, which is fundamental. This is the nature of the loss, the loss, or feared loss, of the sense of 'being me', of maintaining the ability to 'constitute'—on Jaynes', and the psychoanalytic and Buddhist, models it is a constituting, not a 'brute fact'—my 'me'. Spiritual experience, meditation and spiritual emergency take people into similar territory (and there is a real attempt at both witness and transformation in schizophrenic process)—this is one of the reasons why Wilber's over-defensive (and over-endorsed) distinction of pre-personal, and trans-personal, is not so watertight (Wilber, 1995). But their thinking does not normally break down. Yet this sense of being in danger, 'off the wall', is no doubt why a significant proportion of schizoid people are drawn into religious societies and communities. Probably more are helped—than triggered into psychological disturbance by such participation—through increased consensual support.

**Schizophrenic thinking as fusion of consciousness and bicameral modes**

*Working Psychotherapist*

So what is it that is so disturbing about schizophrenic thought processes?

*Philosophical Psychotherapist*

The agony of schizophrenic thought process is the loss of consciousness modes—and therefore the nature and creativity, but also the bizarreness, of schizophrenic thought process is not a reversion to the bicameral but the creative compromise between the bicameral and consciousness thinking. Bicameral thinking and experience was very concrete and straightforward, not particularly bizarre; if one looks at the type of illustration in Hammurabi's Code (1750 BC...
approx.), as presented by Jaynes (pp. 198–201, pp. 247–248), it comes across to us as pretty boringly pedantic and literalistic. In religious communities (and indeed psychotherapy practices) where there is genuine religious emotion combined with submission, and a moratorium on subversive humour or irony, we get a faint idea (tinged with post-bicameral emotion, which gives it its compensating depth and interest as such) of the monotony of the bicameral mind, it is extremely literal and non-bizarre.

The agony of schizophrenic thought process is about the expression, through a partial regression to bicameral modes, of an absence, the loss of consciousness modes in the resort to schizophrenic modes of being and thought, or even the exclusion from them, where the double-bind situation in a family, the emotional-cognitive double messages which make coherent learning of feeling and thought impossible, is dominant. Loss of, forbiddenness of, or not having learned of, consciousness modes leads to a going down (the decomposition of language Freud, Searles and Lacan write of, e.g., Searles, 1993) meeting the reactivated bicameral modes coming up (in Jung’s archetypal regression, for instance). It is, simplifying, a compromise formation between secondary and primary process thinking, classically set out in Freud (1961). This creative compromise between the bicameral and consciousness thinking is the source of the bizarreness of schizophrenic thought process and language—illustrated by the communication of alienation in concrete terms, such as dispersal through infinite space of schizophrenic thought process, of which Bion and Searles write poignantly.

Again so-called ‘word salad’, the telescoping of two words into one (Humpty Dumpty’s ‘portmanteau words’ in Alice Through the Looking Glass, such as ‘brillig’—‘brilliant’ and ‘shining’)—and schizoid punning—is a merging, an expression and concrete symbolization of the need for merger and symbiosis—but also, conversely, a skilful alienation, and protection by disguise, of the unvisitables and unconscious—of the client's inner, but unrealizable being, because of the risk that violation would happen if it even became possible; this is protection by bicultural concrete—-and, thirdly, it is creation; it comes from the same level of being, though less recognized and combined with consciousness, as Finnegans Wake, and The Goon Show. New word coinage has relation to it—Shakespeare is full of them—just as new myth coinage, as in Wagner, has relation to schizophrenic myth coinage. There is analogy to dream here.

Schizophrenic modes as response to isolation from consensual thinking

Working Psychotherapist

So you are saying it is partly a response to isolation?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

It is a special kind of isolation; schizophrenic modes are primarily a defence against, a retreat from, the loss of consensuality, the de-authorization of experience, or its never being established. Yes, in this light your first conjecture, about isolation, which I rejected, is part right—but it is a very special kind of isolation and leads to a very special vicious circle. This can have a predominance of either genetic or environmental factors, even very early, semi-congenital, even pre-natal, environmental factors—the early laying down, or lack thereof, of neural pathways—but always involves both in some degree of mutual balance. The primary basis of consensuality, its possibility, is established or impaired in childhood; hence the developmental themes Jaynes ignores, but which his intuition cries out for, particularly the infant-mother relation, are situated. (Bicamerality would have had its own very different versions of these, and schizophrenic ways of being have difficulty in these areas.)

