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Right and Left Brain Dominance: Thinking outside the box

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The problem to be faced is: how to combine loyalty to one's own tradition with reverence for different traditions.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Iain McGilchrist's book, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, is one of the most important books I have ever read. McGilchrist's thesis is that the existence of our world as we know it is threatened by our reliance on left brain hemisphere (LH) thinking – to the exclusion of right brain hemisphere (RH) awarenesses and thinking.

In this discussion I first review McGilchrist's observations and conclusions. He presents these as LH summaries of neuropsychiatry research, with historical considerations, and the effects of LH and RH on distinct cultural epochs through the past two and a half millennia. McGilchrist's analyses are presented as LH discussions of research evidence, wonderfully counterpointed by numerous, rich examples of RH and LH expressions in literature, linguistics, poetry, art, music and architecture. I then go on to consider extensions of McGilchrist's conclusions in the light of deeper understandings of RH functions from my own studies that include research, clinical and personal experiences. My worldview is based on wholistic understandings of the world that consider the unitary oneness of consciousness on every level of our being: body, emotions, mind, relationships (with other beings and with the environment) and spirit.

McGilchrist is an English psychiatrist who came later in life to the practice of medicine and psychiatry. He provides an extensive review of research on the differences between LH and RH functions. LH thinking is linear, built on axioms that are put together in logical sequences from combinations of small bits of information. LH builds models explaining the world through its understandings *about* the world. These theories are formalized as hypotheses. Life experiences and experimental observations test these assumptions, and reasoned, logical conclusions are derived about the world through these deductive processes.

RH awarenesses are global, taking in ongoing, moment-to-moment information through all of our senses. RH resonates with other people's feelings. RH attends to sensory data in the outer world and particularly to patterns of relationships between self and others. RH is inclusive, accepting that there are diverse ways of perceiving, understanding and interpreting information. RH accepts that there may be differing views of perceptions that are all acceptably correct.

If I imagine myself in pain I use both hemispheres, but your pain is in my right hemisphere. The same neurons in the right anterior cingulate cortex, an area known to be associated with the appreciation of pain, show activity whether we ourselves are hurt or we witness someone else undergoing a similar painful experience. Self-awareness, empathy, identification with others, and more generally inter-subjective processes, are largely dependent upon...right hemisphere resources. (p. 57)

LH lives in a world of its own creation. It has an either/or mindset and seeks information to support its "re-presentation" of the world that it has built. It often prefers to not pay attention to details in the world that might bring into question or contradict its theories. In fact, it often systematically avoids evidence that is contradictory to its theories and beliefs. McGilchrist reviews research on the frontal lobes, providing extensive evidence that these portions of each hemisphere serve to suppress brain activity and awarenesses in each hemisphere. This may explain some of the mechanisms LH has at its disposal for ignoring RH awarenesses.

People who are LH dominant innately and/or through acculturated preferences often denigrate, dismiss and even persecute people who do not adhere to their LH articles of faith – much as people in religious communities behave. McGilchrist in fact points out that a major contributor to modern day LH prevalence in Western culture is derived from Protestant views and approaches in relating to the world.

If what it is that exists comes into being for each one of us through its interaction with our brains and minds, the idea that we could have a knowledge of it that was not also an expression of ourselves, and dependent on what we brought to the relationship, is untenable...

...We have to be able to recognise ('re-cognise') what we experience: to say this is a 'such-and-such,' that is, it has certain qualities that enable me to place it in a category of things that I have experienced before and about which I have certain beliefs and feelings. This processing eventually becomes so automatic that we do not so much experience the world as experience our representation of the world. The world is no longer 'present' to us, but 're-presented,' a virtual world, a copy that exists in conceptual form in the mind. (p. 37-38)

McGilchrist's statements are not criticisms of LH thinking based on alternative religious views. They are strongly reasoned arguments that are extensively supported, in great detail. This is the other enormous strength of the author's presentation. He brings us a very broad and detailed summary of the presence and shifts between RH and LH predominance in Western society from early Greek history to modern times. His credentialed university expertise (New College, Oxford) in English Literature enables him to weave a tapestry of understanding of social changes through the past two and a half millennia – reflecting ever-tightening adherence to LH constructs of the world that increasingly plague and threaten the very existence of all life on our planet today.

In the interest of clarity and for a more concise summary of LH and RH functions, I summarize many of McGilchrist's observations in Table 1.

Table 1. Brain hemispheric patterns

LEFT HEMISPHERE	RIGHT HEMISPHERE
Awarenesses built upon bits of chosen and researched information	Awarenesses perceived directly
Explicit	Implicit
Rational	Intuitive
Favors objectively measurable data	Favors subjective experiences that provide direct awareness of the world.
Favors sight and appearances	Favors the experienced essence of the world, including all sensory details
Static, fixed, inflexible in theoretical orientation	Moving, changing, constantly innovating and evolving in new ways
The world is composed of inert particles	The world is alive in every aspect of its essence, including the spiritual
The body is composed of interacting but inert particles	The body is a whole that includes emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects
Words and ideas define facts about the world	Metaphors, imagery, myths, music and other creative arts convey experiences that invite direct awarenesses of the world
Logical constructs <i>about</i> the world, "re-presentation" of the world, is what is real	Embodied experiences provide knowledge about the world
" 'Knowledge' and 'truth' ... [is] impersonal, static, complete, a thing" (p. 170)	" 'Knowledge' and 'truth' ... [is] personal, provisional, a matter of degree, a journey." (p. 170)
Favors a static worldview	Accepts an ever-changing world
The world is here to be used to serve human needs	We feel "a desire or <i>longing</i> towards something, something that lies beyond itself, towards the Other." (p. 171)
Seeks to control the world	Accepting being part of an uncontrollable, ever-shifting world
The world is just a bunch of resources, to be enjoyed and exploited by humanity	Every element of the world must be respected
Words and ideas define facts about the world	Metaphors, imagery, music and other creative arts convey experiences that invite direct awarenesses of the world
Linear, sequential	Circular, parallel
Utilitarian in ethic	Concerned for the good of all
Over-confident in its understanding of reality	Questioning its own views and seeking consensual validations
Lacking insight into its problems	Self-reflective
Excludes and dismisses RH awarenesses	Is inclusive of LH awarenesses.

Problems and limitations with exclusive LH or RH consciousness.

