

If Jaynes Was Right: Consciousness as Recursive Compression and Drift Cycles

Cognitive Drift Series – CD 5.3

A. Jacobs — Reality Drift Framework (2023–2026)

Core Claim

Consciousness evolves through cycles where dominant compression systems lose fidelity, collapse, and are replaced by new recursive structures that restore coherence under changing conditions.

Mechanism

- Systems compress reality into stable meaning structures
- Fidelity maintains alignment between representation and reality
- Over time, fidelity degrades as conditions change
- Compression continues despite declining fidelity
- Existing systems collapse or lose authority
- New recursive structures emerge to restore coherence

Key Concepts

- **Cognitive Compression Styles:** Patterns by which cognition reduces complexity into usable representations
- **Fidelity:** Alignment between compressed representation and reality
- **Recursive Compression:** Iterative compression and reuse of representations through feedback loops
- **Cognitive Drift:** Loss of alignment in thought as recursive processing continues without sufficient grounding
- **The Drifted Self:** A self-model shaped by misaligned recursive feedback

Mechanism of Recursive Stabilization and Drift

Consciousness evolves through recurring cycles in which dominant compression systems organize experience into coherent meaning structures. These systems maintain stability as long as fidelity preserves alignment between representation and reality.

Over time, changing conditions erode this alignment, yet compression persists, producing misalignment and drift. As authority and coherence deteriorate, existing systems collapse or lose legitimacy, giving rise to new recursive structures that restore stability under altered conditions.

From bicameral command structures to reflective consciousness, philosophical systems, algorithmic infrastructures, and emerging co-cognitive loops with artificial intelligence, each transition reflects a renewal of recursive stabilization.

Drift accumulates when fidelity declines, and coherence is restored when new systems emerge to realign meaning with reality.

Structural Transitions

1. Bicameral Systems

- Externalized command structures (voices, gods)
- High-fidelity coherence through ritual and environment

2. Reflective Consciousness

- Internal recursive loops (self-narration)
- Language stabilizes identity and meaning

3. Philosophical / Narrative Systems

- Explicit self-modeling and reasoning
- Consciousness becomes self-referential

4. Algorithmic Systems

- External symbolic systems produce high-volume compression
- Fidelity degrades under acceleration

5. Co-Cognition (Emerging)

- Human recursion + machine compression
- Potential restoration or amplification of drift

Observable Effects

- Coherence systems shift rather than remain stable
- External voices are replaced by internal or synthetic ones
- Meaning structures degrade before being replaced
- AI outputs can function as perceived authority
- Individuals vary in whether they externalize or stabilize cognition

These effects emerge when compression systems outpace fidelity across historical transitions.

Reality Drift Connection

Within the Reality Drift Framework, this model illustrates the cyclical nature of meaning systems across history. Dominant structures compress reality into coherent representations that guide perception and behavior, yet fidelity inevitably degrades as environments evolve.

Drift accumulates as compression continues despite declining alignment, leading to the erosion of authority and the eventual collapse of coherence. New recursive systems then arise to restore stability under changing conditions.

In the modern era, artificial intelligence introduces a powerful new layer of compression, externalizing cognition and reshaping how meaning is produced and stabilized. When grounded in reality, these systems enhance understanding and coordination; when unbounded, they risk amplifying distortion.

This recurring pattern reveals consciousness not as a static phenomenon, but as an adaptive process shaped by cycles of compression, drift, and renewal.

Keywords: *consciousness, recursive compression, cognitive drift, Jaynes, bicameral mind, co-cognition, synthetic authority*

Related Concepts: *recursive compression theory, drift principle, synthetic flow, mirror effect, semantic fidelity*

Source: *Integrated into the Reality Drift Framework, this work draws from the Cognitive Drift Archive (2024–2025).*

Core Framework and Resources

- [Substack \(Articles\)](#)
- [GitHub \(Full Library\)](#)
- [DOI \(Research Paper\)](#)
- [Glossary & Definition](#)