

Julian Jaynes (1920-1997)

His cultural-historical work suggests that the onset of linguistic metaphor circa 1200BC signals the transition from one kind of mind to another. Word like decide and think—as Descartes and James—used them would not have been in use until after this transition. Jaynes thinks that people used to hear voices that told them what to do until some began to think and decide for themselves.

Jaynes supposes that linguistic metaphor allowed for the possibility of a merging of two hitherto separate mental components.

Which comes first, the linguistic concept that allows for a whole new range of mental activities, or the mind that is able to grasp the concept and/or coin the necessary new words for it? I take the latter view, but the issue seems unimportant regardless of how it is decided.

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Source: Kuijsten, Marcel (2006) *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness, Julian Jaynes's Bicameral Mind Theory Revisited*. Julian Jaynes Society, Henderson, NV. A compendium of the thinking of Julian Jaynes and others, edited by Marcel Kuijsten.