McGilchrist points out that the LH belief in the superiority of LH reasoning is inherently flawed and false. One of the axioms of LH thinking is that LH rules for analyzing the world are the only valid ways for arriving at 'truths' about the world. In other words, linear reasoning is taken to be the only way one can trust in one's observations about the world. RH thinking is denigrated and dismissed by LH

thinkers as being unscientific, fuzzy, emotional, unprovable and unreliable. McGilchrist says of LH scientific thinking:

... Its apparently value free descriptions are assumed to deliver *the* truth about the object, onto which our feelings and desires are later painted. Yet this highly objective stance, this 'view from nowhere,' to use Nagel's phrase, is itself value-laden. It is just one particular way of looking at things, a way which privileges detachment, a lack of commitment of the viewer to the object viewed. For some purposes this can be undeniably useful. But its use in such causes does not make it truer or more real, closer to the nature of things. (p. 28)

Historically, RH appears to have been the originally dominant hemisphere. RH direct scanning of the environment, using all the senses, would have provided maximal benefits to humans for staying alert against dangers and watching out for prey. This is still true of animal brain hemispheric functions today. In many animals their left eyes are larger than their right eyes, and their left eyes are used for scanning for food, prey and dangers.

In the historical times of human RH dominance, LH memories of recurring patterns of observations and experiences would have offered benefits through learned behaviors because RH is inclusive of LH awarenesses. However, because human LH tends to exclusivity and dominance over the world rather than harmonizing with the world, LH approaches have gradually but persistently grown to control what humans are doing in the world.

The brain has to attend to the world in two completely different ways, and in so doing to bring two different worlds into being. In the one, we *experience* – the live, complex, embodied, world of individual, always unique beings, forever in flux, a net of interdependencies, forming and reforming wholes, a world with which we are deeply connected. In the other we 'experience' our experience in a special way: a 're-presented' version of it, containing now static, separable, bounded, but essentially fragmented entities, grouped into classes, on which predictions can be based. This kind of attention isolates, fixes and makes each thing explicit by bringing it under the spotlight of attention. In doing so it renders things inert, mechanical, lifeless. But it also enables us for the first time to know, and consequently to learn and to make things. This gives us power. (p. 31)

The bad news is that LH seeks self-validation through material gains that are measurable, and through power over others that are demonstrable. LH combines these self-validations in accumulations of material wealth that it often displays ostentatiously. This is because LH does not validate itself through social, emotional, relational or spiritual awarenesses. LH cuts itself off from direct awarenesses of the world: minimizing and distancing itself from feeling awarenesses. With its 'either/or' modes of analyzing the world, LH lacks the ability to accept simultaneous, multiplicities of truths that are all valid.

Early Greek history supports these suggestions. For instance, prior to the development of numbers and money, interactions between people were much more intimate and based on RH awarenesses and interactions.

...Before the development of currency, there is an emphasis on reciprocity. Gifts are not precise, not calculated, not instantaneously enacted or automatically received, not required; the gifts are not themselves substitutable, but unique; and the emphasis is on the value of creating or maintaining a relationship, which is also unique. With trade, all this changes; the essence is competitive: the exchange is instantaneous, based on equivalence, and the emphasis not on relationship, but on utility or profit ... Money is homogeneous, and hence

homegenises its objects and weakens the need for bonds, or for trust based on a knowledge of those with whom one is exchanging. It becomes a universal aim, corrupting even death ritual, and threatening other values as it transcends and substitutes for them; and it becomes a universal means, including the divine good will or to political power. It 'breeds an unlimited greed'. (p. 279)

On societal levels, as numbers, money and written language developed, such LH re-presentations of aspects of the world gave governments and religious institutions tools for coordinating ever-broader numbers of people over ever vaster territories. Taxation and distribution of resources were likewise facilitated over broader populations and territories. LH functions then became stronger and conferred ever increasing benefits on those who favored using them. Where the highest good of all is the focus of LH thinking, there can be enormous benefits to every member of society through LH management of resources. That's the good news.

The bad news is that LH styles of promoting, perpetuating and promulgating its beliefs on others leads to societies in which their leaders are dominating and controlling; intolerant of views differing from their own worldviews; unable to accept outsiders' criticisms; and resistant of change. LH re-presentations of the world lead people to value themselves through tallied measures of success – notably the amounts of material wealth they possess and the numbers of people they command. LH perceives the environment as a pool of resources for human consumption, with little or no appreciation of the consequences of such exploitations.

With time, LH individuals and groups become increasingly entrenched in their pursuits of wealth and power and increasingly distanced from RH awarenesses. LH *thinking about the world* denies the validity and even the reality of RH *experiencing of the world* – not only in others but also within the LH thinkers themselves. Domination of 'others' becomes a goal, and the suffering experienced by 'others' is ignored, dismissed or not even perceived.

McGilchrist presents fascinating research evidence and marvelous historical notes in support of his analysis of these tendencies of LH to create virtual realities – in individuals, nations and entire cultures. He also considers the roles that language can play in reflecting, shaping and revealing these biases.

Out of the history of Greece and Rome come confirmatory and converging lines of evidence that it was through the workings of the emissary, the left hemisphere, that the 'empire' of the mind expanded in the first place; and that, as long as it worked in concert with the Master, the right hemisphere, faithfully bringing back the knowledge and understanding gained by it, and offering them to the right hemisphere so as to bring a (now more complex) world into being, an ability which belongs to the right hemisphere alone, the empire thrived. On the other hand, once the left hemisphere started to believe that its dominion was everything, once the wealth it created began to remain obdurately in its own province, as though it could survive on its own, rather than being returned to the world that only the right hemisphere could bring about, then the empire – not the Roman Empire, which the world could do without, but the empire that the hemispheres between them had created, which we cannot – begin to crumble. (p. 296-7)

McGilchrist makes a strong case for believing that LH thinking is potentially toxic and dangerous in many ways. While LH modes of addressing the world may be efficient in solving practical and mechanical problems, they lead to unfeeling responses to human problems.

Masculine ways of relating to the world are more LH oriented and feminine ways more RH oriented. McGilchrist does not give a lot of consideration to this point, but I feel it is of vital importance in our world. See Table 2 for a few of my observations on these differences.

Table 2. Masculine vs. feminine aspects of relating to the world

<i>Men's preferences</i>	<i>Women's preferences</i>
Thinking one's way through life with short and long-term goals in mind	Feeling one's way through each moment, with harmonious relationships in heart
Logic, reasoning	Intuition
Problems invite advocating for one's own views, promoting solutions that are best for one's own advantage, arguing and fighting against others' views	Problems invite discussion, explorations of multiple views and alternatives, compromises that best satisfy the needs of all
Might is right	Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
Career oriented	Family oriented
Power and control over others	Collaboration with others; mutual nurturing

McGilchrist notes in several contexts that the physical body forces people (even with LH preferences) to attend to what *is* rather than to mental constructs that are re-presentations of physical reality. This may be difficult for LH thinkers to do.

Adding further to McGilchrist's observations, I would suggest that women have a biological reason for living that is inherent in their bodies. They know from childhood that as females they have the potential and option of nurturing and bringing life into this world. Monthly menstrual cycles keep them connected with their bodies, with awareness that their spirit is embodied in the physical world. Carrying a baby in gestation, giving birth to a new life, breast feeding and tending to the infant's needs. and spending several decades in nurturing that person to maturity further reinforces this biological experience as a meaningful and (usually) an overall satisfying and growth-promoting experience. This biological function provides a strong and satisfying reason for living. For many women this knowledge offers the most deeply satisfying and meaningful experience of their lives. Having a child is a demonstration of success in life.