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Breakdowns and transformations of bicamerality: loss of consensual authority

'T', and privacy, the most intimately individual attributes of the capacity for consciousness as explained by Jaynes, is also a consensual creation, a consensual authorization (cf. Wittgenstein, 1967, §§203, 243ff; Jaynes is implicitly a vindication of the 'private language' argument). It is about fundamental alternative learning pathways, the possibility of very primary choice points. This is the impact of grounding causation in childhood and in history. And these alternative primary choices towards consciousness were learnt to be made by humans between 1200 and 600 BC; gradually the bicameral options withered on the vine, and lost authority (rather then Jaynes' language suggesting genetic alteration). Absolute authority is the mode of consensus for bicameral man, and was undermined. The bicameral options were replaced in three main ways: either (i) transmuted into forms of authorization (such as oracles, possession, prophecy, speaking in tongues, mysticism, hypnosis) which may be (and are by Jaynes) argued to have replaced or reproduced in a new form the bicameral experience and communication, or (ii) forms which expressed its absence, such as the great monotheistic religions of the departed God, or (iii) forms which suppressed its absence, as increasingly is the case with secular positivistic science, which inherits the mantle of Protestantism in its smashing of the idols of the vestiges of the bicameral. But Protestantism is also, in this mode, fundamentalist, and therefore is also expression, not merely suppression, of the absence.

Working Psychotherapist

This was the pathway of the breakdown of the bicameral mind? By which it was turned into an outcast mode? It seems tortuous.

Philosophical Psychotherapist

It was tortuous, for consciousness precisely makes options available and relativizes them. These three options are usually combined in complex and unexpected ways. The development of the concept of God's transcendence in the monotheistic religions is precisely the rationalization and transmutation of absence, a defence against doubt or absence of faith (especially in its fundamentalist forms), in Jaynes' terms. Therefore, theologically, when Nietzsche (1974)proclaimed 'God is dead', he was, as often, merely shouting out loud what had nihilistically been concealed by, and was implicit in, the concept of transcendence (and related modes) for 2000 years and more. Buddhism's nirvana and sanyata are also turning necessity into a virtue, but openly and proactively. Absence of gods is accepted. Civilization moved paradoxically towards the authorization of self-authorization. Fear of madness, fear of both the bicameral lack and the threat of its return, shows upon what thin ground we tread with our sense of conscious self. Madness is culturally defined and created.

Transformations of consensual authority: squeezing out of the bicameral modes

Working Psychotherapist

Can you say more about authorization, then, in relation to the point we have reached?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

It may be that the issue of authorization, consensuality, is even more fundamental than the form it takes, and 'changes of mind' are changes in the forms of authorized self-being. If this is so, then the movement from outer to inner, and from object-centred to object-free

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(Buddhism, mysticism, and modern psychotherapy being the fullest versions of this), are natural movements, in the light of the developing Hegelian–Piagetian logic of the concrete and the metaphorical (Searles, 1993), moving from the solidity of the concrete and external, towards the unassailability of the least externally dependent forms of authorization. Buddhist no-selfhood and parallel developments would be the apotheosis of self-authorization, in Hegelian fashion the extension of consciousness as well as its abolition, the third evolution.

As the pressure grew to squeeze the bicameral into new forms, and suppress its primary direct manifestations, those who occupied or came to occupy the bicameral end of the spectrum had no cultural niche to occupy, and no authorization. Jaynes does not fully see that, though there are significant parallels between schizophrenic experience and modes of behaviour, and bicameral modes passed down to us, schizophrenic experience itself is twisted and distorted into new and bizarre forms by the attempt to communicate something of its search for authorization, despite the sense of foreignness. ‘Bizarre’ in its intrinsic forms is a communicative category—like ‘fanatical’, or ‘comical’. Schizophrenic art communicates huge anguish and alienation, through its non-representational (or partially representational) or non-perspectively organized forms, an expressiveness of feeling not possible for bicameral man. There is often a desperate grandiose attempt to impose an authorization.

