

**The Missing Mind:
Contrasting Civilization with Non-Civilization Development and Functioning**

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Abridged

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Most anthropologists who first encountered small-band hunter gatherers (SBHG), did not understand them because their consciousness was so alien (Sorenson, 1998).

For example, SBHG spend much of their mindspace in *polysemy*. Polysemy, in this context, is where consciousness swims in a shape-shifting world—there is no solid identity of a thing (Bram, 2018). Polysemy reflects the ability to merge with multiple others, human and non-human and is the product of *de-differentiation*, finding oneness with others rather than difference and separation. Many non-civilized cultures de-differentiate and creatively respond to the present moment, which is heavy with connection to others, including the other-than-human, to ancestors and other spiritual aspects of a dynamic, fluctuating universe. This inclusive creative space is where they spend/spent most of their lives. When needed, SBHG move into the problem-solving mindspace of *univocity*—linear logical thinking helpful for solving a particular problem. Though SBHG use both mindspaces, polysemy and univocity, with the rise of the Sumerian and subsequent civilizations, there was a shift toward spending more time in univocity, the problem-solving space brought on by stress.

Bram (2018) describes the gradual shift away from polysemy across the history of western civilization due to multiple factors including settled agriculture, forced labor imposed by elites, which led to increased hierarchy, writing, measurement and control of people and things, including war and slavery. Univocity depends on differentiation: sorting, categorizing, and abstracting. Differentiation makes distinctions, defining each thing as one thing only. Univocity relies on dualistic, dichotomous logic (something is or isn't), emphasizing causes and effects which rely on linear thinking. The sense of the present is minimal as people are caught in trying to predict the future based on what was noticed from the past. Obsession with order, precision and prediction becomes normalized—all left hemisphere concerns (McGilchrist, 2009). These skills are valuable and necessary for both an individual and community to solve problems but according to McGilchrist and others (e.g., Tweedy, 2021) become distorted without the help of the right hemisphere's global integration. As a result of obsessive differentiation (sorting and naming separate objects), civilization creates a singular world with a hierarchical shape, a pyramid of order based on linguistic structure (subject-predicate-object) that becomes the model for logic (universal statement particular, statement conclusion) and is transformed into social law. For Bram, hypotactic (hierarchically-arranged) societies are made up of bits, separate entities, whether people, offices, assembly lines, or power structures. Persistent differentiation, encouraged by (noun-based Indo-European) language and law, leads to a hierarchical society that uses contests to determine who reaches the top of the pyramid. Contest winners take the top position—or top abstraction in fields of study like science, or in realms of life like religion or schooling. Univocity plays a significant role in keeping the domination hierarchy in place to benefit those with more privilege. As ecological feminists have documented about Western domination culture (e.g., Warren, 2000), people get categorized, abstracted and coerced into their place. Punishments become part of life and orderliness becomes paramount. Life becomes about staying in your place and carrying your load.

The clash of these vastly different consciousnesses was apparent when Europeans explorers, settlers and anthropologists encountered societies existing primarily in polysemy, but also in *paradox*—that is, a combination of diffuse or peripheral awareness in combination with focused attention or mental alertness (Berman, 2000). The Europeans were confused by community members' lack of precise definitions, shifting stories and social configurations, and their lack of leaders. They were not "logical" in the linear, univocal sense. At the same time, First Nation peoples remarked on the soullessness of European invaders, their inflexibility and lack of openness and awareness of a sentient Earth (Narvaez, 2019). Showing similarities to Bram's analysis, anthropologist E. Richard Sorenson (1998) noted a "preconquest consciousness" (versus postconquest consciousness in westernized nations)

among the different Indigenous Peoples with whom he lived around the world over decades.¹ Among those with preconquest consciousness, Sorenson documented the shifting descriptions of self, others and places, based on context. There were no fixed identities. So, for example, a person could have multiple names that came or went, whose use shifted with the desire of mates or context. With the lack of fixed or rigid identities, the overall sense of the world was not static but dynamic, with actions changing and dependent on foregrounding, activity, season and mood, rather than on fixed cognitive thought.

The difference between univocity and polysemic consciousnesses appears to align with left hemisphere-dominated and integrated modes of being, respectively. Also similar to Bram's analysis, McGilchrist (2009) reviewed empirical research on left and right brain functioning and then concluded that a lack of hemispheric integration (minimal right hemisphere involvement) and left-brain dominance has characterized most of Western civilization. Left-brain dominated thought is governed by the explicit and the disembodied, oriented to static, categorizable things, interested only in what is preconceived or has a defined purpose. It focuses on detail, mechanistic processes, perfectionistic thinking and is largely more comfortable with impersonal interactions. The left brain contains more myelination *within itself*, indicating its function to refer to information that is known (self-referring), unlike the right brain whose expanded myelination and connectivity to the whole brain allows for perception and intake of new information outside itself, playing an integrative role in broad, generalized thinking (Tucker, Roth & Blair, 1986).