In contrast, men have to seek, explore and develop ways for feeling they have meaning and satisfactions in their lives. While they may share in the care and parenting of their child, they are rarely as invested in this life function as women are. Rather than have a biologically determined role that provides a measure of success, they must choose occupations and activities that will provide satisfaction in their lives. When women do not have children, they have at least grown up knowing they have that potential.

Men's measures of success often become the income they generate and/or the numbers of people they control in their jobs; their physical feats that exceed the abilities and achievements of other men; and the numbers and opulence of their possessions. Money and possessions, however, are hollow and often unreliable satisfactions, as many are experiencing in these times of economic upheavals. Physical prowess decreases with age. However, power over others remains a potential satisfaction throughout one's life.

LH modes of thinking help to explain why politicians and administrators tend to be men more than

women. This is largely due to hundreds of years of masculine enforced domination over women and suppression of their asserting leadership roles in the community. Politicians, almost always working within LH-types of jobs in LH-guided institutions, focus on short-term solutions for budget problems in finance, industry, education, and healthcare. They ignore consequences of their decisions on people and long-term issues, such as budget deficits – with losses of social services and weakening of education; pollution and other problems of environmental degradation. Such negative consequences of LH blindness to human values are further magnified in wars where people seek to exploit their advantages of strength. "Collateral damage" is not only tolerated but promulgated as a way of ending up with fewer enemies left alive.

In contrast, RH awarenesses are global and inclusive, taking in information through all of our senses. RH accesses the benefits of LH re-presentations of the world while at the same time it maintains awareness of alternative perceptions, views and understandings of the world. RH decision-making keeps a better focus on the highest good of all. RH maintains compassion for others. In fact, those who maintain RH thinking may perceive other people, animals, plants and all other living beings, as well as the environment to constitute a oneness of being that make it difficult to even entertain the possibility of adopting LH policies and plans.

I believe the essential difference between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere is that the right hemisphere pays attention to the Other, whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves, with which it sees itself in profound relation. It is deeply attracted to and given life by, the relationship, the betweenness, that exists with this Other. By contrast, the left hemisphere pays attention to the virtual world that it has created, which is self-consistent, but self-contained, ultimately disconnected from the Other, making it powerful, but ultimately only able to operate on, and to know, itself. (p. 93)

Sadly, in the world of Western thinking, over the past three centuries we have become so bound by our education and restrictive LH-dominated culture that it is even difficult to allow ourselves to cogitate outside the limits of our LH mind-sets. When some do venture there, those who adhere to LH modes of thinking tend to label such RH excursions outside of the accepted LH domains as fantasies, dreams, fiction, or even as delusions or other mental aberrations.

McGilchrist notes that academia often enforces LH thinking in nasty ways, ostracizing those who dare to suggest that RH experiences are real and valid. If a person in academia dares to challenge the prevalent LH thinking with any persistence, they risk losing their grants and academic positions.

The LH and RH preferences that McGilchrist explores have helped me understand better the difficulties faced by conventional medical people in appreciating that the physical body and physical world are not the sum totals of a person's existence. As it may be difficult to appreciate McGilchrist's thesis about historical reflections of RH and LH into the world from within the LH world that many readers of the IJHC have been educated to prefer, I share throughout this editorial musing a few quotes on how LH and RH have shaped the world.

On early human thinking:

According to Michael Clarke's *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer*, Homeric man does not have a body or a mind: 'rather this thought and consciousness are as inseparable a part of his bodily life as are movement and metabolism.' The body is indistinguishable from the whole person. 'Thinking, emotion, awareness, reflection, will' are undertaken in the breast, not the head: 'the ongoing process of thought is conceived of as if it were precisely identified with the palpable inhalation of the breath, and the half-imagined mingling of breath with blood and

bodily fluids in the soft, warm, flowing substances that make up what is behind the chest wall.
(p. 263-264)

McGilchrist believes that the best of all worlds is one in which LH and RH are in balanced function. This is the way RH functions. It scans the total environment, taking on board all of its perceptions – internal as well as external – including those it obtains through LH awarenesses. LH will often strongly reject RH awarenesses.

Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their unison can knowledge arise.

- Immanuel Kant

Brain laterality shapes the world

McGilchrist brilliantly points out that "the brain is not just a tool for grappling with the world. It's what brings the world about." (p. 19)

His analyses of LH brain functions make it abundantly clear that all linear beliefs are ultimately derived from axioms and articles of faith adopted by the LH, and that these beliefs of ours that we believe to be absolute truths actually are untested, and indeed are often untestable.

In Western thinking we believe that our LH is in charge of our lives. McGilchrist suggests that the opposite is true. RH scans the world for what is occurring outside ourselves and for our relationships with the context in which we find ourselves. This information enables the LH to select which aspects of our situation we wish to relate to and how we wish to respond to it. We believe that we make our choices through such rational analyses and decisions, but McGilchrist points out that in actuality, we often rely on the RH for our choices.

McGilchrist points out that in our over-reliance and exclusivity of focus on LH functions in the world today, humanity has distanced itself from our RH connections with each other and the world.

The reliance on reason downgrades not just the testimony of the sense, but all our implicit knowledge. (p. 286)

He demonstrates through numerous and varied examples that humanity is hell-bent on promoting ever-increasing concentrations of power in the hands of LH-dominated corporations, banks, governments and other power-hungry organizations. By their LH natures, they are self-perpetuating, exclusivist and dismissive of alternate views, and insensitive to the enormous suffering that they produce.

Technical limitations of this book

There is only a partial bibliography in the book. A full, 68-page .pdf bibliography is available for download at <http://www.iainmcgilchrist.com/contacts.asp>. Annoyingly, this document is copy protected so that it is impossible to copy and paste any of the references.

The index does not do justice to the richness of the contents of this book. I particularly missed RH items such as imagery, intuition and spirituality.

McGilchrist's encyclopedic knowledge of history may leave readers who have not been educated in the classics a bit in the dark. He discusses the progression of RH and LH preferences and influences through various cultural epochs, such as the Dark Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment and so on, but does not provide dates that would enlighten the reader to which years are under discussion.

In summary – re *The Master and his Emissary*

This review cannot begin to do justice to the marvelously rich feast that Iain McGilchrist offers us. The delectability of his collection of research data, clinical observations and notes from history, art, music, architecture and more must be tasted and savored and chewed on for a full appreciation of this masterpiece.

This book is in the class of Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, which gave the world an enormous boost by helping to introduce systems theory into psychological and anthropological awareness. The evidence marshaled by McGilchrist is very convincing. Humanity has swung so far into LH modes of thinking and relating to the world that we are endangering not only our own existence but the survival of all life as we know it on our planet.

