

Daily Life with Christ-64. Understanding brain addictions (4)—God does not have a brain-1 (no cognitive unconscious).



My assertion that God does not have a brain enables me to make several points regarding brain addictions, and at the same time address some fundamental misunderstandings among contemporary Christians who mistakenly have anthropomorphic and anthropopathic views of God. Given that believers live, partake, and thrive in God by proper knowledge and proper love, a correct view of God is paramount.

Our studies of the human brain have included five areas: (1) the cognitive unconscious, (2) the conscious, (3) the prefrontal cortex, (4) the pleasure center of the nucleus accumbens, and (5) the dopamine-producing ventral tegmental area (VTA).

Not only does God not have a brain with the three parts we have discussed (thinking in prefrontal cortex, feeling in nucleus accumbens, cravings in VTA), He does not have a twofold mental life like human beings (unconscious and conscious). Let us first consider the cognitive unconscious in this essay. As I have noted, the largest part of the human cognitive life is the unconscious; the cognitive unconscious processes about 10 million bits of information a second whereas the conscious mind can only process about 40 bits of information a second. Moreover, the cognitive unconscious part of our “minds” is not verbal. It is biochemical and is made up all of all kinds of urges from patterns that we have picked up and developed since childhood. These are patterns of likes and dislikes and include not only include basic urges for sex and food, they also include patterns of likes and dislikes regarding God, politics, and various social issues.

Without realizing it, every person has strong unconscious likes or dislikes about certain kinds of people and things, penchants that constantly nudge or even shove the conscious mind to find reasons to justify these urges. We have deep and salient irrational feelings that profoundly influence our rationality. These feelings even have the power to “bribe” the conscious by offering rationalistic excuses. I think we all know what it is like to do something we know on a conscious rational level to be wrong because of a deep irrational and even destructive desire, but we do it anyway and often justify the activity on a conscious level. In sum, these drives of the cognitive conscious part of us drive illicit behavior—unless these drives are checked and controlled by the rational conscious self.

Again, these feelings are non-verbal and consist of patterns of likes and dislikes that develop from childhood. A child who enjoyed a certain breed of dog as a child will tend to want the same kind of dog when he grows up in part because those earlier good feelings are translated into

conscious thinking that this breed is cuter or better in some way. A child who was brought up in racism will tend to have racist feeling patterns. A child of privilege who was taught that those who are poor are destroying the country because they are getting free government money will have negative feelings about government helping poor people. A child of poverty who was taught that wealthy have political connections that enable them to get corporate welfare and game the economic system will grow up with negative feelings about the powerful wealthy. Even after the poor and the rich child grow up they will have these negative attitudes without even researching how much money is spent on welfare for the poor versus on corporate welfare. A child who was taught that Republicans are only for the well-to-do will grow up with negative feelings toward the Republicans. A child that was taught that Democrats use the poor to get elected will grow up with negative feelings about Democrats. These feelings can exist for a lifetime without the person ever checking the facts. The feelings and attitudes are validated by each one unconsciously cherry-picking the data favoring his own feelings. The only escape is for the conscious mind to put a check on feelings; but this requires serious reflection on reality as such with a passion for the Whole Truth, Total Truth. The desire must be for truth, not feelings. Historically, the most powerful change from a biased, bad, or malevolent disposition developed over a lifetime to the obtaining of a virtuous disposition is through Jesus Christ as illustrated with John Newton. This change can take place at regeneration or the instant a Christian realizes that things like racism are inherently and totally antithetical to nature of Christianity.

The overpowering feelings/drives/patterns in the cognitive unconscious are most conspicuous in individuals who are compulsive behaviors and are polarized politically. Let us consider polarized individuals on the political Right and the Left. Consider how powerful the cognitive unconscious feelings are with regard to contemporary cable news. Some hate CNN and believe that they are all just a bunch of communists out to destroy America—that CNN stands for Communist News Network. They just know that CNN is full of evil even though they never personally watch the network. The same could be said about FOX News. There are many who believe that FOX news is nothing but Faux News and serves as the Trump channel for our President. We can even see the strong drives on the networks in that CNN regularly points out the flaws of the President, and Fox News mainly points out the good things about the President. The truth is that the President, like everyone else, is made up of both good and bad. But those who are driven by their deep urges or tastes will not see the whole truth precisely because those drives are ignoring or downplaying what they do not like. CNN does not trust Trump and enjoys pointing out the narcissism. Fox News did not like Obama and enjoyed pointing out his narcissism. This is all driven by base irrational drives along with playing to the audience for better ratings, and therefore more mullah (another drive). In sum, those who have an obsessive disinclination for President Trump will not see any good in him. Those who have an obsessive inclination for President Trump will not see any bad in him—both obsessive groups are irrational and thus are prone to anger and demonization of opponents. It is rationally undeniable that President Trump is not 100% good or 100% bad. It is the rational person who is able to appreciate the good without sanctioning the bad. It is my contention that the Christian is in the best position to achieve the proper balance because of His love for truth over personality (or personal interests or even the American Dream)—because he actually follows the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us such a

beautiful example of commitment to Truth no matter what. Following Jesus Christ, living in Whole Truth, insulates one from so many pernicious evils.

