**Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft**

**9 | 2014**
**Jahresausgabe 2014**

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**Electronic version**
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/zjr/222
DOI: 10.4000/zjr.222
ISSN: 1862-5886

**Publisher**
Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionswissenschaft

**Electronic reference**
Idris Riahi, « Ancient Minds Not Conscious », *Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft* [Online], 9 | 2014, Online since 31 December 2014, connection on 10 December 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/zjr/222 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/zjr.222

# Ancient Minds Not Conscious

*Idris RIAHI*

*Julian Jaynes zufolge hat sich Bewusstsein spät in der Menschheitsgeschichte entwickelt. Zuvor hatte der Mensch keinen bewussten Zugriff auf mentale Inhalte. Die Organisation des Geistes basierte auf der Zusammenarbeit zweier Bereiche der bikameralen Psyche (d.h. zwei mentale ›Räume‹): Es erschienen Halluzinationen von den Stimmen von Göttern, die immer dann zum Vorschein traten, wenn ein bestimmtes Stresslevel überschritten wurde (beispielsweise beim Fällen von Entscheidungen), deren Befehle von der anderen Seite sogleich ausgeführt wurden. Diese Form mentaler Organisation lässt sich in antiken Texten wie der Ilias belegen. Dieser Artikel stellt Jaynes Theorie vor, liefert eine religionswissenschaftliche Analyse seiner Interpretation der Ilias und diskutiert abschließend die Implikationen von Jaynes Arbeit in Bezug auf die Religionswissenschaft.*

*According to Julian Jaynes, consciousness has developed only recently in the history of mankind. Before man gained conscious access to mental content, the organizational structure of the mind had rested upon the working together of two parts, the »bicameral psyche« (i.e. two mental ›rooms‹). The hallucinated voice of a god appeared whenever a certain stress-level was reached (e.g. when decision-making was due) which again made the human side of the »bicameral mind« execute the god's command. This mentality is reflected in texts of antiquity such as the Iliad. In this paper we present Jaynes' theory, analyze his interpretation of the Iliad, and discuss implications for the scientific study of religion.*



Veröffentlicht von: ZjR – Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft / ISSN 1862-5886
URL: http://zjr-online.net, URN: urn:nbn:de:0267-18625886-9

Empfohlene Zitierweise: Riahi, Idris. 2014. »Ancient Minds Not Conscious« *Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft* 9:22-38. URN: urn:nbn:de:0267-201404-riahi-6.

## Inhaltsübersicht



## Introduction

¶1 The theory we are dealing with was first published 1976 by the title: *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (hence: *The Origin of Consciousness*). Princeton psychologist Julian Jaynes aims to explain what consciousness is, where it came from, and why it emerged (Jaynes 2000, 1). The presentation of the theory makes strong claims about religion as well, which are to be addressed in the following. By characterizing religion as a constitutive factor in the emergence of consciousness (»gods [as] organizations of the central nervous system« [Jaynes 2000, 74]), Jaynes' study (primarily focussed on Homer's Iliad) touches upon two old discussions in the scientific study of religion: a) *What is the Early Greek concept of ›soul‹?* b) *Is man in the Iliad determined by the gods, or does he have free will?* It is our aim to assess whether his interpretation of the Iliad provides support for his theory. It is also noteworthy that while in science of religion discourse Julian Jaynes seems to be neglected entirely, other authors have made use of his ideas on religion. We will first briefly report on the impact Jaynes has had on other scholars outside our field, and then – in reference to Daniel Dennett's 2006 publication on religion – investigate an application of Jaynes' understanding of religion.