The left-hemisphere's skills are not in and of themselves deleterious. Rather, they are enhanced and balanced only when in dialogue with the right hemisphere (Tweedy, 2021). The right hemisphere is able to ground and make sense of the detailed, perfectionistic and impersonal insights provided by the left. When a bi-hemisphere collaboration occurs, one maintains the 'big picture,' responds to an evolving, dynamic, interconnected, world and is comfortable with obscurity (vagueness or mystery) and the personal, maintaining connections with the natural world and other systems (McGilchrist, 2009).

According to McGilchrist, capacities for the diffuse, wide-open attention especially declined with the ascent of the Enlightenment and the Western. The lack of hemispheric integration coupled with lopsided hemisphere leadership (left over right), led to an emphasis on materialism at the expense of social cohesion and respect for individuality—the unique nature of each person was replaced with categorical descriptions, such as race or socioeconomic status.

McGilchrist points out that the common modern condition—feeling fragmented, devitalized, depersonalized, depressed, or dissociated, along with lost emotional depth and empathy—correspond to an overbearing left hemisphere and underactive right hemisphere—what psychotherapy seeks to rebalance (Tweedy, 2021).

Berman (2000) suggests that a large part of western civilization reflects disconnection from nature and from flexible coordination with others, including the other than human. In our view, the lack of connection to others, including to the natural world, generates further disconnections within the individual as well as the individual's understanding of present and future life. According to Bram (2018), persistent differentiation leads to deep anxiety and death terror as the sense of the present is thin and emptied out of creative polysemy and the focus is on the future which will bring about certain death.

In contrast, integration of hemispheric functioning, the right-brain leading, results in thinking that is open and receptive, attuned to the energies of the moment, dominated by a feeling of relation and multiperspectivalism, interested in penetrating mysteries and that which is beyond apparent perception or comprehension; such integration is apparent in noncivilized communities the world over (Berman, 2000; Descola, 2013; Wolff, 2000). This type of hemisphere integration is able to drink deeply of the realities of the present moment, participatory consciousness, as well as conceive, creatively and realistically, the future.

Moreover, brains that are integrated across hemispheres are associated with compassionate and

kind action (Tweedy, 2021). Like Sorenson, McGilchrist, Berman and Bram, physicist David Bohm (1994) also described two types of awareness. The first, insight-intelligence, the source of creativity, is open to the flow of shared being with others outside the self. It taps into transrational reality where participation is entwined with observation, instilling a sense of awe. For westernized minds, it appears in eureka moments. Among First Nation societies, it is routinely experienced in dreams, visions and intuitions (Wolff, 2001). For others, in participatory ceremonies, rituals and dances, sometimes with mind-altering practices. Bohm's second form of awareness is thought-in-the- mind, a dualistic, subject-object worldview familiar to westerners. It consists of static habits of mind, a fossilized consciousness, such as beliefs and other self-referential or cultural loops. It is the self-looping of the left hemisphere. Cognitively speaking, we can see a lining up of polysemy with insight-intelligence and the right hemisphere, and a lining up of univocity with left hemisphere self-referential thought.

Taken together, we suggest a correspondence between the socio-cultural transformation and the biopsychosocial. That is, diminishing polysemy with the rise of patriarchy and the devaluing of women and natural cycles may be caused by the devaluation and degradation of nurturing child formation. We propose that a significant causal factor in bringing about the

emphasis on univocity is the "misraising of the species' brain," that is, the lack of EDN provision, leading to an underdevelopment of coordinated connection to others and right- hemispheric functions generally. Specifically, it is our hypothesis that civilizations' concern for controlling nature and non-elites led to a diminishment of EDN provision which became culturally sanctioned, leading to an enhancement of left-hemisphere functions at the expense of right hemisphere functions.

The shift away from the EDN is particularly hard on males. Lack of EDN provision impairs healthy development of all people but critically impacts developing males because neurobiologically and psychologically they develop more slowly, have less built-in resilience and need more nurturing than girls (Schoore, 2017). Without appropriate nurturing boys more easily develop dysregulation in multiple ways, including an easy downshifting to primitive survival systems of territoriality and dominance-seeking, affecting adulthood and the culture such dominance-oriented people create (Eisler & Fry, 2019; Narvaez, 2008, 2014). Undercare, particularly of boys, is common in harsh patriarchal societies. Across generations undercare continues to degrade, leading to personalities vulnerable to fear, rage or greed (the wétiko virus of cannibalizing life noted by Natives in the European invaders of the Americas; Forbes, 2008), empowering ideologies of one kind of supremacy or another (Narvaez, 2014).

Civilizations have moved away from the EDN, polysemy, and right hemisphere development, at the risk of human species extinction. Right hemisphere development undergirds receptive intelligence awareness of sentience in the natural world, a sense of connectedness and placefulness on the earth (Narvaez, 2014). We now face the four horsemen of the environmental apocalypse: massive toxification of earth systems, degradation of the atmosphere, global burning and mass extinction (Wilson 1991). We think that the missing EDN plays a role in the widespread ecological autism that governs modern human culture.

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