I hope McGilchrist will publish a popular version of this book. It deserves to be widely read by people who do not have the medical expertise to understand and appreciate the complexities of LH and RH functions detailed in the current edition.

Limitations of and extensions to McGilchrist 's analyses

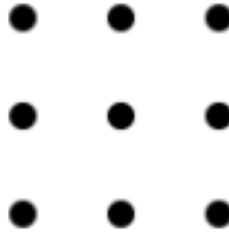
McGilchrist's analyses are outstandingly thorough, methodical, LH discussions of how RH has been marginalized and dismissed throughout much of human history. This has come about through LH ways of building theoretical models; linear reasoning; and LH difficulties in considering alternative views and options. While he presents extensive discussions *about* this, he misses providing a full critique of LH preferences by failing to go beyond metaphor, poetry and music for direct examples of how RH perceives and interacts with the world.

As wonderful as this book is, it is limited by the very factors that McGilchrist identifies and describes so wonderfully. While McGilchrist repeatedly points out and decries the LH focus that is prevalent in Western discussions of brain hemispheric functions, he himself appears limited by the very problems that he points out in others. McGilchrist 's discussions are almost entirely LH in their orientation and analyses. He does a marvelous job of discussing poetry and metaphor, with occasional mentions of spirit, but these are still considered within LH terminology. These discussions are also restricted to linguistic analyses – which are LH re-presentations for experiencing the world.

Though McGilchrist identifies the difficulties of appreciating RH ways of relating to the world, he, himself, appears to be stuck in the LH box that he has so perceptively analyzed. This is very much like the challenge of a simple puzzle. Quoting from Wikipedia:

The "nine dots" puzzle: The goal of the puzzle in Figure 1 is to link all 9 dots using four straight lines or fewer, without lifting the pen and without retracing the same line or crossing through the same dot more than once. I invite you to explore this as a way of experiencing what I am addressing in this review. (The solution appears in Figure 2, at the end of this editorial musing.)

Figure 1. The Nine Dots Puzzle



LH boxes itself into its re-presentations of the world and resists intrusions of RH awarenesses. However, despite having cut itself off from conscious feeling awarenesses, LH nevertheless experiences emotions. LH simply ignores or buries them in the unconscious (mostly RH) mind.

LH, language-bound and concept-bound problems

In part, McGilchrist's LH discussion is due to limitations of modern English language. The very title, *The Master and his Emissary*, encapsulates this issue. McGilchrist points out that RH modes of relating to the world are more common in women than in men, and that LH, masculine domination of our world is leading us to self-destruction. Yet he uses "*Master*," which is clearly a masculine descriptor, to identify the RH functions. He compounds this misplaced emphasis in his title, using "*his*," which is a masculine possessive.

I have myself noted that there is a strong tendency among LH people to dismiss RH observations as "ill-logical" "un-reason-able" or "non-sense" – pointing out in the process that our language biases us to LH beliefs, disbeliefs and preferences. These dismissive, pejoratively LH terms are so much a part of our language that they reinforce LH thinkers in their beliefs that LH is the best or only way to know anything with certainty about the world, and conversely, these terms are commonly used to criticize people with RH preferences in relating to the world. McGilchrist, too, remains stuck within mainstream, LH approaches to considering LH and RH problems.

LH awarenesses of RH perceptions

Philosophers spend a good deal of time inspecting and analyzing processes that are usually – and perhaps must remain – implicit, unconscious, intuitive; in other words, examining the life of the right hemisphere from the standpoint of the left. (p. 89)

McGilchrist states that RH experiences and analyzes the world in a gestaltic manner, perceiving that everything is related to everything else in the world. In this I am in full agreement. However, when McGilchrist states that LH does not perceive the world in these ways, I believe he overlooks LH systems theories that explore and explain the social inter-relatedness of individuals who have close associations with others.

In its usual, linear approaches, LH has delved into systems analysis of multi-level interactions – both within and between individuals. As with other LH analyses, this provides clearer maps, or "re-presentations" of what occurs in long term, 1:1 relationships, as well as in multi-member families, communities, countries and globally. In most of these, LH focuses on how the participants develop and live within their chosen 'rules of relationships.'

Though McGilchrist goes a wee bit further, he does not delve into the richness of transpersonal psychology, where RH offers its greatest promises for healing on all levels of our being.

What we feel arises out of what I feel for what you feel for what I feel about your feelings about me – and about many other things besides: it arises from the betweenness, and in this way feeling binds us together, and, more than that, actually unites us, since the feelings are shared. Yet the paradox is that those feelings only arise because of our distinctness, our ability to be separate, distinct individuals, that come, that go, in separation and death. (p. 303)

I will not belabor McGilchrist's limitations in addressing our interrelatedness because the LH systems theory appreciations of RH are rudimentary – relative to the richness and complexity of RH *direct* experiences of the world.

LH research on RH direct knowledge of the world that extends beyond our ordinary senses

There is well-validated LH research on direct knowledge through telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition. This extends McGilchrist's observations of RH ways of knowing the world to much broader and deeper levels.

I have long been challenged in various ways myself by the same problems and issues for which I criticize McGilchrist. My own training in psychology, medicine and psychiatry, with a heavy emphasis on research, led me to hold strongly LH beliefs about the world. My views were in many ways very similar to those expressed by McGilchrist, and perhaps I was even more harshly skeptical and doubtful about there being any objective validity to intuitive awarenesses. I could accept that others held faith in the possibilities of spiritual dimensions of experience. However, I felt these beliefs were RH preferences that had no validity outside of an individual person's wishful thinking for a better world and hopes for creating a better place to live on this planet. I know many ways that people can fool themselves into believing that they have had various experiences - from expectations and wishful thinking, through magical beliefs, suggestion and hypnotic effects, and on into delusions and psychotic thinking.

Another motive I postulated in my LH analyses for dismissing RH intuitive and spiritual awarenesses was that people could be expected to have wishes and hopes for an afterlife – rather than accepting that physical death was all that we could expect at the end of our earthly life.

Gradually, however, I relented in my LH beliefs and prejudices. Over four decades I have explored research and personal experiences of others and myself in psychic and healing abilities. My studies have convinced me that my initial impressions and theories about these matters were sorely inadequate and incorrect. I now fully believe that while it is possible to fool ourselves in all of the above ways, this in no way proves the non-existence of psychic phenomena that include:

- Mental awareness from one mind to another at a distance (telepathy);
- Mental awarenesses of physical aspects of the world (clairsentience);
- Mental awarenesses that transcend ordinary time;
- Mental effects upon non-living aspects of the world (psychokinesis/ PK); and
- Mental effects on living beings (spiritual healing).