The cognitive unconscious is also powerfully at work with reference to God. A person who has negative vibes against God will seek reasons to justify these negative feelings against Him in one way or another. These urges motivate him to find confirmation from people who think like they want to think—like atheists. Even believers can have distorted views of God and biblical themes like love. Because how some Christians have so emotionalized or “sillified” love, other Christians have redefined love into something called “a relaxed mental attitude”. Some Christians will reject a pastor because his message rebuked them in some way. Their negative feelings of being rebuked will cause them to reject all that he teaches and only see him in a bad light. This leads to looking for a ministry to make them “feel good” about their lives. It really is no longer about Truth, the Whole Truth, Total Truth. It is about feelings, feelings which can find those passages that will make the person feel better about his desires/vices—thus the power of the unconscious to drive the conscious and even contort the Word of God as one unconsciously “desires.” Correspondence truth is no longer the issue—which means the real Christ is no longer the issue.

We can see these deep and powerful unconscious drives at work in such controversial topics like global warming/climate change. Isn't it rather odd that some Christians can be so absolutely dogmatic against the claim of warming/change without really studying the evidence? This is testimony to the inner unconscious drive as the source of the dogmatism, given that they have never personally and exhaustively examined the scientific evidence (by the way I am not taking a position on the topic; I have not studied it thoroughly; I am agnostic about it). Some even act as if the biblical or Christian thing to do is to oppose all scientific claims that there is global warming/climate change. I recall my former pastor teaching that we should not regulate the industry to protect the environment. We should let industry boom, and then God will clean it up. But what about the Great Smog of London of 1952 that killed 12,000 people, which was followed by their version of the EPA to make sure that would never happen again? Should they have just said “let God clean it up”? What about the states in our own country where the air is cleaner, and there is less lung disease because of EPA regulations? Does “we don't need regulation because God will clean it up” comport with rationality or reality? I understand the need to push back on overregulation. I also understand the urge to say anything to push back, even if it means pushing it off on God. By the way, didn't God tell us in His Word that man is to be His stewards on the Earth? No doubt, those on the far Left go too far with regulations and those on the far Right can be too resistant to regulations due to valid efforts to make more profits. Extremes on both sides demonstrate that they are governed by their irrational urges which nudges the conscious into trying to make the irrational into a rational argument. The extremes on both sides need to be rejected. Let the rational people on the Right and Left engage in thoughtful discussions about the amount of needed regulation. The only argument there should be is on how much. The same thing could be said about virtually all political and economic issues—in a word: balance!

Moreover, both rationally drive Republicans and Democrats have valid biblical points, the former has a biblical and God-given right to his private property and the fruits of his labor, the latter has the biblical and God-given right to demand certain social necessities for the community/country for the helpless (e. g., a safety net). The debate should only be about how to equitably work out the inner tension between each citizen's personal rights and his obligation to his community. Again, both personal rights and community obligations are affirmed in the Word of God and natural law. God is the Author of private property and is also the Author of the government mandating help for those who cannot help themselves (e.g., the mandatory laws forcing Boaz to allow Ruth to glean his field; the destruction of Israel by Assyrian in 721 B.C. for the nation's failure to help the helpless).

Consider the power of deep urges and feelings when a person gets so angry that he says things he wishes he never said. His deep feelings influenced his conscious mind to find the strongest words to express this rage—again, it is deep non-verbal urge of rage that is being expressed through the conscious mind. What about when a person is aroused sexually? One minute a man can be rational and have no thoughts of illicit sex. Then, some temptress comes along and touches him in a certain way, and his urges/feelings are aroused, which perhaps changes his mind and motivates him to rationalize engaging in illicit sex.

We can also see the power of the cognitive unconscious life in various brain addictions. For example, the drug addict who destroys his health and family just to satisfy his irrational desire. That primal urge from dopamine production from the VTA nudges, pushes, and bribes the conscious mind into shooting up more drugs. It is all driven by primal urges that inhibit rationality in the prefrontal cortex at the service of the pleasure in the nucleus accumbens. The man has lost rationality and freedom due to the cravings in the limbic system.

A person who is dominated by the urges of the cognitive unconscious is precluded from living in or for Total Truth, Truth as such. He lives by urges rather than what is right. He is polarized by his desires and thus is uninterested and blind to correspondence truth as such. He lives by desires which are often concealed by rationalization. He lives a self-deceived life, which finds an excuse for every selfish lust he has. In sum, he lives and thinks according to how he feels in his cognitive unconscious. The good news is that it is possible to reprogram the cognitive unconscious to crave what is true (Whole Truth, Total Truth, correspondence truth) so that the person will have an urge for what is true/good/beautiful.

Thank God that He does not have a physical brain with all of its parts. Thank God that He does not have a cognitive unconscious life. He is not governed primal urges in food, sex, rage, or ideology. He is not biased politically, socially, or religiously. He is not led by irrational desires which seek rational justification. He does not demonize others because He has inner dislikes of them. He is Pure Act, Pure Conscious Thought, Pure Spirit, Pure Happiness, and Pure Love. He has no need for the limitations and mutability of a brain. He is not motivated by unconscious urges produced by chemical patterns and substances like dopamine. God does not struggle to be rational in the face of powerful irrational and unconscious desires. God is radically different, as classical theists put it, "He is the Wholly Other." Thank God is immutably 100% spirit, love, and happiness.

Moreover, thank God that He has given us the capacity to live by our rational conscious selves and partake of the life of Christ, rather than by the urges and penchants of our irrational cognitive unconscious minds. Moreover, thank God that we have the example of Jesus Christ, who although He had those human urges, He sanctified and transformed them. He also invites us to live in Him whereby we can enjoy the same freedom rather than be governed by the irrational desires of our flesh which are so pernicious, and so undermine the abundant life.

For His Glory,

Pastor Don