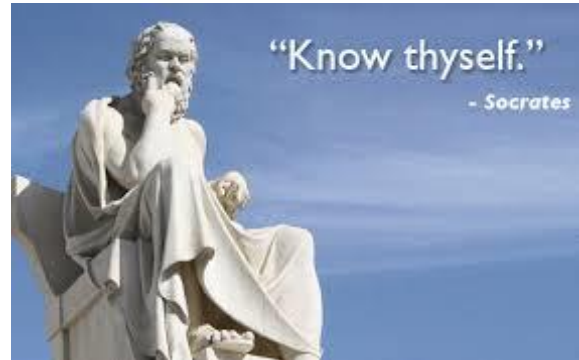


7. Masculinity has self-knowledge

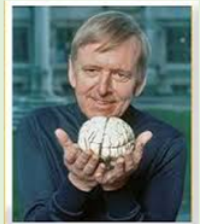
A most harmful consequence of pride is *thinking we are conscious* of our motivations, when in reality most of the time we are not. In fact, we are not even aware of many of our own very perceptions. We take for granted that we “know” what’s coming through our senses, but this is to over-estimate the power of the conscious mind. In fact, most of what we perceive in our virtual worlds is nonsense. This insight is not new to theologians and philosophers, and now it is well-established scientifically, making its way into brain research literature and textbooks.



“Our behavior can be guided by perceptions of which we have no conscious awareness.”
- Physiology of Behavior, 11th Edition, Neil R. Carlson.

Consciousness is a much smaller part of our mental life than we are conscious of, because we cannot be conscious of what we are not conscious of. How simple that is to say, how difficult to appreciate! It is like asking a flashlight in a dark room to search around for something that does not have any light shining upon it. The flashlight, since there is light in whatever direction it turns, would have to conclude that there is light everywhere. And so consciousness can seem to pervade all mentality when actually it does not.

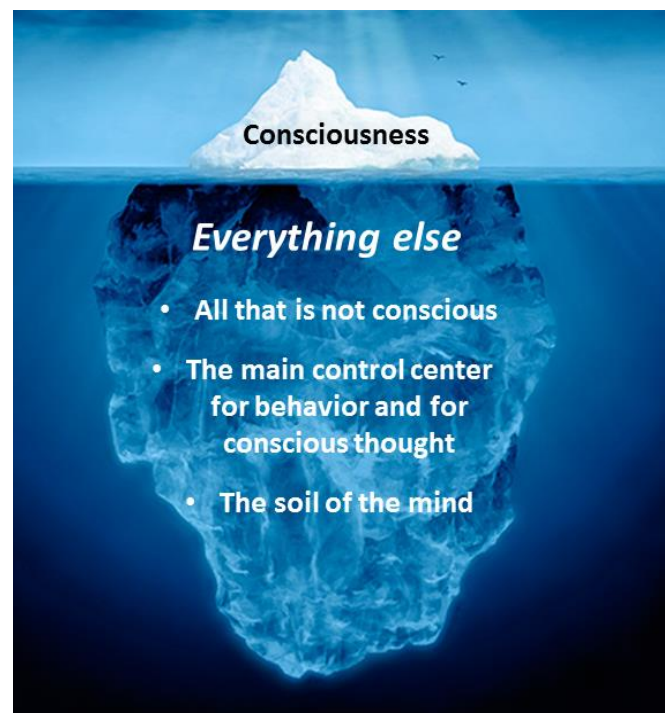
-Julian Jaynes



Because we are not conscious of many of our motivations, and furthermore blinded by pride, we must be rigorously disciplined in making observations and deducing, rather than purely speculating, what is actually driving us.

When speaking of the mind, the unsettling consensus among neurologists and philosophers today is that the conscious portion is merely the tip of iceberg.