## Theory and reception

¶2 According to Sleutels (2006, 177) »academia has been proportionately dismissive« towards Jaynes. The most outspoken critic is philosopher Ned Block, who rejected Jaynes' claim as »patently absurd« (ibid., 178), while on the other side of the spectrum is Daniel Dennett, who appreciates Jaynes not only as a »fellow social constructivist« (cf. ibid.) but relied on Jaynes' notion of divination to make plausible why early men needed the belief in gods to cope with the challenges of everyday life (see below discussion of Dennett 2007). »How could one take such a book seriously?«, Dennett (1998, 121) wonders: »Because it asked some very good questions that had never been properly asked before and boldly proposed answers to them« (ibid.). Apart from the aspect of divination Dennett carries Jaynes' ideas

further, suggesting a kind of »Software Archaeology« with which he seeks to answer the question of why people today are conscious beings. The »revolution« which Jaynes claims must have happened to bring about consciousness was »not an organic« one, but a »software revolution«, so that by means of reverse-engineering we can reveal the nature of consciousness. (Dennett 1998,130) Authors from different fields mention Jaynes' *Origin of Consciousness* for some of its many other ideas. Steven Pinker (1998, 133), for instance, briefly highlights the idea of consciousness as a recent development (in this context also see Prinz 2006, 272, and Reber 2003, 621). For a reference to the idea that the communication with gods in early man is neurologically manifested in the brain, see Brams 2006, 4. For his work on auditory hallucinations see Bever 2008, 85, who used it in context of the study of witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. Richard Dawkins in his 2006 book »The God Delusion« dedicates a few paragraphs to Jaynes' theory (2000, 350ff.), where he, like Dennett, plays around with the idea that early minds were driven by the voices of gods, soon enough, however, discarding the notion. Unlike many of his contemporaries, and later authors who still receive Jaynes (even if only to mention his ideas and subsequently destroy them), Dennett understands one of his own most popular works, *Consciousness Explained* (1991), to be an attempt aiming at those »very good questions« that before Jaynes had never been asked (Dennett 1998, 121). To Dennett this way of conceptualizing consciousness is on the *right track* – and *direction* for that matter, as it goes top-down. He begins at a crucial point, i.e. at the phenomenon (how does consciousness appear to us?) itself, and works the way down from there to make clear what are the indispensable elements to achieve consciousness. Thus Jaynes delivers »one of the clearest and most perspicuous defenses of the top-down approach that I have ever come across«, Dennett maintains (1998, 123). Jaynes project was to aim at »bridging what he calls the ›awesome chasm‹ between mere inert matter and the inwardness, as he puts it, of a conscious being« (Dennett 1998, 121).

## Consciousness as a terminological/cultural problem

¶3 »There is in general no consciousness in the Iliad«, Jaynes (2000, 69) claims, instead antiquity was crowded by people with *bicameral minds*. By this term he envisioned a mind made up of two separate mental »rooms« (in analogy to the two brain hemispheres), in which different mental tasks were performed. Jaynes refers to this as the »double brain«, (chapter 5, 100-125) where there is a dominant left cerebral hemisphere and a non-dominant right cerebral hemisphere. Both hemispheres were able to communicate via language so that one could inform the other about what is going on in the world. This did not happen all the time, as to some extent the tasks in daily life could be solved by instinct. However, when a more challenging task turned up, and bicameral people were due to make more complex decisions, their stress level rose significantly over a threshold at which it began to

trigger auditory hallucinations (emerging from the right hemisphere). Bicameral people perceived this as the voice of a god delivering an answer which was consequently carried out by the other half, the listener part. All of this happened unconsciously: none of the hemispheres produced any kind of content that was phenomenally accessible (see below *phenomenal- and access-consciousness)*. In other words, neither the »god-« nor the »man-part« was conscious of the action (Jaynes 2000, 84).

¶4 When asked *what consciousness is*, one might intuitively refer to the brain and its biological evolution. Perhaps we are then intuitive physicalists and believe consciousness to be a property of the physical world rather than culture. Consciousness appears to us as a most familiar thing, and we can barely imagine there could ever be human beings without it (cf. Jaynes 2000, 84), but so Jaynes claims. As a social constructivist he relies on culture rather than on biology (cf. Sleutels 2006, 177f.). Culture, understood as »exogenetic information«, has a similar impact on the development of man as evolution but without genetic mutation, and it gives way to a kind of a »virtual evolution« (McVeigh 2007 [Part 2 of 2], 00:07:12). In this sense consciousness is not a universal quality of human mental life, an inevitable faculty of the homo sapiens' brain. When societies are able to achieve consciousness individually, depending on their history and further cultural developments (writing, social organization, religion), the brain plays a much smaller role than initially assumed.