Working Psychotherapist

How does this kind of rethinking affect the work, then?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

Jaynes’ evocation of the pathway of the breakdown of the bicameral, and the emergence of consciousness, gives us the materials to reconstruct the account of schizophrenic experience, and to relate this to psychotherapeutic intervention. His partial failure in this goes with the over-emphasis on the genetic, but is a failure offset by his awareness that ‘insanity’ was a cultural creation from about Plato’s time onwards (pp. 405–407), and by his conveyed sense of the agony, and its reasons, of schizophrenic experience in the modern age.

Depth psychotherapy: the basis of deep change at the level of the ground

The implications of Jaynes’ model in terms of our concept of ‘grounding causation’ are radical, and form the basis for the development of the work. They are as follows: (a) the structure of experience can be fundamentally rearranged; but, (b) this is a deep change at the core of a person’s being-in-the-world, a realignment of the core habitualities and constructs of their being, one which takes place at the level of the grounding of the system of their being and framework of reference as a whole, their authorization structure of functioning; (c) therefore it cannot be effected purely by altering detail within, internally to, a person’s being, strategies, and frame of reference (something has to happen at the level of the ground), and: (d) it is not lightly undertaken, it is tantamount to life or death, surrender of the deepest allegiances and defences—authorities; (e) this only makes sense if it is possible to reorganize the same fundamental raw materials and symbolic resources the person already has; (f) it is possible here, because the grounding causation of the modes of being of bicameral man and conscious man draw from the same basic Matrix.

This is not Jaynes’ model but can be extracted from it. The Matrix as a basic concept, the Matrix of Grounding Causation, Matrix of the Ground, enables specific transformations in overall ways of construing the world and experiencing. These cannot be explained from within the frameworks of construing, by definition; and we are also inferring some continuity.
between one framework and that which succeeds it, not the 'continuity' of our time concept (which is one of our own frameworks of construing), but inferred by analogy. We assume that the framework has that which makes it, constitutes it as a whole, its horizon and ground (Heidegger, 1967, 1990). And this horizon or ground participates in the 'continuity', connected with the generation of new frameworks of construing. This I call the Matrix of the Ground.

_Working Psychotherapist_

This sounds all very grand but how does it affect us all, on the ground?

_Philosophical Psychotherapist_

Very droll! The ground is indeed the key to it. It poses a problem for the psychotherapist to work at this level, but there are relevant things which can be done. Whenever—a common experience in our work, but easy to concretize and to miss its full significance—we and our clients experience a moment of creative indeterminacy, we are touching grounding causation. This is the fertile void of which Gestalt speaks, or sunyata, the emptiness of forms of Buddhism. It may be associated with a limbo or (in Buddhism) bardo experience, and with a strong upsurge in the imaginal realm. We have a window of creating. It is often associated with silence, with encountering beneath or beyond words, and we can relate it to Stern’s work with infant–mother primal rhythms (Stern, 1995). The crucial question is, is this type of experience too a specific form, or is it pointing, glimpsing, beyond form? Does the Matrix of the Ground become more available, more unified and integrated, or does it just change?

This is compressed and difficult. I hope to show you the parallels and analogies between different types of experience, which, if we relate and interweave them, widen and enrich our work, free us to communicate better as a profession, give us access to wider resources, and make us less parochial. For instance, change on the basis of the Matrix of the Ground makes sense of the fact that, in some instances, very long-term psychotherapeutic work with someone in a schizophrenic predicament can lead to an awakening, and an alternative life-choice—a complete giving up of symptomatic hearing of voices, for instance—not denying their schizophrenic experience and its protective wisdom, but integrating it, and allowing the choices of consciousness to be integrated and relativized by it as well (cf. Milner, 1969; Dorman and Penney, this issue). This is an alteration of their entire being-in-the-world. Similarly, the Buddha both was not the same person—and was the same person—after, and before, his enlightenment experience.

This is where something like Wittgenstein’s idea [above] of altering the limits of the world without altering the facts comes into its own:

In short the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole.

The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man.