To be humble is to acknowledge the power of all the activity that is under the level of conscious thought. If we don’t, then we make the mistake of thinking we know why we’re doing something when in reality we do not. People who work in the marketing industry are well aware of this fact, and they are highly skilled at manipulating the public to choose their products without us noticing. Whenever we are not vigilantly aware, we are vulnerable to being controlled by someone or something else. Furthermore, as we become more dependent on the technologies that have



enabled the accelerating move toward virtual living, and as we become too busy with virtual concerns, we observe and notice less of what comes through our senses, less of what is actually occurring in the physically real world of sensation. This is making us easier to control, since non-violent abstract directives can now be used effectively in place of physical force.

Think about it. How many times have you driven home from work while talking on the phone or listening to the radio, and suddenly you are at home, not remembering the actual drive at all? Or, you got up to go into the other room, while you were thinking of something else, only to arrive in the other room completely forgetting why you went there? Maybe it was to get your phone charger. No harm is done, just strange. Now imagine it wasn't your phone charger, it was a tool you needed to repair your roof as storm clouds were rushing in. Certainly you would be less likely to forget. In fact, in the more real world of the past, on a regular basis you would need to be more in touch with your sensory environment and would need to be acting

Marketers are doing their jobs, and many of us are aware that we are unaware of their influence, and we accept this for what it is. No problem. However, we can ask, "Besides our purchasing choices, in what other ways are being manipulated without our conscious recognition, and who or what are the manipulators?" As we conform to a world that is increasingly more manmade, virtual, and scripted for sameness; our real lives, what we are actually doing as opposed to what we *think* we are doing, are more susceptible than ever to being controlled by forces - a parasitic power - of which we generally unaware. As long as we fail to practice conscious free will in the pursuit of our rational interests, we are vulnerable to externally programmed control. We can see many examples of how this type of power arrangement operates.

First Example: *Dicrocoelium dendriticum* (Lancet Fluke)

The Lancet Fluke is a parasite that has acquired through evolution the ability to find its way into an ant's brain and direct the ant to climb to the top of grass blades where it can be most easily eaten by a sheep or cow. It turns out that this particular parasite can reproduce only inside the stomach of a sheep or cow, so this is how it benefits from the ant's self-destructive behavior.



Second Example: *Toxoplasma Gondii*

Like the Lancet Fluke, *T. Gondii* is a parasite that is capable of changing the behavior of its host. *T. Gondii*'s adaptation is that it can hijack the nervous system of a mouse to make it behave fearlessly out in the open, where it becomes an easy meal for cats. It makes sense, because this parasite reproduces only inside the stomach of



felines. This ability enhances *T. Gondii*'s fitness to survive, and the adaptation is replicated to the next generation.

Third Example: Organized Religion

In this example, organized religion is the parasite and humans are the host. Like in the examples above, the parasite has acquired the adaptation of being able to control the behavior of its host for its own reproductive benefit. However, instead of propagating genes by sexual reproduction spanning generations, this parasite evolves through the deployment of seductive memes (packets of information transmitted between people by language, symbols, gestures, imitation, and customs) that are activated immediately and that direct the host's behavior whenever the host is vulnerable. The memes that have the best fitness are those that successfully persuade human host that it will benefit, and that these benefits are worth a degree of self-sacrifice. In these cases, it is common for the host (human) to engage in missions, traveling near and far, risking one's own life, to spread the memes of a particular religion. In extreme cases, the parasite (the religion) succeeds in persuading the host to commit suicide while murdering members of the parasite's competitors, thus greatly increasing the parasite's reproductive success.



If this is new to you, it may take a while for this to sink in. How can we compare organized religion, which is technically an abstract ideology that alters the behavior of humans, to a parasite like *T. Gondii* or the Lancet Fluke, which are real organisms that can be sensed? Actually, that's the point. Humans have the unique ability to change their behavior, or to have their behavior controlled, by memes that arise from beliefs, which are abstractions, not sensed. So a system like organized religion (or even our entire culture, as I argue in the fourth example) is evolving in the same way that a real, tangible species evolves, following the same rules as normal Darwinian evolution. The organism that has undergone a change in its genes that makes it more fit to survive and reproduce will flourish and pass these new genes on to the next generation. Likewise, the virtual system (organized religion, in this example) that has undergone a change in its memes that makes it more marketable/attractive, even (especially!) non-consciously, will transmit those memes from person to person, thus flourishing, growing, and continuing to evolve to its benefit, as long as the host does not reject this change and as long as the host survives long enough for the parasite to reproduce. So a parasitic system of concepts, like a real biological parasite, is a natural phenomenon. It's how nature works. (It would take conscious acts of free will to counter the natural self-destructive actions of a human host when it is infected with a fundamentally self-interested, non-human, short-sighted, and non-conscious parasite). The examples above are courtesy of still-living philosopher Daniel Dennett. For further elaboration, please refer to his books and many lectures.