¶5 Let us consider the etymology of the term consciousness: The German word ›Bewusstsein‹ is only about 300 years old and was introduced as a nominalization of *sich etwas bewusst-seyn*, into *Bewusst-seyn*, by German philosopher Christian Wolff, (1679-1754) entering the dictionary in 1719 (Metzinger 2009b, 00:27:25). The English equivalent occurred for the first time in the words of the Archbishop of Ussher in 1620, »who said ›(I was) so conscious vnto myself of my great weaknesse‹ « (Wilkes 1988, 18). The concept did not only denote some *inward awareness*, but also has been used to express »shared knowledge« (ibid.), cf. *con* and *scire* (*to know together*). »The term ›consciousness‹«, however, »did not appear until 1678, ›self-consciousness‹ not until 1690.« (ibid.) The antonym »unconscious« appeared for the first time in 1712 signifying »unaware, lacking conscious thought«, in 1860 the notion »temporarily insensible, knocked out« was added, and »subconscious« as in »not wholly conscious« was to be used for the first time in 1886 (McVeigh 2007 [Part 1 of 2], 00:07:17). In her comparative study, Kathleen Wilkes (1988, 16), presents the English terms consciousness (and mind) as »notoriously difficult to translate into other languages«. With »(relative) confidence« she (1995, 98) claims that at least the major European languages clearly show these issues. Complications in translation is not an unusual problem of course, but becomes quite revealing when those terms in question refer to concepts that are essential in scientific investigations: for instance when a theory in physics lacks »notions of ›force‹, ›energy‹, or ›mass‹« (1988, 16). So she asks »is the notion of

›conscious(ness)‹ anything like these?« (ibid.) What does it tell us than apparently a fair number of people in different cultures at different times in human history have not found it necessary to develop a term: consciousness?

## Bicamerality instead of consciousness

¶6 So, *what is it like* to be a bicameral man? And how does such a mind work? The world, Jaynes speculates, would merely »happen to him and his action would be an inextricable part of that happening with no consciousness whatever« (Jaynes 2000, 85). Thrown into a new situation, a bicameral person cannot sit down and reason consciously on how to act. Her only chance of facing situations with proper reactions was to listen to the hallucinated voice, »which with the stored-up admonitory wisdom of [her] life would tell [her] nonconsciously what to do« (ibid.). There is a »lack of mental language« that leaves the people in need for something with which to initiate action, and this role is played by gods (cf. 78). Gods were part of men, they could not step out of the natural law, which can be seen in the fact that the Greek gods never create anything ex nihilo, unlike the God of the Old Testament (ibid.). Any everyday decision which »could not be dealt with on the basis of habit« was sufficient to cause hallucinations (Jaynes 2000, 93). With this depiction in mind it may dawn to those familiar with the Iliad how Jaynes came up with such a theory. There we find Gods and humans in a specific interaction. Touching on an old debate in the science of religion, we shall now begin to evaluate this depiction.

## The Early Greek concept of the soul

¶7 Jaynes' major support of his assumptions is based upon etymological observations: There are »no words for consciousness or mental acts« in the Iliad (Jaynes 2000, 69). Those words only at a later age came to mean »mental things« (ibid.). *Psychē*, according to Jaynes, is derived from the verb »*psychein* = to breathe, [and] has become internalized into life substances in its main usage in the Iliad« (Jaynes 2000, 270f.). There is *yet* no psychological attribution to the term psyche. »No one [in the Iliad] in any way ever sees, decides, thinks, knows, fears, or remembers anything in his *psyche*« (271). Bremmer (1983, 3f.) comes to a similar conclusion: in Homer's epics »the word psyche has no psychological connotations whatsoever.« So Homer and his contemporaries »did not yet have ›cognisance of any concept denoting the psychic whole, of any notion that might correspond to our word ›soul‹« (ibid.). Finsler 1914 and Marg 1938 come to similar conclusions. Marg refers to the terms νόος and θυμός, and none »denote something essential, immutable or something that is rooted in man, i.e. his character …« (Sarischoulis 2008, 41, translation: Author). Finsler, as well, subscribes to a notion of psychē that neither

addresses mental nor spiritual (*geistige*, *seelische*) forces, not in life and not in death (Finsler 1914, 146).