What helped me initially to open the doors to RH explorations was the amazing body of research on psychic phenomena. The studies on psychic abilities are among the most meticulously performed and carefully replicated research in the scientific literature of the human sciences. (A testimony to the rigor of the research can be found in the fact that the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has accepted parapsychology as a member of this prestigious organization). This research demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that:

- Meta-analysis of studies of telepathy (Radin, 1997) demonstrate significant mind-to-mind communications ($p < 10 \times 10^{-8}$ = odds against chance of 10 billion to 1)
- Meta-analysis of studies of clairsentience (Radin, 1997) demonstrate significant awareness of the inanimate world around us ($p < 10 \times 10^{-5}$ = odds against chance of 10 million to 1)
- Meta-analysis of studies of clairsentience (Bem & Honorton, 1994) demonstrate significant awareness of the inanimate world around us ($p < 4.76 \times 10^{-8}$ = odds against chance of 4.76 billion to 1)
- Meta-analysis of studies of precognition (Honorton & Ferrari, 1989) demonstrate significant abilities to connect with awarenesses across time ($p < 10 \times 10^{-24}$ = odds against chance of 10 million billion billion to 1)

Research on immediate interactions and influences between individuals and the world outside the individual

There is well-validated research on psychokinesis ('mind over matter'), showing highly significant effects of intention on dice, random number generators and living systems. This extends the observations of RH ways of interacting with the world to another level.

- Meta-analysis of intentional influence over the throw of dice (Radin & Ferrari, 1991) demonstrate significant abilities to alter their randomness ($p < 10 \times 10^{-7}$ = odds against chance of 1 billion to one)
- Meta-analysis of intentional effects on electronic random number generators (Radin, 1997; Radin & Nelson, internet reference) demonstrate significant deviations from randomness ($p < 10 \times 10^{-8}$ = odds against chance over 1 trillion to one)
- Meta-analysis of studies of intentional influence on electrodermal responses (Braud & Schlitz, 1989; 1991) demonstrate significant influence of one person upon the psychophysiological processes of another person ($p < 1.4 \times 10^{-6}$ = odds against chance of 1.4 million to 1). While the research evidence for spiritual healing lacks meta-analyses due to differences between research protocols in diverse studies, it is still robust and growing (Benor, 2001a; b; WholisticHealingResearch.com web reference).

Studies in which the left brain was engaged (and presumably distracted) with a task during psi testing seem to suggest that psi may be a right-brain phenomenon (Broughton, 1976; Maher, Peratsakis & Schmeidler, 1979). The significant effects were found in males. This is consistent with my hypothesis that left-brain-dominant persons would have more difficulty appreciating psi phenomena. Males, who are typically more attached to LH modes of thinking, would demonstrate an increase in RH intuitive awareness if their conscious LH attention is distracted.

Skeptics will very rarely cite any of this research literature. They seek every other possible way to prove their LH disbeliefs in psychic phenomena rather than rely on research. While they can be annoying, I find skeptics fascinating subjects for observation – because research shows that skeptics have psychic abilities just as much as believers do (Lawrence, 1993).

My many personal, RH, direct experiences of these types of phenomena were just as influential in convincing me of the reality of intuitive, psychic experiences as all of these sophisticated LH research

demonstrations of psychic and healing abilities. Here are just a few of these transformative gems that I still carry with me to cherish and to share with other seekers:

- In 1980 I witnessed a spiritual healing bringing about a physical change in a young man's body that was medically impossible. A lump under his nipple shrank, became much softer, more mobile and less tender under a healer's bioenergetic intervention.
- I interviewed healers, medical intuitives and psychic counselors – to learn how they used intuition and awarenesses of biological energies (bioenergies) in identifying, analyzing and addressing problems of body, emotions, mind, relationships and spirit. I interviewed their clients and healees – to learn how they had been helped by these interventions.
- Over a period of two years I came to appreciate that these intuitive therapists were often able to help people much more quickly and deeply than I could – despite all of my education, training and clinical experience in conventional healthcare approaches. During these two years, I was holding onto a LH 'objective' attitude of observation, deliberately working at not letting myself be misled through unverifiable, subjective observations – which would presumably be biased or tainted by my personal beliefs and expectations.
- I came into a transformative, "Aha!" moment – in the process of applying for approval of a double-blind, controlled research study of spiritual healing to facilitate physical and psychological recovery from a surgical intervention. As the research board was grilling me over a six-month period with all sorts of LH questions and objections to the study, I realized I didn't actually have much of an idea what healing was – despite my knowing many facts *about* healing. I decided to abandon my attempts at remaining objective and to explore healing experientially for myself.
- I studied Reiki, Therapeutic Touch and LeShan healing methods. I practiced offering healing on my own and as part of several groups – to people with wide varieties of problems. I came to combine healing with varieties of psychotherapy, finding that each approach facilitated the other. Generally, the responses were modest and gradual, but occasionally they were startlingly rapid and deep.

I can wholeheartedly offer my personal testimonies to the benefits conferred by connecting with and utilizing RH modes of awareness. Over the past 30 years, my personal intuitive, RH awarenesses and healing gifts have gradually grown and deepened. Most importantly, I now trust my intuitive and spiritual inner 'gnowings' of rightness and wrongness in my life – in matters large and small, and guide myself accordingly. This has been enormously helpful both personally as well as in my individual and group teaching of WHEE and other wholistic healing approaches.

See also the [report of Rosie Jones, MD](#) in this issue of IJHC regarding her sudden, rapid and deep opening into RH awarenesses and her personal and professional transformations.

Liabilities of RH awarenesses

RH is the domain of emotional awareness and expression. To the degree that we are connected to RH awarenesses, we open ourselves to experiencing our own emotions and to empathizing with the emotions of others. This openness may lead us to feel overwhelmed when our emotional experiences are intense.

A predominance of RH awareness may also leave us without the benefits of LH understandings of the processes and unfoldings of our situation, and of memories that can reassure us that our intense

emotions will eventually be released and that any distress we experience will at some point pass. I use the term 'meta-emotions' for such distress and worry *about* emotions. These meta-emotions may be very distressing, on top of whatever the primary distressing emotions are that are troubling us. For example, a person may be grieving and depressed over the death of someone close, and on top of that they may worry that they are never going to get over their depression and hurt.

Opening suddenly or rapidly into intuitive and spiritual awarenesses may be a disorienting experience. There may be a flood of impressions that are difficult to absorb. Meta-anxieties may arise about losses of boundaries between oneself and others; between oneself and spiritual dimensions; or about one's abilities to regulate the intensity of such awarenesses and feelings.

Again, this aspect of RH awarenesses is well illustrated in the [report of Rosie Jones, MD](#) – regarding her sudden, rapid and deep opening into RH awarenesses and her anxieties and distress about these experiences.

