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- [UFOs](#)
- [Paranormal](#)
- [People](#)
- [Places](#)
- [Area 51](#)
- [Random](#)
- [Top 100](#)
- [Catalog](#)
- [What's New](#)

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- Page Contents
- Book Title/Author

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Book Catalog

The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind

By [Julian Jaynes](#)

Our Price: **\$18.00**

Our Item Code: **JulianJaynes**

Postage Code: [book2](#)

495 Pages, Trade Paperback

Cover Size: 6 x 9 inches

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Date: 1978 (reprinted 1990)

ISBN: 0-395-56352-6

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From the Book Cover

At the heart of this book is the revolutionary idea that human consciousness did not begin far back in animal evolution but is a learned process brought into being out of an earlier hallucinatory mentality by cataclysm and catastrophe only 3000 years ago and still developing. The implications of this new scientific paradigm extend into virtually every aspect of our psychology, our history and culture, our religion—and indeed, our future. In the words of one reviewer, it is "a humbling text, the kind that reminds most of us who make our livings through thinking, how much thinking there is left to do."

JULIAN JAYNES teaches psychology at Princeton University.

"When Julian Jaynes . . . speculates that until late in the second millennium B.C. men had no consciousness but were automatically obeying the voices of gods, we are astounded but compelled to follow this remarkable thesis through all the corroborative evidence . . ."

--John Updike, in [The New Yorker](#)

"This book and this man's ideas may be the most influential, not to say controversial, of the second half of the twentieth century. It renders whole shelves of books obsolete."

--William Harrington, in [Columbus Dispatch](#)

"Having just finished The Origin of Consciousness, I myself feel something like Keats' Cortez staring at the Pacific, or at least like the early reviewers of Darwin or Freud. I'm not quite sure what to make of this new territory; but its expanse lies before me and I am startled by its power."

--Edward Profitt, in [Commonweal](#)

"He is as startling as Freud was in The Interpretation of Dreams, and Jaynes is equally adept at forcing a new view of known human behavior."

--Raymond Headlee, in [American Journal of Psychiatry](#)

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General Links

- [Notes on Julian Jaynes](#) - By Cosma Rohilla Shalizi <11/8/97 #1>
"The rest of the book is devoted to the rather bizarre theory that, prior to about 1000 B.C., consciousness did not exist, but rather everyone went around in a ``bicameral" condition, hallucinating the voices of the gods and their parents out of one of their cerebral hemispheres, which gave orders to the other."
- [Julian Jaynes: Too Visionary for College Professors](#) <12/8/97 #2>
- [Julian Jaynes Dead at 77](#) - Press release - Published: 11/25/98 - Source: Princeton University <2/21/98 #3>
"After making significant contributions to the study of animal behavior and ethology, he turned his attention to the riddle of human consciousness and became best known for his provocative book, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind, a nominee for the National Book Award in 1978."
 - [Large photo on Jaynes](#) (181k) <2/21/98 #3.1>
- [*The Julian Jaynes Society](#) - The primary goal of the Julian Jaynes Society is to foster discussion and a better understanding of the life, work, and theories of Julian Jaynes. <6/25/98 #5>
- [Catasrophism](#) - This page puts Jaynes into a larger context and provides a few more related links. - Supportive <5/21 #6>

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Reader Comments

Regarding "The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind" -
Latest First

Jaynes on oracles

As a scholar interested in Jaynes's theories I would be very grateful if someone could give me a more complete description of the following study: D. C. Stove«The Oracles and their cessation: A tribute to Julian Jaynes», Encounter April 1989, pp. 30-38. (What volume? number? publishing house, etc. With thanks.

-- Claude Savary (claude_savary@uqtr.quebec.ca) 6/16/99 (#5)

Jaynes is/was a visionary

Just like to add my two cents. I used Jaynes' theory of how consciousness is a constant interplay of ever changing metaphor, much like figurative language in poetry. I was inspired by such a notion--that identity/self consciousness is like a poem, unstable, connotative, open to creation and recreation--and tried to use it to explain British Romanticism, Wordsworth's Intimations Ode especially. I just want to add that Jaynes was a great inspiration to my thought, and it's wonderful to see a web site for him. He was an original thinker, and not afraid to make huge interdisciplinary connections.

-- pnolan (pnolan@coryphaeus.com) 7/19/98 (#4)

Michael Persinger

Those interested in current research along the lines of Jaynes' work should look up Michael Persinger. His book "A Neuropsychological Basis for God Beliefs" sheds a lot of technical light on Jaynes' theory. It does not indicate that he is at all aware of Jaynes' work, however.

-- root mugwort 6/2/98 (#3)

Since you noted on your webpage you were looking for a home page for Julian Jaynes, I assume you have not heard that he died. I went to the Princeton Home Page to look him up, and there was information stating that he died on Nov. 21 of a stroke. If you want more info, go to Princeton.edu and do a search on his name.

-- Carol Stwalley (stwalley@aol.com) 2/21/98 (#2)

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