¶8 Pivotal studies were conducted by Swedish Sanskritist, *Ernst Arbman*, who in an analysis of Vedic soul belief in India could show »that the concept of the soul (*ātman, puruṣa*) was preceded by a duality where the eschatological and psychological attributes of the soul had not yet merged« (Bremmer 1983, 9). Arbman identified two types in his analysis which he called »body souls endowing the body with life and consciousness and the free soul, an unencumbered soul representing the individual personality« (ibid.). Both souls are active at different times when the individual is either sleeping (free soul is active) or waking (body soul is active); further, while it is unclear where the free soul resides, the body soul can be divided into the following categories: »one is the life soul, frequently identified with the breath, the life principle; the other is the ego soul. The body soul, or several parts, represents the inner self of the individual« (ibid.). At this stage in Vedic soul belief the notion of a unitary soul has not yet arrived, however, at some point these concepts will merge. Arbman speaks of a development of the »concept of *psychē* [...] into the modern unitary soul« (Bremmer 1983, 11). Latter »would reach its completion only at the end of the fifth century« (14). Based upon Arbman's methodology, Bremmer comes to the conclusion: The »early Greek concept of the soul« in the »Archaic Age« was a »dualistic« one (Bremmer 1983, 66). Following the terminology from Arbman's analysis of Vedic soul belief, the two elements can be called the free soul and the body soul. Concerning the free soul, the Greek notion of *psychē* »corresponds most with Arbman's concept«, the only exception being that »the activity of the soul in trance and dream […] is only evident in post-Homeric times« (ibid.). Bremmer hints at a point of criticism which has been raised by many authors, i.e. the limitation of Arbman's dualistic principle: »Instead the Greek soul belief might best be characterized as multiple« (ibid.). Still the development is the same, a »unitary soul can only be found in the period after the Archaic Age« (ibid.).

¶9 However, it was argued that despite the lack of a concept of a unitary soul, »early Greeks could easily say *I wish* or *I thought* and, consequently, must have had a general sense of psychic coherence and at least, an imperfect notion of the unity of personality« (Bremmer 1983, 66f.). Bremmer continues to state that the Homeric individual did not yet have a notion of will in terms of an ethical factor, »nor did he distinguish between what was inside and outside himself as we do (67). The early Greeks and other Indo-European peoples, »did not primarily consider themselves to be independent individuals but rather members of a group« (ibid.). But we are advised not to carry this argument too far (cf. Bremmer, 67). It is save to conclude that the »Greeks perceived the attributes of their personalities to be structured differently than we perceive ours today« (68), but that does not yet lead us to conclude that they did not have an »inner space«, or »consciousness«, as Jaynes proposes.

## Early Greek gods and the problem of free will

*Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά*

¶10 This century old piece of literature would thus be considered not the product of conscious man, but an epic hallucinated by an »entranced iron-age bard«, chanting to his fellow people »standing at the ruins of Agamemnon's world« (Jaynes 2000, 73). The characters of the Iliad do not »sit down and think out what to do«, they are not conscious people and »certainly« have »no introspections« (72). To prove that, several text references are given in *The Origin of Consciousness*. In all of them we are presented the same motif, gods are the ones playing the vital roles, not people (Jaynes 2000, 72). But is the text that reliable? Indeed Jaynes claims: »The Iliad is *not* imaginative creative literature and hence not a matter for literary discussion. It is history, webbed into the Mycenaean Aegean, to be examined by psychohistorical scientists« (76). The Iliad is not meant to be treated as a »sociological document« (78), rather it is meant to be treated as a »psychological document« (ibid.). It is an account of »constant action«, as Jaynes claims »[i]t really is *about* Achilles' acts and their consequences, not about his mind« (79).