Spiritual dimensions of awareness and spiritual realities

McGilchrist notes that it is impossible to state definitively that consciousness is a product of the brain, and criticizes modern scientists for their insistence that mind is the product of brain. He attributes to mind a "howness" that is beyond reduction to physical parts. He notes that personal spiritual awarenesses (not just religious beliefs held on faith) are meaningful to people, and that these are reported when people are open to their RH awarenesses.

McGilchrist accepts that intuition is a function of RH, mentioning the word intuition often in his discussions without defining it. As I understand it, intuition in this context is one of our doorways into spiritual awarenesses (Benor, 2002). However, as with other RH perceptions, LH tends to denigrate and dismiss RH intuitions among other aspects of RH transpersonal and spiritual awarenesses. While McGilchrist acknowledges and discusses this, his discussions are entirely LH in approach. What follows below are my own understandings of RH awarenesses.

Interestingly, hundreds of studies correlate religious affiliations and practices with better health (Koenig, 2001; Levin, 1999). This is a LH approach to identifying that people who belong to a religious institution and/or follow religious practices have lower incidences of anxiety, depression, hypertension, heart disease, immune diseases, hospitalizations and much more. They also tend to live longer. This is all LH evidence, however, without focus on RH intuitive, transpersonal or spiritual awareness.

Religions have codified personal spiritual awarenesses of humans who were very gifted with personal spiritual consciousness, such a Christ, Buddha, Mohammed and others. Reports of these awarenesses have been formalized into religions, which often teach more *about* spirituality of the founders of the religions than about developing one's own, personal spirituality. These teachings were filtered through generations of oral history. They were codified into religious texts by followers who appear to have been motivated in many cases as much by the intentions of keeping the sheep in the fold as by wishes to enlighten the flocks.

Be that as it may, many have found inspiration and helpful teachings of moral values in religious teachings. McGilchrist's discussions shine interesting lights on these topics.

The right hemisphere sees the lower values as deriving their power from the higher ones which they serve; the left hemisphere is reductionist, and accounts for higher values by reference to lower values, its governing values of use and pleasure. (p. 160)

Research in RH experiences of spiritual dimensions is still in its early stages. However, there are surprisingly consistent findings in many studies of Out of Body Experiences (OBE), Near Death Experiences (NDE), reincarnation memories, reports of apparitions (ghosts) and channeled (mediumistic) information. Not only are the findings within each of these categories consistent – across diverse cultures – they are also consistent across these categories of experiences. For instance, many of the reports of channeled communications, bereavement apparitions and reincarnation memories provide strong support for a belief that consciousness and relationships with other people continue after physical death (Benor, 2006).

Many people also report awarenesses of human interrelationships with every living being – including other humans around the world, as well as with animals, plants, and other organisms. Reports of trans-species communications are often fascinating and heartening (Abram, 2010; Sheldrake, 1999; Wright, 1997).

Going further yet into RH perceptions, increasing numbers of people are reporting awarenesses of oneness with every aspect of our planet – including earth, water and atmosphere, and with Gaia, our living planet, herself. It is fascinating to read LH discussions about the planetary geobiological system that acts like a living organism (Lovelock, 1988; 1991; 1995; 2006), and to contrast these with RH planetary awarenesses (Abram, 2010; van Gelder 1978).

What if thought is not born within the human skull, but is a creativity proper to the body as a whole, arising spontaneously from the slippage between an organism and the folding terrain that it wanders? What if the curious curve of thought is engendered by the difficult eros and tension between our flesh and the flesh of the earth? ...

This directly experienced terrain, rippling with cricket rhythms and scoured by the tides, is the very realm now most ravaged by the spreading consequences of our disregard. Many long-standing and lousy habits have enabled our callous treatment of surrounding nature, empowering us to clear-cut, dam up, mine, develop, poison, or simply destroy so much of what quietly sustains us. Yet few are as deep-rooted and damaging as the habitual tendency to view the sensuous earth as a subordinate space – whether as a sinful plane, riddled with temptation, needing to be transcended and left behind; or a menacing region needing to be beaten and bent to our will; or simply a vaguely disturbing dimension to be avoided, supersede, and explained away. (Abram 2010, p. 4-6)

Personal spirituality is a real experience of RH

My definition is that personal spirituality is our awareness that extends beyond our physical body, and which is perceived as an inner awareness that carries its own certainty – just as we experience with our physical senses. I call this our inner *gnowing*, which may include:

- Memories of our own past and future incarnations;
- A direct perception of the consciousness of others living beings, human and non-human (telepathy);
- A direct perception of the physical, non-biological, world (clairsentience), which informs us of consciousness in every aspect of the universe. (I use 'clairsentience' to include perceptions through any and all of our senses, not just our visual awareness, or 'clairvoyance,' which has been the subject of much of psychical research.);
- A direct perception of the consciousness of beings who exist in spirit dimensions, including humans and animals who are no longer physically alive), nature spirits, angels, malevolent beings, and other living beings.

McGilchrist discusses the role of Western religions, particularly of Protestantism, in strengthening LH dominance. He mentions spirituality as a belief held on faith, particularly within religious contexts.

In essence the cardinal tenet of Christianity – the Word is made Flesh – becomes reversed, and the Flesh is made Word. (p. 323)

But of the domains of spirituality through direct knowledge he says little. The closest he comes to discussing knowing is to describe the oneness that people feel between themselves and nature.

McGilchrist's analysis of the fringes of the topic of spirituality suffer particularly from LH biases and limitations. While he acknowledges the presence of intuition (which, as I noted, he does not define per se) in LH and RH, he appears to define this as the meta-acceptance, without reasoning or evidence, that what is conceived by the LH or perceived by the RH is true. In other words, intuition includes those axioms regarding our existence that form the base of the pyramids of our LH and RH belief systems. The meta-acceptances are unspoken rules about taking LH re-presentations and RH direct awarenesses as being true and valid, inherently obvious and beyond questioning.

Interestingly, he also observes that East Asian language and culture (especially Japanese) have much stronger RH awarenesses of being one with the world around us. For instance,

... the Japanese language does not have an established method for composing abstract nouns, and has no definite or indefinite articles, considered to be a crucial step in the emergence of abstract nouns in Greek... The Japanese have... no abstractions in general; they have never developed the dichotomy between the phenomenological world and the world of ideas... (p. 452)

The Japanese also preserve a healthy skepticism about language, and this goes hand in hand with the rejection of a reality that must, or ever could, be arrived at purely by reason. In Zen Buddhism, according to Soiku Shigematsu, the abbot of Shogenji temple, 'a word is a finger that points at the moon. The goal of Zen pupils is the moon itself, not the pointing finger... (p. 452-453)

This appears to suggest that RH experiences may be strongly shaped through cultural filters. Or perhaps what is shown here is that Western LH and meta-beliefs about these experiences – the doubts about and disparagements of RH awarenesses – are aberrations that we would do well to address.