(Wittgenstein, 1961, §6.43)

It is more like altering the total organization, the *gestalt of the ground*, without altering the contents—though a reconfiguration does in another sense alter the contents, when we see a face in the leaves or the snow; everything reorganizes, and it ‘clicks’, ‘aha’, and we see the duck instead of the rabbit, in the famous illustrations of gestalt perceptual organization. The conception of the Matrix of the Ground enables us to relate, for instance, religious experience; the micro-process of sessions, which are, in effect, mini-schizophrenias (not resulting in psychosis because of the difference in authorization provided by support at the level of the
ground), as Freud said dreams are a psychosis; in the instant of confusional opening we don’t know who we are. This implies a rehabilitation also of schizophrenic experience, a normalizing of it as part of our humanness and as very near at hand for all of us. The traumatis basis of ordinary reflexive consciousness, our ‘neurosis of the normal’, is also connected with the Matrix (Freud, 1984).

Religious transformers of bicamerality, consciousness and enlightenment

A striking instance is the capacity of great transformers of consciousness to draw on the bicameral in order to supersede it. Socrates heard his bicameral corrective voice to counterbalance his extremes of reason; Buddha experienced his enlightenment process in terms of the encounter with the devil or tempter, Mara, which I do not take to have been simply a personification, not even for the god-free Gautama Buddha, and Jesus similarly with the tempter, and his ‘Abba’, father. Nietzsche grasped the insights of the apotheosis of secularization, and the god-depletion of the world, just at the precise moment of the culmination of secularization under the intellectual and imaginative impact of such scientists as Helmholtz and Darwin, in the counterbalancing form of an overwhelming experience of revelation, and the visitation of a ‘double’ (Zarathustra), for which there are few parallels in the modern epoch. That moment of secularizing of our thought was an historic moment of which Jaynes writes poignantly (it is his ultimate preoccupation) and in Nietzschean terms (pp. 438–439):

It [Darwinism, etc.] said in a word that there is no authorization from outside.
Behold! there is nothing there. What we must do must come from ourselves. The king at Eynan can stop staring at Mount Hermon; the dead king can die at last. We, we fragile species at the end of the second millennium AD, we must become our own authorization. (p. 438)

Freud too, faced by secularism only a little later (Krull, 1987; Bakan, 1990), had a quieter cumulative ‘revelation’, fundamentally about transference (in other words sessional micro-process and re-enactment). By this he was undoubtedly mythically gripped, which has been well registered by Derrida (1987), giving his writings their biblical or talmudic quality. Jung’s bicameral visions are of course fairly well-known. The implication is that work at the level of the ground brings about change because it shifts our core authorization structure, but change also has to be continuous enough to permit the locus of authority to shift—though this can of course take the form of a leap. Only developmentally linked change which has the (Hegel-like) quality of retention of what is transformed, that is recapitulation, providing continuity and respecting, really honouring, the previous way of being, can be change that endures, through assimilating properly what is changed, as in Piaget’s view of schemata which shift to a new gestalt when enough experience of the previous stage has been assimilated through varied repetition (Piaget, 1977). This also relates to Freud’s insistence on ‘working through’ (Freud, 1957). Implications about support, linked to the Winnicottian domain of the mother–child relationship, are too big to pursue here.

Metaphysical aspects of change at the level of the ground

Working Psychotherapist

Before we go further into these issues of method, please tell me more about the Matrix of the Ground. In what sense does it change, on this model? If it is the basis of all the changes of form
of expression of phenomenological causality, does it change, and, if not, in what sense does it explain anything? Have we not got the old matter/form dilemma here, where either the ground changes and does not explain or else it purely explains, but at the price of being 'noumenal', unknowable or meaningless? Can we influence, or be aware of, the matrix of the ground directly, or is it simply introduced to explain these transformations of which you are speaking? What is the relation of the Matrix of the Ground, and the ground of ordinary experience, in the gestalt sense? Aren't the modes of expression sufficiently explained purely by their transformations one into the next, using the 'material' of the previous mode of expression, in a Hegel-like way, without appealing to this Kantian noumenal notion of the 'ground'? Is not the only possible way this can be done be to treat the ground as, not other than, but part of the circle of any given stage, in the ordinary Gestalt sense—but then it will not serve your purpose of being outside the circle?