¶11 So, what do we know about the nature of the Homeric gods? This question is addressed and thoroughly dealt with by Burkert 1991, who investigates a »special picture of divine beings« at the »crossroads of religion and poetry« (81). From him we learn that Nilsson (1924, 369) understands *anthropomorphization* (Vermenschlichung) as one of the legacies of the Homeric time. Gods are presented in an »unheroic, all-too-human vein«, (cf. Burkert 1991, 81) which Greek poet and philosopher, Xenophanes, harshly criticized in the works of Homer and Hesiod (ibid.). They »put upon the gods everything that is shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other« (ibid.). It was also due to Xenophanes that »a system of postulates of what a god should be like« began to develop. This system claimed that a god should be »without need, not only immortal but ungenerated, all-knowing, omnipotent, and hence exempt from any sexual, thievish, or cunning activities« (ibid.). However, anthropomorphization had another function as it obstructed the enchanting perception of gods, which was usually widely spread at that time, as for instance is the case in the Egyptian religion (Nilsson 1924, 369). Such a perception had the effect that people felt fear and awe in front of the gods (cf. θεουδής). Nilsson concludes, »[t]he Homeric anthropomorphization broke these chains. Hence man was free to discover the world on his own; this was the origin of Greek science« (Nilsson 1924, 369, translation: Author). And fittingly Burkert (1991, 81) adds: »[This] is a traditional form of narrative, to be understood from its function within heroic tale, developed in Greece under the influence of oriental models.« As for evidence, Burkert (1991, 82) takes on a scene in the fifteenth book of the Iliad in which Hera reacts with amusement: »Hera's smiling is a hint on how the audience should react.« Burkert continues and proposes: »One may be tempted to say that gods are masks of an

oppressive superego« (ibid.), as religion is generally viewed »with awe in most civilizations« (ibid.) – emphasizing the same effect as what Nilsson indicates. This is, however, not meant as a »serious revolt« but rather a form of narrative, a »divine burlesque« (ibid.), giving a genuine narrative trick to the poet, helping to catch and hold the audience's attention by that which is »uncommon, amazing or thrilling« (ibid.).

¶12 Yet, indeed there are a lot of textual references showing that the conception of free will was different then. No decision in Homer happens within the human being. (cf. Sarischoulis 2008, 33f.) Voigt 1934 explicitly searched for concepts denoting »to consider« and/or »being indecisive«, suggesting the terms μερμήριξεν and ὁρμάινειν. In an analysis of the references of the words Voigt comes to the conclusion that μερμήριξεν is not so much used as to express the aspect of uncertainty of the thinker, but rather indecisiveness as an objective conflict (Sarischoulis 2008, 35). In a similar way ὁρμάινειν, which refers more to the emotional, denotes something different from our contemporary understanding of decision (»Entscheidung«). Concerning the term to decide (»Sich-Entscheiden«), Voigt does not find a corresponding term, so strictly speaking, there isn't even a term for »to choose«. In close semantic proximity we find ἀιρεῖν, αἱρεῖσθαι, however, both signify the taking of something (by itself) »*(Für-Sich-)Nehmen*« (ibid.).

¶13 In conclusion, Voigt denies any consciousness of personal freedom of Homeric man: »Human beings in Homer are not portrayed as responsible for their own deeds, neither in good or in bad, or in their own consciousness or in that of their fellow human beings« (Sarischoulis 2008, 39, translation: Author).

## Divination and decision making

¶14 Daniel Dennett in his 2006 (here quoted as Dennett 2007) case for a natural science of religion borrows from Jaynes and states that divination facilitates decision making, which is an asset in an ever more complex society. It can be seen as one of few merits of Dennett 2007 to engage a multitude of theories on religion (also from outside of peer reviewed science of religion discourse), and thoroughly discuss their explanatory value. Yet, not everybody may agree that Dennett 2007 does any good at all to the scientific study of religion (cf. Geertz 2008). An interesting example of his theoretical elaborations to be picked out, however, is the application of Jaynes' theory of divination.

¶15 He begins by adopting Jaynes' stance who proposed that when human groups were becoming larger in size and more complicated in structure, decision-making was becoming more complicated as well (Dennett 2007, 133). »Few things are more anxiety-provoking than not being able to decide what to do next or what to think about next« (Dennett 2009, 00:48:40). The people of that time, Dennett claims, solved this problem by *divination* (Dennett 2007, 132). Thus people can get rid of the burden of having to reason over choices. This might also work with flip-

ping coins, but in case of more momentous challenges flipping coins or the like would not be convincing, Dennett argues, so people resort to something more impressive, more ceremonial. (Dennett 2007, 133) Divination, or in Jaynes' words »exopsychic methods of thought or decision-making«, he argues,

> »could have risen in popularity simply because those who happened to do it liked the results enough to do it again, and again, and then others began to copy them, and it became the thing to do even though nobody really knew why« (ibid.).