Collective consciousness as a RH awareness

My own belief is that both the LH and RH evidence above provides a very strong basis for postulating that a collective consciousness exists. If each and every one of us has psychic abilities, then each of us is like a cell in the brain of all that is. We have access to consciousness of other living beings, both from the present and across time.

The good news is that the collective consciousness is available to anyone and everyone, anywhere and everywhere, in the present as well as across the apparent (LH) boundaries of time. The collective consciousness holds a potential for all participants to know directly the thoughts and feelings of other beings. Empathy for all consciousness becomes much more available and likely to lead to greater cooperation and less conflict in human relations.

The bad news is that there have been countless major traumas from wars, diseases, natural disasters, and personal injuries to people throughout recorded history – and presumably from earlier

times as well. In most cases, people experiencing such traumas die without releasing their pain, grief, anger, guilt and other negative emotions and memories. Thus there is a burden of negative memories and emotions that grows heavier and more problematic in the collective unconscious through time.

Humanity is suffering from a collective consciousness PTSD

Living with LH preferences, as detailed by McGilchrist, has had disastrous effects on psychological health through the ages. Ignoring and burying emotional traumas outside of conscious awareness is the preferred response of LH. This leaves people subject to suffering from the unconscious emotional distress and pains that were experienced.

Going much further than McGilchrist, I believe that this repression of psychological traumas has led to a horrendous accumulation of individual psychological trauma in the collective consciousness. Human history is one of incredible angers, hatreds, wars and other cruelties on the side of aggressors, and hurts, pains, anxieties, fears, losses, grief and bereavement on the side of the oppressed. The Bible, which has been a guide to moral principles in Western society, is full of bloody annihilations in wars and territorial conquests. Recent history demonstrates ever more efficient ways to annihilate those who are labeled as 'others' and enemies. Among countless other cruelties, a few more prominent examples include the gas ovens of Nazi Germany and the indiscriminate use of firepower in Iraq that produces 'collateral damage' of one to two million innocent civilians killed and injured. Another heinous crime against humanity is the use of ammunition laced with depleted uranium by US soldiers that is increasing birth defects and cancers (Johnson, 2002; Rense, web reference).

This is vitally important to understanding humanity's cruelty to and abuse of each other; our genociding of other species; our abuse of the environment; and our impending suicide by global heating (warming is an unacceptable euphemism), pollution, exhaustion of natural resources, nuclear holocaust, or other destructive methods.

Most of our world's political leaders and corporate executives appear indifferent to these dangers. These LH dominant people appear to be locked into paths of personal gain and power, and unwilling, or unable to accept the evidence that they and their children may not live out their natural lives. How can we explain these LH suicidal behaviors?

People ask, "How is it possible for humans to be so cruel to each other?" Several answers for collective behaviors can be postulated from individual psychological theory and practice of psychotherapy.

Many of the abusive behaviors seen in groups of people resemble very closely what is labeled post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in individual emotional disorders.

Symptoms of PTSD may include:

- becoming overly emotional under minimal stress,
- becoming easily angered and having brutal temper outbursts,
- becoming phobic about situations and relationships similar to the original traumas.
- low self-esteem,
- difficulties in concentrating
- nightmares and difficulty sleeping,
- headaches,
- backaches,
- other physical symptoms, and
- re-enactment of trauma – against others.

People who have suffered PTSDs and other levels of physical and emotional trauma that is untreated are also likely to vent their negative feelings on others. For example, it is rare to find sexual perpetrators who have not suffered sexual abuse themselves. Soldiers returning from war with PTSDs often have violent tempers. Bullies were often bullied themselves, often by their parents.

This has a clear parallel with societal cycles of sectarian violence. The Irish and the Catholics; the Jews and the Arabs; and many other cultural and national groups have vented their angers at each other over generations. Many of the colonists in North America fled from religious sectarian abuse in Europe, venting their cultural PTSDs on relatively defenseless native populations.

These cultural problems worsen with time, as the collective hurts and angers increase and as the abusing groups come to devalue those they are abusing, labeling them as 'others.' This label allows the abusers to suffer less guilt in displacing and venting their frustrations and angers (from causes unrelated to their targets of abuse) upon people who are different from themselves.

Abuse is also vented frequently upon displaced targets. Teachers who suffered abuse may vent their buried, festering hurts and angers upon students; employers bully employees; doctors and nurses who were abused during their student and training are subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) abusive to each other and to people under their care.

The same is true of the collective consciousness. We are brutally abusive to each other. Another of our displaced targets is Gaia, our planet. Humanity has been abusive to many life forms. Consider our over-hunting and over-fishing to extinction of many species; our pollution of the environment; our exhaustion of natural resources such as water and trees; and more...

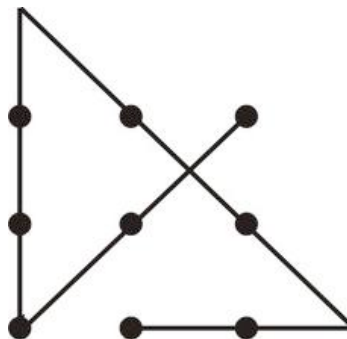
When individual PTSDs are of sufficient severity, suicide is the ultimate running away from the buried traumas. In a similar manner, I believe humanity is suiciding collectively due to its collective PTSD.

Extending beyond LH thinking

The Nine Dots Puzzle solution

The solution to this puzzle requires that we go beyond the boundaries of the nine dot figure, to link all dots in 4 straight lines. Most people automatically assume they are required to stay within the borders of the square box defined by the nine dots. It may take a while to see that the instructions permit drawing the lines outside these confines. The origins of the phrase "thinking outside the box" are obscure; but it was popularized in part because of this nine-dot puzzle.

Figure 2. A solution to the 9-dot puzzle



How can we free ourselves from LH oppressive dominance?

This is a difficult but vitally important question to address. I believe this is the first of the most important questions of our time.

I believe the first step is to work on ourselves. As McGilchrist points out, connecting with our body helps to ground us. I find that every symptom we have includes important messages for our deep, inner awareness. Seeking out, uncovering and processing these messages requires that we connect with RH. Deciphering them is aided by LH analyses, combined with further RH explorations – to include unconscious thoughts and emotions; early life resonations with current symptoms; relationship issues – from personal interactions in present and past lives; and issues of the collective consciousness. See discussion on the complex relationships between all of these levels in Benor (web reference). Often, the help of a counselor or therapist is vital to our identifying and clearing such issues.

As difficult as the first step is, the next one is even more challenging. How can we halt and reverse the growing dangers to the survival of life as we know it on our planet that are being perpetrated by humanity – through people who are firmly wedded to their LH re-presentations of the world? McGilchrist's discussions in this book help us appreciate the enormity of the challenges that are involved. The very nature of LH thinking – with its rigid adherence to its re-presentations of the world, along with its avoidance and dismissal of RH awarenesses – makes this challenge particularly complex and difficult.