Philosophical Psychotherapist

The bicameral mind too broke down in individuals; it's not such an extreme possibility, you know. If experience now is inaccessible in these ways, so is the breakdown of the bicameral mind. Grounding causation is learnt in its variant forms in every child and in every generation and culture. We are encountering something hard to speak of, and to put into words precisely, here. In this contrast between: (i) total circles which succeed one another as wholes (Gestalt therapy notions, and Piagetian notions of cognitive development); and (ii) some notion of the ground as partly outside, or beneath, the specific circles, we are bumping up against old Western and Eastern arguments (e.g. Heidegger versus Hegel). But in terms of the phenomenology of structural personal change, it does not matter which fork of this dilemma we choose. If change at the level of the Matrix changes the whole circle for a new one, that is the analysis of grounding causation (Heidegger would argue that the presupposed whole, underpinning the transformations, in Hegel is the already present experience of the 'absolute', Heidegger, 1994). If it happens in terms of the Heideggerian intuition about the ground as Horizontally beyond its forms (Heidegger, 1967, 1990), that is how grounding causation works. Both models, horizontal versus vertical, have a concept of fundamental structuring in terms of the ground of experience. Hegel was arguably the pioneer in thinking about core transformations.

That which makes possible the shifts, both in civilization and the individual, is not identical with any of them, however this is understood, but nevertheless is presupposed in the intentionality of process. A parallel is the conception of object constancy, the discovery by the child of continuation of existence of objects not observed. By hypothesis, these can never be observed (cf. Hume, 1961). Yet the lived enacted conception of objects regulates and organizes our experience in ways which Husserl in particular (Husserl, 1991) has demonstrated to be rich in implications of intentionality structure. Once we realize this, too, in Hegel-like fashion there is a flip-over, a gradual accruing of enrichment of understanding and depth in our conception of the existence of the absent object, and of our relation to it, an implicit allowing of perspective in the heart and essence of our conception. Indeed the pathway to the solution to the philosophical problem of external existence (Hume, 1961) lies in the full implications of perspectival intentionality appraising us of that which is other, internally to its identity, its essence. Inversely, in non-dual mystical experience, where the otherness of intentionality is comprehensively dissolved, the ultimate identity of the ground of all reality is—tautologically—free to be experienced.

With reflexive consciousness we also acquire the potentiality of transformational consciousness. The Matrix becomes partially accessible, not just inferred.
Plurality of options with the emergence of consciousness

This also opens up the way for a more pluralistic, less sequential Hegelian or Wilberian model of the developmental sequence of change in civilizations. The indeterminacy the Matrix historically generates after the emergence of, and in consolidation of, reflexive consciousness illustrates this. It includes: the rise of enlightenment religion (Hindu monism, Buddhism, Platonism); transitional, throw-back religion, e.g., Paulinc, Islam; the 'unravellings' of enlightenment religion in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are explained in Jaynes' terms better than any other; the modern age—modern reflection on self-consciousness, Descartes, Montaigne, Shakespeare, the historic sense; the rise of science; philosophy is only loosely tied to the time sequence, but absolute knowledge in the Hegelian sense is undoubtedly post-Descartes; and phenomenology, anthropology and psychotherapy are in turn post-absolute knowledge in Hegel's sense, as is post-modernism.

It is clear from this that the further we get towards the modern, the looser and more pluralistic the sequence becomes and the harder it is to define the central differences which demarcate one epoch or mode from the next. Jaynes' original model, however, has a graphic simplicity—and perhaps crudity. It is only not merely crude because the material which enables us to make the modifications is put there by Jaynes. The ones not much explored by him are precisely the ones where the complexity comes out most acutely, and this is also retrospective to the bicameral.

Working Psychotherapist

There is no point trying to solve all this now; it is too big for this discussion. It is enough to have logged the questions, and to have indicated a limitation and relativity in Jaynes' thought, that there is a fertility there, which makes further exploration on the basis of his assumptions, or modifications of them which are not repudiations or dismissals, fruitful. But if we now go back to psychotherapeutic change in relation to schizophrenic predicaments, where are we now?

Greatness and limitations of Jaynes' conception of fundamental change

Philosophical Psychotherapist

Our world changes in instants. The window or shutter of change is open. The accruing of safety conditions which make such a shift possible—in terms of schizophrenic predicaments, or any other which challenges the risk and uncertainty of change—may well be described in terms of an Hegel-like accumulation, though many mini-creations will have contributed to that progression also.