¶16 According to Jaynes, Dennett emphasizes the idea of »randomness or chance« is of rather recent origin. Before, everything that happened was supposed to mean something, and the people needed to know what it meant. It was not so important to reason over the source of the information than it was to obtain that information, to believe that there is somebody somewhere who knows what is right and she or he is telling you (cf. 133f.). The invention of divination again happened in the dark as people did not know what they were doing as they used the free-floating rationale to create rituals »that permitted them [...] to ask their departed ancestors what to do next« (Dennett 2009, 00:49:22).

¶17 Dennett places this discussion into the chapter about the roots of religion, »Religion in the Early Days« (2007, 116ff.) giving his readers an account of how it all came about.

## Conclusive discussion

¶18 In this paper we have shown that Jaynes' theory of the emergence of consciousness is rested upon his interpretation of Ancient Greek religion, the people's understanding of soul, gods, minds and free will as revealed in the Iliad. For the most part of his work he reviewed philological and historical studies in order to make his point of Ancient Greek non-conscious societies. We have proceeded in similar fashion but also included contemporary studies of the philosophical debate of consciousness to engage his claims from another perspective. In the conclusive discussion we shall deepen one or the other discussion on the point to assess the value of Jaynes' theory for the study of religion.

¶19 The first problem addresses the scarcity of textual evidence. No other text of antiquity is as extensively discussed as the Iliad. References are made to the *Odyssey* (272ff.), the *Gilgamesh Epic* (251ff.), *Works and Days* (278ff.), and others but analyses, if any, remain on a superficial level, merely repeating what has already been said about the Iliad. Like in many other occasions, Jaynes was conscious of this weak spot and knew how to defend it. In anticipation he states that with the Iliad we have the »first writing in human history in a language of which we have enough certainty of translation« (Jaynes 2000, 68). What exactly is meant by certainty of translation is neither explained nor hinted at. We are unable to judge whether philologists are in much less command of the language of the textual evidences found in the Odyssey, Works and Days, the Gilgamesh Epic, and, in need of more

elaborate argumentation, we assume, Jaynes was neither. Further, if indeed ancient people had such a fundamentally different kind of mentality, shouldn't it even reflect more vividly and richly in more writings of that time? Shouldn't we be able to point at a much deeper but also greater variety of linguistic and cultural items of that kind?

¶20 The second problem raises the question: What is it that Jaynes wants to explain about consciousness? What is his explanandum? To establish the background on which to discuss this question we refer to Block 1997 and 2007. Here he narrows down the problem to two concepts of consciousness, i.e. phenomenal consciousness (P-consciousness) and access-consciousness (A-consciousness). P-consciousness, Block argues, cannot be defined in »any remotely noncircular way«, and the best you can do for it is »*point* to the phenomenon« (1997, 380). The *pointing at*, however, has to be conducted properly, in Block's sense it can be achieved »via rough synonyms« (ibid.),

> »P-consciousness is experience. P-consciousness properties are experiential properties. P-conscious states are experiential states – that is, a state is P-conscious just in case it initiates experiential properties. The totality of the experiential properties instantiated in a state are ›what it is like‹ to have it« (Block 2007, 276).

¶21 Examples of that are the states that are present »when we see, hear, smell, taste, and have pains« (ibid.). The controversial part begins when we differ those P-conscious properties from »any cognitive, intentional, or functional property« (Block 1997, 381). P-consciousness Block claims, is that which »has seemed such a scientific mystery« (ibid.). Chalmers (1996) even refers to this as the ›hard problem of consciousness‹ (also see Thomas Nagel 1979 below), distinguished from the easy problems which refer to the function of consciousness. Still, there are attempts to solve this problem from a neurophysiological perspective (e.g. Crick and Koch 1990). The second concept of consciousness, A-consciousness, is to be kept separate from P-consciousness. By access-consciousness Block understands mental states which have a content that is

> »(1) poised to be used freely as a premise in reasoning, according to the capabilities of the reasoner, (2) poised to be used freely for control of action. In the case of language-using organisms such as ourselves, a major symptom of access-consciousness would be *reportability*« (Block 2007, 144).