Fourth example: Our Culture as a Parasite – Next Chapter

Note: As stated previously, the scope of this work is observations, patterns of observations, and a comparison of these patterns to values. My main thesis is that the pattern of observations reveals that the lack of masculinity is allowing harm to life and liberty. The postulation that there is a parasitic power that benefits from this harm is secondary, intended only as a plausible means of explaining how this can happen.

Let your conscience be your guide. But what does that mean?

As long as we are “too busy” or “too tired” we are not doing extra hard work – slowing down, observing carefully, reading more, introspecting - taking the time and energy to examine deeply whether or not our activities are actually benefiting ourselves, our wives, and our children, if we have them; or whether we are strengthening some other agent(s) under whose control we may be; and ultimately causing harm to others.

I’m not a saint. I’m motivated by fear, because I’m flawed, and not living in some type of idyllic fear-free paradise. Yes, fear can be a good motivator. Fear is a physiological reaction that can be felt and observed. When the fear is present but we are not consciously aware of it, fear can *rule* us, as it does in our culture today – most often as the fear of being seen as a “loser”, or of not “fitting in”. On the other hand, some fears – even those that don’t have anything to do with an immediate threat to survival – can be good. Fear of feeling guilty can be good when it springs forth from a “good conscience” that has been deliberately cultivated by humbly and rationally choosing patterns of behaviors and thoughts that are “good”, which for this discussion will be defined as a form of Humanism, “that which benefits ALL humans, and ALL of life.” When I am motivated by the fear of guilt, rather than the desire to be *perceived/branded* as selfless, there is no impulse to draw attention to my good deeds, nor to make a special effort to divert attention away from them – because it has *nothing* to do with admiration, or image, or anyone else. It is simply a matter between a solitary man and his conscience (or God, as some would say).

By avoiding the pain of guilt, we are still true to our nature as pleasure-seekers; but here comes the hard part: Conscience is not always a “good” guide. Pride gets in the way.

1. Psychologist Nathaniel Brandon, who was Ayn Rand’s lover, gave accounts of hard-working people who took so much pride in believing the anti-altruism message of Objectivism (an over-reaction to the deathly power abuses of Communism), that some of them reported feeling guilty whenever they lent a helping hand to someone else.
2. Hard-working Nazi concentration camp guards who were blinded by racial and national pride (an over-reaction to the unspeakable horrors experienced in post-WWI Germany) also reported feelings of guilt if they momentarily felt compassion for their holocaust victims.

These two examples of pride-based conscience-cultivation by anti-social behavior and ideology may sound strange or extreme, but we would be negligent if we did not inquire whether this might be happening today. I say it does.

3. A hard-working man today feels pride too, in how he lives, and how he escapes. “Follow your conscience” is not enough, because it is influenced unconsciously by good or bad forces, behaviors, and thoughts. By surrounding himself by men who feel the feel and think as he does; his conscience will learn that it is normal, and no guilt is felt – just like the Objectivists and Nazi’s in the examples above.

It is up to us to investigate deeply - to resist escapes and the comfort of large groups – and to observe, read, introspect, investigate, think, etc; then finally to choose good thoughts and behaviors over bad ones. Only after a man has dedicated himself to this type of work can he let his conscience (and fear of guilt) be his guide. This work is free will in action.....literally for *goodness* sake. The less we exercise our free will this way, the easier we can be controlled.