Jaynes' insight makes sense of such major possibilities of change, and of the issue of the structural conditions of change. Though this issue of change is not his own concern, which is by implication rather the Nietzschean one of somehow finding a home in a post-Darwinian, scientific materialist world, without succumbing to nihilism—as if the evolution had stopped—his insight is so fertile it can be applied in this area. In enlightenment experience nirvana is achieved through directly realizing or releasing sunyata, emptiness, and the suchness, or is-ness, of being, precisely in the forms of our experience. Mountains are first mountains, not attended to, then not mountains, finally just mountains, attended to, again. We can indeed alter the ground as well as the specific contents of our reality, at many levels of experience. Jaynes' insights are part of the becoming reflexive of the ground in the modern age.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF JULIAN JAYNES

Working Psychotherapist

We had better end by just registering the questions which can be raised about Jaynes—themselves often proof of his fertility. (This very concentrated yet highly readable and lucid book is packed on almost every page with unexpected insight there has been no space for here.) As mentioned he neglects the whole maternal and developmental dimension, and both the 'structural logic' and socio-economic 'system logic'. He is caught in a materialist/physicalist paradigm, of which he also says that it too is part of the bicameral paradigm, thus being subject to its own deconstruction. He never tackles this tension. This also prevents him ever fully quite empathizing with bicameral modes of awareness from the inside, or again ever really questioning the supremacy of the hallucination called conceptual consciousness, or seeing that from outside we all appear 'unaware' to someone with a different frame of reference; we are subtly 'foreign' to one another even in the (rare) moments of great mutual understanding. He also fails to apply his paradigm to its full scope, where it would be confirmed on a much larger scale; Heidegger's lament for the silence of being (and the gods!), and Wittgenstein's strongly analogous one (Wittgenstein, 1961), are typical nostalgia for the bicameral, whilst Derrida's counter-preoccupation with writing, primary 'writing before the letter', is highly significant in respect of the part writing, the demotion of the authority of the voice, and the nostalgia for it, played in the breakdown. Jaynes greatly neglects the intrinsic logic, and phenomenology of experience, of the realm of the spiritual, and indeed also, emphatically in line with categorical pure 'this-worldists', like Humphrey (1995), he simply neglects or dismisses the paranormal—which is highly relevant to the bicameral experience (voodoo, for instance, cf. Ekeland, 1997). One could continue. Working on his own, very much on his own, his theory suffers from a degree of lap-sidedness. But it identifies something of major importance; and psychotherapists will miss out badly if they do not read it.

References


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Résumé  Cet article sur Julian Jaynes et "L'origine de la conscience par la rupture de l'esprit bicaméral" (Jaynes, 1990) illustre le thème d'un article antérieur (Wilkinson, 1998) sur "La causalité phénoménologique"; et est aussi étudié son affinité avec le concept bouddhiste de "création co-dépendante". Le travail de Jaynes est parcouru en rapport avec l'expérience schizophrénique. Il affirme que l'hallucination était un aspect normal des prises de décisions humaines dans des situations de stress jusqu'aux environs de 1200 avant Jésus-Christ—l'esprit bicaméral. Ceci ne s'explique pas tout simplement par une équation entre expérience schizophrénique et hallucination; en effet, il existait auparavant une autorisation consensuelle, maintenant perdue, d'une expérience hallucinatoire des dieux et des ancières. Jaynes propose quatre hypothèses principales: La bicaméralité (les deux modes du mental); la constitution de la conscience; la datation; enfin la localisation cérébrale des différents modes d'expériences. La conscience remplace le recours bicaméral à l'hallucination dans des situations de stress; celle-ci est constituée de métaphore. L'expérience schizophrénique transforme la bicaméralité par l'intermédiaire d'un changement consensuel: une aliénation, décomposition de la pensée et du langage, une perte de constitution 'analytique' de la conscience et du moi, une fusion entre la conscience et l'esprit bicaméral. Les ruptures, pertes et transformations de la bicaméralité et de l'autorité consensuelle sont illustrées par les grands transformateurs religieux de la bicaméralité, de la conscience et de l'éveil. Une psychothérapie de fond est également basée sur un potentiel de changement profond au niveau d'une relation de cause à effet. Une pluralité réfléchie de chemins de l'existence depuis l'apparition de la conscience est maintenant disponible. La grammaire et les limitations de l'évocation de Jaynes sur le changement fondamental sont également abordées.