¶22 In other words, access-conscious states are states whose contents can be used by an organism to control reasoning, language and behavior (cf. ibid., Block 2007, 164).

¶23 Let us dwell a bit more on the fascinating notion of P-consciousness. Thomas Nagel (1979, 166) famously argued that on a basic level when an organism has conscious experience »there is something that it is like to *be* that organism«. This *what it is like* quality, however, is a most elusive thing, and certainly not a clear notion (cf. Wilkes 1984, 224). Seemingly accessible only by first person perspective it appears to be somewhat detached from the physical structures of the mind. There seems to be an *explanatory gap* (Levine 1983) between what happens physi-

cally and conscious experience. To highlight the gravity of the problem, we could concoct a being which is »physically identical to [us] (or to any other conscious being), but lacking conscious experiences altogether« (Chalmers 1996, 94). Despite whether or not *philosophical zombies* exist, the notion may at least be conceptually coherent – enough, it is argued, to keep up the attack on physicalism (cf. ibid., 94ff.). Philosophers call those entities philosophical zombies, or just *zombies*, and by definition »[t]here is nothing it is like to be a zombie« (ibid., 95).

¶24 So what do we have in Jaynes? Access- or phenomenal-consciousness? He claims that Greeks did not feel anything inside (84), but it still remains debatable whether that is to say the Ancient Greeks did not have P-consciousness. Some people argue this is not of interest for Jaynes, as he seems to be more concerned with self-consciousness than with phenomenal consciousness (or P-consciousness). (Chalmers 1996, 30) Others again argue that there is something *it is like to be unconscious*, so there are no *Greek zombies* (cf. Sleutels 2006) in Chalmers' sense after all. Williams (2010, 10) claims that »a bicameral mind is phenomenally-conscious but not access-conscious«, and this seems to explain best what we have here, as there is a mind to perceive mentally but that »mental content is not accessible for conscious access, voluntary control, or rational articulation« (ibid.). The crucial question as Williams puts it, »is whether it is plausible that our human ancestors could have lacked consciousness proper« while having access to phenomenal contents and being able to engage in »an elaborate behavioral repertoire of complex cultural phenomena, including speech, religion, tools, problem solving, writing, etc.« (ibid.).

¶25 The third problem refers to Jaynes' too strong interpretation of the absence of »proper« terms.

¶26 As we have shown by reference of the works of Metzinger and Wilkes, consciousness (and mind) are not necessary categories of a language. One may feel puzzled by the fact that many cultures have not found it important to devise a word for the concept. As was shown in reference to Bremmer (1983, 66), however, we must accept that even if there should not be a term in Homeric Greek which signifies consciousness or the psychic whole, it does not necessarily follow that it was not communicable, not to mention that the thing itself – whatever it may be – did not exist. According to his most renowned critic, Ned Block (1981), Jaynes has done exactly that: he confused the phenomenon with the name of the phenomenon or the concept of it. This is to say that even if his analysis was correct then all he could relate to is the arrival of the concept a few hundreds of years ago, and not the phenomenon. Considering that Jaynes' conclusion rests on the lack of a proper term we must concur with Block, and again point at the fact that the term in German or English is not even 400 hundred years old.

¶27 The fourth problem points at the fact that Jaynes favors a biased interpretation of the anthropomorphism displayed in the presentation of the Ancient Greek pantheon. We have seen that there is a long history of discussions about the nature

of the Homeric gods, and the problem of free will. Jaynes exploits this debate to make a case for his bicameral theory. However, we are talking about literature here, not about empirical data. The Iliad may contain hints which reflect a different kind of mentality in antiquity, but how can we be sure this peculiarity is not due to this kind of literature? This piece has gone through stages of development, beginning as oral tradition until it arrived in that textual form Jaynes and we discuss today (cf. Patzek 2003, 41-59). As we have seen above, Burkert establishes a coherent approach on how to understand these Greek gods. He does so without postulating an outlandishly different mentality, but by referring to the style of narrative.