This challenge is made all the more difficult because in North America we now have more than a generation of people who have been educated in schools where rote learning and regurgitating a standardized curriculum have been strongly emphasized – over the development of critical thinking. The majority of people today tend to accept uncritically what is presented by the media. Increasingly, the media are being controlled by people with LH dominant, vested corporate and governmental interests. Major media 'news' is more like LH infomercials than accurate reporting of facts.

Even more difficult to deal with are the LH dominated corporation executives and politicians who are selfishly doing their best to exploit just about every aspect of our planet, with no thought or care for the damages they are doing – not only to those they harm directly but to future generations as well.

I find hope for many of these challenges in the 'Occupy' movements; in the protests at the annual world financial institution meetings (as in the G20 in Toronto in 2011), and in the myriads of organizations representing countless people who are dedicating themselves to healing our planet (e.g. www.wiserearth.com). These are people who have a good RH sense of the damages being perpetrated and are developing LH and RH approaches to dealing with them.

Most difficult of all are the LH religious fanatics who have re-presented the healing teachings of Christ and Allah, and who believe that by hastening the coming of an Armageddon they, the true (LH) believers, will ascend to heaven. Devastating and destroying everyone and everything on our planet means nothing to them.

With these challenges I take hope from the fact that many are abandoning the traditional organized religions and are seeking their RH connections with a personal spiritual awareness (Benor, 2003).

The good news is that even in LH dominant people, decisions are often made on the basis of unconscious RH awarenesses. For instance, fear and related emotions make it easier to manipulate public opinion and decision-making. LH dominant leaders know this well, and regularly manipulate the populace by generating false fears.

Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind is closed, the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded by patriotism, will offer up all their rights unto the leader and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar.

- Author unknown

Similarly, RH awarenesses are deliberately elicited by LH propaganda specialists in order to further LH agendas. Sexual arousal is used regularly in the media to attract attention; pets and children are used in ads to evoke a heart connection; and humor used to evoke a chuckle – all to engage the audience and create a positive association with advertisements and to sell products, services and ideas.

The enormous successes of these LH tactics that exploit RH awarenesses suggest that it should be possible to engage and enhance RH awarenesses for constructive, healing purposes.

Increasing the participation of women in leadership positions

Since women, as a rule, have more RH awareness, the promotion of women's rights and inclusion of women in leadership roles is of great importance and holds great promise for helping to correct the predominance of LH thinking and behaviors in human affairs.

Ultradian rhythms suggest that RH awarenesses are more available to some (as yet not adequately studied) degree on a regular basis than is generally appreciated. McGilchrist appears to be unaware of these tidal shifts from RH to LH dominance and back that occur every 90-120 minutes in humans. This alternating general hemispheric activity dominance is associated with contralateral (opposite side) opening of the nasal passages. In ordinary language, this means that if your RH is more active at a given moment, your left nasal passage will be more open, and conversely with LH and right nostril.

During the shift from greater hemispheric activity in one side to greater activity in the other, both nostrils are equally open. The nasal passage opening and closing is easily identified by most people when it is pointed out to them.

It has been found that people are maximally open to hypnotic suggestions for changing their perceptions, beliefs and behaviors during this brief period of balanced hemispheric activity. It is possible to use this to enhance suggestibility during hypnosis, because people have been found to be much more suggestible during the 1-5 minutes that are required for the shift to occur from one hemisphere to the other (Osowiec, 1992; 2000; Rossi, 1982; 1986).

I find for myself and for people whom I teach the self-healing method called [WHEE](#), the effects of self-healing are also enhanced when practiced during this period of dual hemispheric activation. There are also ways to prolong the period of suggestibility through maintaining a continuous state of hemispheric balance (2010a; 2010b).

Wholistic healing for problems of physical, psychological and transpersonal nature invites people to engage and use both LH and RH awarenesses. It is thus that we are often helped to redress LH and RH imbalances, through addressing issues of body, emotions, mind, relationships (with other people and the environment) and personal spiritual awareness.

Love is, without a doubt, the most important RH element of all. When we connect with this aspect of RH awareness, we are able to achieve more healing for ourselves, for other people, and for every other aspect of our beleaguered planet. Of the many definitions and countless poetic descriptions of love, the one I find most helpful is simply 'unconditional positive regard with compassionate acceptance.' Sadly, there is barely a mention of this in McGilchrist's book, and no entry for love in the index.

Other approaches include promoting RH awarenesses through the creative arts, through sharing of life experiences, through practices that promote compassion and spiritual awarenesses. Connecting with the environment and with all living beings facilitates RH spiritual awarenesses. Shifting responsibility in healthcare is enormously helpful. Moving away from the physician as the technician who repairs the body and the mental health professional who adjusts the on-board guidance system – to self-awareness and self-healing can be transformative. This is the core of our focus in the International Journal of Healing and Caring (IJHC).

In this edition of IJHC we have examples of wholistic healing approaches which help to harmonize LH and RH consciousness.

[Lisa Tully](#) reports on research in bioenergy healing. In this case, LH is helping RH to confirm the effects of Reiki healing.

[Anna Parkinson](#) reports on how she used self-healing to cure her brain tumor. In this case, she released repressed RH emotions from traumatic experiences and found that her body healed itself – without medical treatment. Her strong LH beliefs in the methods she used may have contributed significantly to her healing.

[Rosie Jones](#), an Australian physician, describes how she had a stressful awakening out of LH consciousness, opening to her artistic, creative abilities. She left the practice of medicine to pursue a new career as a painter.

[Debbie Lerman](#) shares a few of the many healing responses brought about by her Black and White Photo Project, a series of black and white photographs that highlight perceptions of people whose skin color is black or white.

[Jim Perretta](#) brings us expressions of the Transcendent in poetic language, translating RH spiritual awarenesses into LH language.

[Scott Kalechstein Grace](#) invites us to consider how Dr. Seuss might interpret Eckhart Tolle, in our section on humor as healing. Humor is yet another way that we come to appreciate the relationships of LH and RH perceptions and conceptualizations.

See also the [book review of Kathryn Schulz](#), *Being Wrong*, which beautifully documents and analyzes the difficulties LH has in acknowledging it could be mistaken in its perceptions and beliefs.)

In summary– re dealing with our LH-dominated world

I am enormously grateful to Iain McGilchrist for having written this book. It has helped me enormously to clarify my understandings not only of right and left brain functions, but also of ways in which humanity has put itself in peril of suiciding and of destroying our planet.

Iain McGilchrist's observations strongly suggest that LH dominant thinking and LH dominated behaviors, along with suppression of RH awarenesses and behaviors, are dangerous to the survival of life on our planet as we know it. These same awarenesses suggest possible ways for addressing and hopefully healing the problems of LH self-destructive re-presentations and exploitations of the human resources and other resources of our planet.

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