

## Foundations of Learning II

### *The Gods that Inhabit Us and Anoetic Consciousness*

In the last article, we discussed how your perception and experience of the world depends on your frame of relevance, what matters to you. We introduced how the world is populated by things we either understand, order, or things we don't understand, chaos. Let's now examine the forces that are in us that help us learn and act in this world - aims, desires - **how we engage**.

**F**RAMES TO AIMS - Old myths, fables and stories, including the stories in the Bible, represent thousands of years of humans observing ourselves - watching ourselves act out our lives, observing the patterns over the years. Since we act out things that we do not always understand, we can learn much from watching our actions. We are a driver of a very complicated vehicle and sometimes we don't understand that vehicle very well. We don't understand consciousness hardly at all. Yet that is how we engage in the world.

We are not always in control of our actions, especially when we are gripped by some emotion. The ancient peoples explained many of our actions saying that it was the gods that inhabits us. When we are angry, Mars, the god of anger, is inhabiting us and acting through us. He can act through anyone, including animals.

People can know things and act them out which they cannot articulate. Have you ever had an argument with someone who then got angry. Then they cried, and then they figured out what they were angry about. And it wasn't what the argument was about. How weird is that? Where did that come from? Crying accessed what?

Where do thoughts come from? Do these emotions and thoughts just well up from inside our bodies? What do emotions have to do with what is inside of us? We have this articulated space that we can understand, talk about and think we live in. However, just outside of that is something that is more akin to an emotional dream that we are embedded in that gives rise to our thoughts and emotions and many of our actions. Outside of that dream is what we don't know anything about at all, chaos.



**P**HAINESTHAI - *TO APPEAR or shine forth* - In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, various thinkers, philosophers and psychologists shaped our understanding of ourselves. Freud started popularizing the idea of the unconscious mind - your perceptions, actions, thoughts are all informed and shaped by unconscious motivations that are not part of your voluntary control. Psychoanalysts see us as a loose collection of personalities. Piaget sought to understand our psyche by watching children as they developed, positing that our psychological evolution unfolds in their development. Jung looked into our dreams . Dreams can be viewed as the birthplace of myths as well as our thoughts. Thoughts have a developmental origin. Even to say something like I am conscious is amazing, Chimpanzees don't say that. **Thoughts shine forth.** Music, art, dreams share the same realm that is both within and outside of us. Dreams can tell us

something you don't know. How the hell can that be? It's frightening to think that things are happening that control you... instead of the other way around.

We act out things we don't understand. We learn things we do not semantically understand. Certainly a bit more understanding of consciousness, engagement and learning will help us with our clients - even if we don't understand everything about it, we are beginning to learn more.



**A**NOETIC CONSCIOUSNESS - Jaak Panksepp, with his research in affective neuroscience, has helped further shine that light on our conscious states. In ski instruction circles, we often talk about the “here and now” state of being, being present, mindful. Panksepp and other call this anoetic consciousness. It is not a ‘knowing/thinking’ conscious. The important point of anoetic consciousness is that it is highly affective (emotions). This is a level of consciousness that many athletes access for performance. It is also a very primal consciousness and is what gives birth to higher levels of consciousness. It is body-brain/affect, not “mind”. This is where we can learn, where we lay down memories, without even knowing that we are learning. This IS necessary for higher levels of understanding. In teaching, interrupting or interfering with this state delays learning in our clients. Timing is everything regarding ‘understanding’. First the foundation of anoetic consciousness, then as the learner is ready, noetic and autoanoetic consciousness - (as Horst says, first pants, then shoes... )

We act out things that we don't understand. We can learn things that we do not knowingly, semantically understand. We are awesome and complicated beings and understanding more of our structure can help us learn and help others learn to ski and ride.

### **Consciousness is how we are engage in the world.**

**A**IMS - WE engage in the world. We act things out. We are mobile creatures. Where are we going? Anoetic consciousness is affect and body oriented. It is part of a circuitry in the very primitive and powerful structures in our brain, the hypothalamus -which is a center of our primary incentive-reward system, the dopaminergic system that **moves us forward**. We will always have an aim, whether we are consciously aware of it or not. It seems best to know what that aim is and help create it...



**Our aims, our desires not only frame our world, governing our perception, but they also direct our consciousness - direct our engagement in the world.**

Learning is a natural result of our primitive brain circuitry that leads us to be curious, to explore, to move and to play. The incredible work of the hypothalamus. Survival... **AIMS!**

How do we work with our primitive motivating circuits and help them become integrated with our higher levels of consciousness? How do we help our clients do this?

People learn when they are engaged. Aims, desires, outcomes are what engage people - their own aims, and desires. People engage through their consciousness. Anoetic consciousness first.

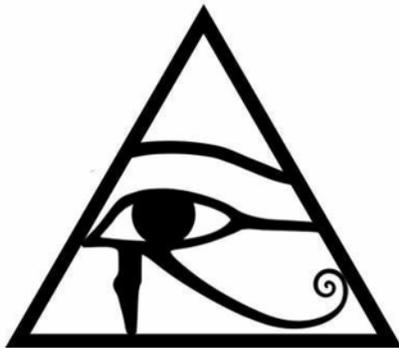
Anoetic consciousness is a precursor of higher levels of noetic consciousness where we can share articulated speech, where we can “know” and “understand”. However, it is always the aim, the target that will motivate and moves us towards a valued goals. In the previous article, we shared how positive emotion from dopamine is only in response to perceived progress towards a valued goal, not attaining the goal, but progress towards one. We always need to have a target!

**M**ARDUK - THIS means that our clients can learn without understanding what they are doing. They can process information and work with it consciously, but not knowingly. Understanding comes **after** the experience. Such understanding should be connected to an aim, a target, an outcome instead of complicated details of movements. This is the skills concept. It allows people to learn based on how they are wired. Where am I going, how fast? The ski is the tool, so what is the ski doing....We can help our clients the most if we become like Marduk or Horus in the old Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths - eyes all around and speaking magic words.



Timing is everything - there is a time to watch and listen and allow people to learn. There is a time, when they begin to articulate and ask, to augment their own internal awareness and experience. We need to start working with our clients in their here and now. We need to come into their world and then help them make order out of the chaos that they are encountering. They will speak up and tell us when. We help them. It's not our world, but we do know more and can help them decide what objects in their world will help them attend to, what are “doable” targets and what things can be ignored. Bit by bit, but always allowing them to experience their world.

Noetic understanding is not a pre-requisite for learning to ski, anoetic understanding is. We need to stop short-circuiting it!



**Understanding that we are incredible beings** is what helps us watch, listen and help others. If you are a Darwinian, you might say, “we have fearfully and wonderfully evolved”. If you are religious, you might say, “we are fearfully and wonderfully made.” There is so much we still don't understand and it's so cool to learn more and to ski!

**(Next up will be how the body is mapped on the brain and how this can help us help others learn snowsports.)**