

Episode Fifty-Eight - The Mind's Direct Receipt of Images

Post by “Julia” of May 19, 2024 at 8:30 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

By defining "consciousness" narrowly or broadly, two speakers using the same word can talk right past each other.

I agree. Choice of words and their respective definition matters a lot here.

[Quote from Don](#)

It also strikes me as similar to the discredited idea of the "trine brain" (reptile/mammal/human) that Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett (among others) has done such a good job debunking.

Please note I'm not trying to argue from the bottom up (neurons → mental phenomena → behaviour) but I am arguing top down (behaviour → mental phenomena) and I leave the neurons out of the picture entirely; they're still really a black box to us today. Some neuroscientists and science journalists love to make it seem as though we have it all figured out, but in reality we barely understand the first things.

As such, when I say things like “autopilot”, I do not envision a literal cluster of neurons acting on its own, bypassing all other processing to directly control the physical limbs. Rather, I am referring to a mental phenomenon, a state of mind.

I have extensive, direct personal experience with a wide range of mentally ill (ill, as in: inherently suffering or inherently causing suffering in others) and mentally divergent (divergent, as in: straying far from the average without suffering inherently caused by it) people, diagnosed with all sorts of things: addiction, depression, acute schizophrenia, severe personality disorders, mental symptoms of neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative diseases, you name it. With that understanding, please do note my distillate wasn't "Ancient Greeks were Schizophrenics"; instead, what I said was:

[Quote from Julia](#)

In some ways, ancient minds worked considerably different from ours.

Now, am I trying to cop-out? Not really: Regarding Jaynes (whom I didn't bring up), if the very ancient minds (Homer, not Epicurus) were schizophrenics, there would have been chaos, and it

doesn't make sense in several other ways. However, this doesn't negate the underlying idea that they were somehow qualitatively different from us. If I were forced to put a single word to it, I'd say *very* ancient minds were dissociative (which implies being much-less introspective, and is a sort of "geocentric vs solarcentric" distinction, when before the assumption was a flat earth). However, dissociation is quite hard to grasp for laypeople, requires rather verbose explanations (because it is so foreign from common everyday experience); by using only a single word, it is necessarily a simplification, and as such in turn easily gives rise to half-true analogies and half-true associations to fill the gaps. That is why I prefer the qualitative description of "their minds worked quite differently from ours" (unless I'm talking to someone well-versed in psychology lingo to begin with *and* who knows how I define my terms) and try to illustrate it by saying "they might have actually heard 'muses' speak to them" - but weren't able to conceive of them as originating from their own brains (that would be akin to introspection), nor did they consider them to be as real as the ground they stand on (that would be akin to schizophrenia), instead they speak of "divine afflatus" or other things along the lines of new-age "channelling" in a similarly casual way as they speak of dreams - that is in itself noteworthy. Furthermore, a very similar oddity occurs in dissociative humans, who lack cultural input to develop better concepts (or have been fed false ones). With nature deities (thunder gods, ...) being an accepted part of everyday life, it would be much less outlandish for contemporaries of Homer to think of 'muses' speaking to them, than to think of the voice they hear as originating from 'another self residing besides them inside the same brain', an accurate description some, even today, erroneously consider outlandish. During Epicurus' time, this would have been in the process of changing for quite a while, with presumably low-ranking slaves lacking behind and the relatively rich and wealthy (such as, for the most part, our philosophers) leading in the development.

(For those who this is intriguing to: In response to recent changes in modern day society, mostly the ubiquitous internet access, a weird wave of collective mental shifts is currently happening in the Empty Spaces (no, not the Pink Floyd song 😊), leaving people increasingly disengendered, disembodied, and ultimately dehumanised; oddly enough, it doesn't appear to inherently cause any suffering. Personally, I've put this phenomenon on my watch list for the coming decades.)

I'm not entirely sure this offers more answers as it raises questions, but having typed all this makes me want to hit [Reply] so here we go 😊