¶28 We may then understand the Iliad as a document which shows the same narrative tricks that also work today. Consider Boyer 1994 and his notion of a *cognitive optimum* (e.g. 121), which suggests »certain combinations of intuitive and counter-intuitive claims [to] constitute a cognitive optimum, in which a concept is both learnable and nonnatural.« In this way, the gods of the Iliad may have simply contributed to the »catching and holding of attention« as explained by Burkert before, and as possibly supported by such a theory of a cognitive optimum of narratives.

¶29 To add yet another, more recent take on Jaynes, we shall bring Brian Boyd's 2009 publication *The Origin of Stories – Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Similar to what was suggested above, he states that we should not confuse our folk terminology with »definite features of mind«, which are in need of a revision that »only scientific psychology can make possible« (Boyd 2009, 256). Further, Boyd speculates that perhaps the opposite of what Jaynes claims could be the case. Jaynes saw the presence of the Olympian gods as a confirmation of the »absence of a modern mind or at least a modern notion of mind« (Boyd 2009, 281). One might actually turn the claim on its head: »Religion plays such a prominent role for Homer and his characters precisely because they have a fully human sense of mind« (ibid.). The human need to read the intentions and desires of other people results from the fact that it may make »the most dramatic difference to our chances and choices day by day«. Thus, »our understanding of other minds has evolved into our richest natural mental capacity« (ibid.). It is this mental faculty which we find represented in so many colorful ways in Homer's Iliad; and it is religion, we shall agree, which shows best what modern mind Ancient Greek men must have had.

¶30 Let us close our discussion by making some remarks regarding Dennett's application of Jaynes. A thorough assessment of the theory requires another scope, and certainly a different preparation to begin with, thus we will solely graze the limits and chances of Jaynes' theory for the scientific study of religion. For both Jaynes and Dennett the practice of divination is to be understood as a formula to cope with the continuing challenge in facing the possibilities that are offered to society each and every day. This seems to resonate thematically with a plethora of theories proposing ever new examples of religion as a strategy to cope with contingency (Religion als Kontingenzbewältigung). The examples given by Jaynes and Dennett, however, are highly changeable. Dennett quotes from sections on divination in

Mesopotamia but it could well have been taken from anywhere else in the history of religion. As Dennett points out, the basic function of divination is this: »to pass the buck«; and if you need to pass it, »pass it to something that can't duck the responsibility in turn, and that can be held responsible if things don't go well« (Dennett 2007, 133). Passing the buck or »flipping a coin« works with a multitude of objects, so that essentially belomancy, rhabdomancy, haruspicy and so forth are the same (132f.). Certainly, such a »free floating rationale« (133) will have a social function which can be investigated, but we do need to care about how it was embedded culturally! The claim of a universal cognitive function may well begin by such a Jaynesian »just-so story« (Dennett 1998, 125), but the debate need not end there. So why the unwillingness to provide more examples? Both do not care much for connecting the specific divinatory practice to its cultural environment. And it does not even seem as if they needed to: while Jaynes uses religion to make plausible his ideas of the origin consciousness, Dennett, on the other hand, follows the old and trodden path to display religion as a philosophy of need: in accordance with radical criticism of religion discourse, where religiosity is only practiced in order to compensate for the shortcomings in life (cf. Lübbe 2004, 144).

¶31 This is not to say that Dennett and Jaynes are not right in their observations, and divination could indeed be a universal concept of human religious culture, and could perhaps be best explained in terms of coping with contingency. Yet, as long as the debate shuns the reconciliation of cognitive *and* cultural accounts, we are fobbed off by mere just-so stories, and our testing of the theory has already shown some fundamental deficits. To establish an understanding of religion that both satisfies cultural specificity, and at the same time agrees with, and is informed by, the cognitive sciences is a daring and intriguing attempt. One might argue that in his thorough preparation of neurological and psychological facts about human life, and his way of presenting those facts as the foundation of the relation of man to god(s), Jaynes delivered an early attempt of a cognitive science of religion. But just as with many contemporary studies of that kind he (and Dennett no less) makes the mistake of merely presenting one account of the functions of religious practice. We shall conclude by stating that with support of a strong focus on cultural studies and a much wider scope of samples, cognitive accounts of this kind may well deliver a powerful working hypothesis in the scientific study of religion.

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